

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOUND MIND

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

IN THIS TEXT St. Paul is addressing the children of God – those who have left the world, who have turned their backs upon the things of sin and selfishness, who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit because of full consecration to God and to whom the Advocate has imputed His merit. They have received of His Spirit, the new mind, and so have the spirit of a sound mind.

In the beginning of the Gospel Age there were marked manifestations of the Holy Spirit, known as "the gifts of the Spirit" (I Cor. 12:4-11), such as knowledge, healing, miracles, tongues, etc. These gifts were bestowed at that time for two reasons: first, to witness who were God's people; and second, to confirm the faith of the early Church. They were necessary that the Church might have a start, so to speak.

The Apostle says that these miraculous *gifts* were to continue only for a time, but that the *fruits* of the spirit were to abide – meekness, patience, gentleness, brotherly kindness, faith, hope and love, the greatest of all. (I Cor. 13.) The gifts of the Spirit died out with the death of the Apostles and of those also upon whom they had conferred the gifts. But the fruits and graces remain to this day.

Just as soon as we have been begotten of the Holy Spirit a transforming work begins with us. But in general the reception of the Spirit is at first without marked manifestation. We *grow* in knowledge, love and all the fruits of the Spirit, in proportion as we have received the Holy Spirit, which is given in order to develop our minds and hearts and to do a transforming work, bringing forth the fruitage of the spirit in our characters and our lives. With some of us the fruitage develops rapidly; with others, slowly.

The grape-vine gives us gifts in that it bears grapes. As fruit-bearing in nature is in one sense of the word a miracle, so also are the fruits and graces of the Spirit which show in our lives, but which are such a gradual development that they do not seem to be miraculous.

The Lord is the true Vine and His true disciples are the branches. The Spirit of the Vine must permeate all the branches, and the fruit of the Vine must appear on every branch. The one thing necessary to remember is that our ultimate blessing and acceptance of the Father depends upon our abiding continually in this blessed relationship of branches in the Vine and our bearing fruit. If we fail to do this, we shall not remain in this relationship. But if we bear the fruits of the Spirit abundantly, we shall some day be branches in the glorified Vine – The Christ of God.

FEAR A FORM OF SELFISHNESS

In our text the Apostle is discussing the character of this Spirit which God has given us. It is not the spirit of fear, not the spirit of dread, not the spirit of timidity. Where the spirit of selfishness goes, there is more or less fear accompanying it. We can realize that with our first parents the spirit of fear led them to hide themselves from the Lord. We recall that Cain feared and fled. (Gen. 3:10; 4:14.) So all down through the ages, the spirit of fear has exerted a powerful influence upon mankind. If a storm comes up, many people act as if they feared that **[R5094 : page 279]** it was something sent especially after them.

All fear, being a manifestation of one form of selfishness, is made up of the elements of self-love. People fear lest they may lose some of the things which they selfishly desire to retain. The spirit of many of the heathen as well as of many in Christian lands is a spirit of fear. They are serving God, not from a desire to be co-laborers in His work, but from fear. They have been taught that they ought to go to Church. They know not what God might do to them if they were to neglect to go. Some ministers have said, "If I believed, as you do, that there is no eternal torture, I would do all the wicked things imaginable." They

show by these words that they are not impulsed by a Holy Spirit, but by a spirit of fear, a spirit that belongs to sin. The spirit of fear does not come from God.

There is, of course, a holy fear – a fear to do anything to offend God or to offend a friend. And we ought to be afraid of offending a friend, afraid of hurting or injuring a friend or anybody. If we love our Heavenly Father, we ought to fear to do anything to displease Him.

In Hebrews 4:1 the Apostle says, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Let us not fear evil – but let us fear lest we fail to attain the blessings promised to the overcomers. God will give those blessings only to those who reach a certain development of character. But the fear of the world is wholly improper. If any of the Lord's people have that fear, they have received it from some other source than the spirit of Truth.

TRANSFORMING INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Apostle proceeds to tell us what this Spirit of the Lord has brought to us. It has been a spirit of power, of strength. All who are seeking to walk after the Spirit and have a knowledge of the Lord's love – these He will not **[R5094 : page 280]** forsake, but will deliver them from evil. These have a courageous spirit, or influence of mind proceeding from this spirit of power. It gives them such energy that they are able to do more than otherwise they could. They astonish themselves. They have the peace of God to work in them to will and to do His good pleasure. – Phil. 2:13.

Those who receive the Truth are very different from what they were before they had received its spirit; and as a rule their neighbors and friends discern the change. Where a wife comes to the knowledge of the Truth, her husband is often surprised to find how much more firmness she has for everything that is right. This firmness is not a spirit of arrogance, but a spirit of assurance that God is able and willing to

work things together for good. It is the same with the husband. Many wives have seen how much the Truth has strengthened the husband. This change is due to the spirit of power which the Lord has given His people. In proportion as we get this spirit, we get this power. Of course, some characters are naturally strong, but the Truth will make them stronger. Others naturally weak are made so much stronger that they surprise their friends and neighbors.

All who have been in the School of Christ seem to make like development. They become better people than they have ever been before. They are not necessarily better looking, but the Spirit of the Lord helps them to keep their clothes tidy and neat. It helps them to be more particular as to what they say and how they say it. It influences their words, actions, conduct – everything. It makes them more patient, brotherly-kind. All these qualities are manifested increasingly.

