

## THE SPIRIT OF A SOUND MIND.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." – 2 Tim. 1:7.

The word spirit is here used in the sense of mental disposition. Thus we sometimes speak of a bad spirit, meaning an evil disposition; or of a good, true spirit, meaning a pure, noble and amiable disposition. So the Apostle here refers to the disposition of a sound mind.

A sound mind, is a mind in a sound healthy condition, and in full possession of all its faculties. Its perceptive faculties gather up various data and store them away in memory's garner; and its reasoning faculties arrange and compare them, and thus arrive at conclusions that otherwise could not be gained. However, if the mind is not in a sound, healthy condition, reason will not act properly. It will receive memory's store of facts, and by misapplying and misappropriating them, arrive at erroneous conclusions. If the mind is disturbed by undue fear and dread, or by superstition or prejudice, or hate, or revenge, or undue ambition, or pride, or self-conceit, or avarice, or any [R1080 : page 3] depraved passion, reason will be so influenced by such dispositions as to render its conclusions, or judgement, untrustworthy. The mind is only sound when in the full possession of all its faculties, and when it is entirely free in the use of those faculties – free from prejudice to bias it in any direction. Those among men who are freest from prejudice in the use of reason, we sometimes, and very properly, speak of as cool-headed, while those of the opposite disposition are called hot-headed.

Strictly speaking, there is not a perfectly sound mind in the world. The mind could not be perfectly sound unless the body were so. Both mind and body are sadly bruised by the fall; and in the fallen race we see all shades and grades of mental as well as physical derangement. Mark the varieties of physical derangement: Here is one with a deranged stomach – a dyspeptic; and that derangement affects the

whole body to a greater or less extent. Another is afflicted with an improper action of the heart: and the whole body is therefore in trouble. The same is true if the lungs will not fill their appointed office, or if the liver will not do its duty, or if the nervous system be unstrung. In such cases the mind is always more or less unfavorably affected. If the body is burning with fever, or racked with pain, or agitated by an excited nervous system, or oppressed by the distresses of a dyspeptic stomach, or excited by a palpitating heart, or enfeebled by inactive and diseased lungs, the mind is correspondingly weak and diseased; it is unsound, fettered in the use of its powers, and unable to fully govern and rightly use them.

The curse of sin and its penalty has laid its heavy hand on the entire man – mind and body. If one member of the body suffer, the whole body, and no less the mind, suffers with it. And in addition to those sufferings of the mind which come directly from physical disabilities, are many others which come from its own derangement, from the undue cultivation of its inferior instincts and the dwarfing of its nobler faculties through sin and the necessities of painful toil – the labor and sweat of face which are parts of its penalty. Truly, as the prophet expresses it, There is none perfect (*sound*, either in mind or body), no, not one. (Psa. 14:3.) All are covered with wounds and bruises and putrefying sores – both mentally and physically, though there are various degrees of unsoundness.

O, says one, I do not see that the world in general is so much out of gear mentally. Men are considerably out of order physically, greatly out of order morally, but it seems to me that mentally they are pretty straight. What evidence is there of such general mental derangement?

Well, let us see. If we go into an insane asylum we find people who are so far unbalanced mentally as to be incapable of managing their own affairs, and often in danger of damaging the interests of others as well, because unable to exercise even moderate judgement. But we all know that we have neighbors on every hand whose

judgements, as well as our own, are very imperfect. And not infrequently many give evidence of inability to manage their own affairs creditably, who are a great annoyance in attempting to manage the affairs of others. Through self-conceit they are gossips and busy-bodies in other men's matters though incapable of managing their own. This is one evidence of an unsound mind – a measure of insanity.

What business man will not admit that, over and over again, when he has used his very best judgement, he has actually done the wrong thing when he should have known better? The large number of failures in business, and ill-successes generally, attest that the majority of people are very unsound in judgement. And likewise the numbers of badly raised families, of mismatches in matrimony, of ungoverned tempers, and of miserly, or extravagant, or foolish habits, etc., etc., all bear witness to the same fact. The great trouble in every case is *an unsound mind*. And no one knows better than the man who has precipitated financial disaster, or who has made a bad mistake in choosing a wife, or the woman who accepted a worthless man for a husband, that bad judgement, unsoundness of mind, was the cause of the trouble. And so avarice, selfishness, and other bad habits are evidences of mental as well as of moral and physical unbalance. Sometimes a man has average soundness of mind on most subjects, but is greatly astray on some one. He can reason intelligently on other subjects, but on this one he cannot; he reasons absurdly and draws false conclusions. There are some subjects on which so many are astray that mankind in general do not regard the wrong course as wrong, and are ready to pronounce those unbalanced who do not run with them to the same excesses.