Some who have been a little while in the Lord's service have been remarked upon by others. They say, "These are a very intelligent people. Where did they get their vocabulary? They are not well educated, yet how much they know of affairs in the world! They seem to have a general knowledge of everything." God's Word gives this broad knowledge, and His Spirit gives us power to use this knowledge and to appropriate it to ourselves, for we see it to be the Word of the Lord.

We receive the spirit of love also. The Apostle says that the Spirit of God is the spirit of love, because "God is Love." (I John 4:8.) God's Spirit is God's mind, God's disposition, God's influence. Since God is love, His Spirit must partake of all the qualities which go to make up love.

In proportion to the measure of the Holy Spirit which we have, we shall have *love* – first, toward God; secondly, to the children of God; thirdly, to our neighbors and friends, and lastly it will extend even to our enemies. It would lead us to be considerate of birds and beasts also. The spirit of love has a generally benevolent influence. Whatever

affects the thoughts is sure to affect the words. Whoever has the spirit of love will manifest its influences and will become more loving and more lovable as that spirit increases.

DISREGARD FOR THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS A FORM OF SELFISHNESS

Finally, the Apostle brings in the spirit of a sound mind. Man was created with a well-balanced mind. Adam and Eve did not need an outward record of God's Law. They had the sense of right and wrong so well defined in their minds that they knew right from wrong intuitively. But when they fell, they lost this balance of mind.

As we come down the centuries from their day to ours, we find that this keen sense of right and wrong has become dull. Thus in cannibal lands the inhabitants believe it right to eat each other. They think that if they feed on enemies who are strong, they will be made strong. This utter disregard for the rights of others is the spirit of selfishness. We see this spirit manifested in civilized lands also, where they do not eat up the enemy literally, but eat up his fortune, his reputation.

Our Lord said that while the Pharisees were very particular to give a full tenth of the mint, anise and cummin, yet they had omitted the weightier matters of the Law – judgment, mercy and faith. He showed that the Law which says, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," is more important than the giving of tithes. He also said that the Pharisees were full of extortion and excess, and that they strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel, that they devoured widows' houses. – Matt. 23:23-25,14.

By this our Lord meant that when a widow was left alone, with no one to look after her interests, some of these professors of religion would get possession of her property if they could. So in our day there are people who scheme to discover how they can injure their neighbor.

They do not eat the persons of their neighbors, but they eat their substance, their property. These people are cannibals in spirit.

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In proportion as we get the spirit of love, we get the spirit of a sound mind. This spirit leads us to consider what is right and what is wrong, in all the affairs of life. Not only have we the spirit of the Law, but in addition we have the spirit of the Lord to instruct us. The Law says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." The spirit of the Law says that we shall not permit wealth or anything else to take away our minds from the Lord. We today find people worshipping bonds, stocks, giving the best of their time to the worship of Mammon. They do not know what they are doing.

These people are very well illustrated by Bunyan's picture. You remember that when the pilgrims were in the house of the Interpreter, he took them into a room where there was a man with a muck-rake in his hand, drawing to himself straws, small sticks and the dust of the floor. Above his head was one with a celestial crown in his hand. This crown he proffered to the man in exchange for the muck-rake. But the man neither looked up, nor regarded what was said.

Today we see some who use muck-rakes, gathering all the trinkets of life, not knowing what to do with them after they have been accumulated. When such people die, perhaps these things will be injurious to those to whom they are left. The pilgrims had sound minds, but the man who was raking for sticks and straws and dust had an unsound mind. More or less we see all around us the spirit of an unsound mind, overlooking the things that are really valuable and grasping at trifles.

As we develop the spirit of a sound mind we get to see what things are valuable, and we look at other things as being insignificant. More and more we desire the heavenly things. But the world thinks, "Look at this dust! Is not this fine straw?" or what not. They say, "Get some

of these sticks and worm-eaten fruits that we have here." But what they strive for is all illusion.

They say of us that we are of unsound mind because we care for the better things, the heavenly things. So they said of Jesus, "He hath a devil and is mad." (John 10:20.) As the Apostle said, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God." (2 Cor. 5:13.) Others think it strange that we run not to the same excess of riot. (I Peter 4:4.) And it is true today that whoever will live godly will be misunderstood, slandered. (2 Tim. 3:12.) But it is for us to show our courage, our faith and our loyalty to the Lord and to manifest His Spirit "of power **[R5095 : page 281]** and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Tim. 1:7.) The manifestation of His Spirit will help those who are His to become "more than conquerors." (Romans 8:37.) Thus, even if we are not helping the world, we build one another up in our most holy faith. – Jude 20,21.

The spirit of a sound mind is a most wonderful manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Lord's people. It gives them much advantage every way over the remainder of mankind. It sees in the present life opportunities for the attainment of character. It broadens and deepens the mind along all good lines. It makes one less touchy in respect to his own rights, privileges and preferences, and more considerate of the rights and feelings of others.

The spirit of a sound mind makes one's judgment clearer, truer, more trustworthy than before, for it impels him to accept the instructions of the Word of God in respect to what he should and should not do, and to reject his own faulty judgment. The meek will He guide in judgment. Whatever may be the imperfection of mind and body resulting from the fall, those who receive the spirit of a sound mind are thereby made purer, kinder, gentler, less selfish and more thoughtful in regard to others. Those who are thus rightly exercised will develop the spirit of love increasingly until that which is perfect shall have come and that which is in part shall have been done away. – I Cor. 13:10.

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