Suppose a man down on the river bank with a long rake, raking up old corks, and sticks, and rubbish out of the water, and having them at considerable expense carted off and stored in a barn somewhere. You see him day after day toiling away to no reasonable purpose and you say, the man is insane. Why do you think so? Because he is spending his time and effort at that which, when looked at from a reasonable

standpoint, is unreasonable. Now while all are not as bad as the illustration there is a disposition of the same kind running through the whole race with reference to some subjects: For instance, that of accumulating money. That is an evidence of an unsound mind, but the popular opinion does not so regard it. There are thousands of men who have plenty of money, more than they know what to do with. It gives them great care and anxiety to take care of it, and great labor and weariness in one way or another to accumulate it. And yet, notwithstanding their superabundance, they will lie, and cheat, and steal, and defraud their best friends to get more; only to add greater burdens to their already heavy load, and to heap upon themselves the calumnies and hatred of those whom they have unjustly defrauded. What is the natural inference? The man who acts so, has an unsound mind. But it is on a popular subject; and others of similar disposition, though not always so successful, say, That is a great man; his aim is the grand acme of life; go on, become a ten times ten-millionaire (unless I should succeed in outwitting you).

How should a really sound mind regard such proceedings? How does God view it as he looks down upon men cheating and fighting and stealing from one another to get money, or wheat, or corn into a "corner" from other men, then guarding it, and keeping it, and fighting for it, as if it were very life itself.

He sees it as the result of an unsound mind, as the mental and moral unbalance brought about through sin. If the mind were well balanced its energies would be divided between accumulating and using; and good and noble uses would be thought out whereby he and his fellow-men might receive some real advantage. But the common practice of all the world is to lay it up for posterity, and posterity receives it with mean ingratitude and generally uses it to its own injury. – Psa. 49:10,13.

Another subject upon which the masses of men are of unsound mind, but which is not popularly so regarded, is the reckless

propagation of the race without due regard to means of support, or health, or the Lord's special service to which some have consecrated their all, and often regardless of the barest necessities of life, overburdening wives whom they profess to love and covenanted to support and defend, with weights of care which they are mentally and physically unable to endure, and from which they often gladly find refuge in the silent tomb; while the mentally and physically diseased offspring, which she was thus unfitted to rear, and which the father is incapable of supporting, are left to add their burden of misery, and mental and moral and physical depravity to the world's long moan of distress and sorrow.

True the command was given, increase and multiply and fill the earth, but human fatherhood should be after the likeness of the divine fatherhood, which provides for every son – "If a son, then an heir." If a sound mind were in control, a man would not incur the responsibilities of husband, or of fatherhood a numerous family, with known inability to produce a healthy offspring, or to provide for them the necessities of life until able to do for themselves. The unsoundness of mind thus displayed has raised the wail of distress from thousands of homes, and nipped in the bud the tender plants of love and peace; and the struggle for bare existence has driven out every element of harmony and right-mindedness.

If the spirit of a sound mind were in control here, love and harmony would prevail to a vastly greater extent, and a healthy, happy, and welcomed offspring would rise up to bless a mother's training hand of care, to honor a father's kindly providence, and to walk in their honorable footprints.

Is it not true too, that such as have consecrated all to the Lord's service have little enough to give at best without tying their hands with more than indispensable earthly burdens and cares? Is it not, rather, the mission and privilege of such, to feed and clothe, spiritually, God's little ones?

But there are many other evidences of unsoundness of mind not so general among men, and yet very numerous in one form or another. For instance one is a miser: he clutches a penny with almost a death grip; he would bargain and contend with a poorer man to induce him to undersell his little stock of goods on which he depends for the support of his family; he would deprive his own family of the necessary comforts of life, which he and they know he is able to supply, but will not, and thus introduce an element of discord into what might be a happy and prosperous home. Hugging his hoarded dollars he goes to his grave, and his children gather them to quarrel over them and to hate his very memory. O, what a mistake!

Another man is a spendthrift; self-gratification he will have, in every possible [R1081 : page 3] direction, regardless of consequences for the future. This is better than the miserly extreme, yet it is founded in the same mean principle of selfishness, regardless of the interests of others, and even of self-interest beyond the present moment. Neither of these extremes of unsoundness is realized by those so afflicted: The miser congratulates himself that he is not a spendthrift, and the spendthrift that he is not a miser, and neither ever dreams that he has gone to the opposite extreme.

O, that all the world might be blessed with a sound mind! What a renovation it would make! What a transformation of all things! This is just what men will have when the great restitution work is all complete.

But, notice that the Apostle in the above text speaks of the saints as now having the spirit of a sound mind. They are not actually sound, either in mind or body; they have mental and physical and moral weaknesses like other men, but they have received from God *the spirit, the disposition* of a sound mind, which, under God's direction, is able to a very great extent to correct, control, and direct the whole man. To have a sound mind, then, is the thing to be desired above all others, and all who realize their unsound condition should apply at once to the great Physician, who says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are

heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And those who have come to this great Physician can testify to his healing power; for lo, under the magic of his healing touch, old things – the old dispositions of fear and superstition, and evil inclinations, and weakness, and imbecility, have passed away, and all things have become new. The spirit of love and of a sound mind has taken its place, giving increasing power to govern the whole being as we grow up toward the stature of men in Christ Jesus.

In coming to our Lord, his first requirement is, that we submit our minds entirely to his control, setting aside our [R1081 : page 4] ideas and plans entirely, to henceforth be guided by his sound mind. And only those thus consecrated to the doing of his will, have the spirit or disposition of a sound mind.

As soon as this spirit of a sound mind comes in, it begins at once under the divine guidance to set the whole man in order. And it begins in the right place: It commands the will to assert its power and hold its commanding place over body and mind; it puts reason at the helm with the divine Word as its guide book; it searches the heart with the lamp of divine truth lighted by the holy spirit, to see what form the malady of sin has taken; and then looking to the divine healer by faith and the energy of resistance, the transforming work begins and progresses, bringing the mind into a more and more sound and healthy condition, notwithstanding the infirmities of the body may tend in an opposite direction. Thus the children of God are "transformed, by the renewing of their minds."

Sometimes the children of God get cold and listless and almost cease to aspire to and seek this soundness of mind, but let such remember that this is the lukewarm condition of which the Master declares his abhorrence. (Rev. 3:16.) Let the consecrated ones who look for the reward of our high calling remember that ceaseless vigilance and earnest striving against the dispositions of the old unsound mind, and a constant submission to the divine will in the

smallest affairs of every-day life, are the most thorough proof of our faithfulness to God. It is all-important that while we endeavor to faithfully serve the Lord by bearing the good tidings of his truth to others, we should not fail in this most important work of self-discipline and self-culture under the divine direction. The every-day life of faithful saints will preach a sermon to all who know them, which their lips could never speak. And if it does not do so – if avarice, or penuriousness, or pride, or selfishness, or bad tempers, or slovenly habits in conversation still continue, our lips had best keep silence, regarding godly matters except before God in our closets. There we may speak freely, and ask largely for fresh supplies of grace to help us overcome the dispositions of the old unsound mind, that our daily life may speak a volume to our Redeemer's praise. Our children, our neighbors, our friends, and all who know us as exponents of divine truth, are looking for its fruits in our daily life, and judging of it accordingly, whether they tell us so or not. Let us endeavor to let our light shine in this way. We should never be too busy to let those about us see that our mind is under control of the divine mind – to let them see what carefulness the spirit of a sound mind hath wrought in us.

As the divine mind takes the control of our minds, it cultivates the nobler qualities; it nourishes them with divine truth and bids them expand and take possession of the man; it subdues the lower propensities and appoints their definite and proper place in the service of the new higher nature. It also lifts the mind out of the narrow sphere of self, and sets the man to work in the Lord's benevolent service of blessing others; it shows him the divine plan and tells him he may have a share in it – not only in its benefits, but also in its great work as a co-laborer together with God. Thus the saint approaches the divine likeness and enjoys communion and fellowship with God.

Well, says one, while we criticise some who spend their lives in gathering dollars, and others who spend it otherwise, they also criticise us, and say that we are unsound in mind, "peculiar," because our view of life is turned so much from the ordinary. What shall we say of this?



We cannot help that – we once thought much as they do, but now have received the mind of Christ. We cannot expect any but those governed by the same heaven-directed view of matters, to agree with us, or to commend our mind and course. The only way we could please all the insane people in an asylum would be to agree with their ideas and do as they do. And just so, the only way we can please the unsound world is to agree with their erroneous ideas and do as they do; but when we receive our ideas from God's Word, and recognize the world's ideas as contrary to that Word, then we know on God's authority that we have the spirit, the disposition of a sound mind, though we are constantly reminded of the unsoundness of our natural mind by the effort which it costs us to keep it in subjection to the divine ruling. Naturally, the children of God are no better than average men of the world, and often worse. Among them, as natural men and women, there are all sorts of mean dispositions, but when the spirit of a sound mind, under God's direction, takes hold, it transforms and beautifies them in deed and in truth. And, dearly beloved, if this transforming work is not going on within us, we are either dead or dying, branches that must sooner or later be severed from the vine. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit [fruit of the spirit] he taketh away." – John 15:2.

We must then let the transforming work go on within our own hearts, while we do all in our power to inspire and cultivate the same spirit in others. God hath not given to us the spirit of fear and superstitious dread of him, but of power, and of love, and of a *sound mind*. And when we have discarded our own unsound mind, and taken God's mind as expressed in his Word, we know that we have the disposition of a sound mind, no matter how other men regard it.

