

STUDY X

THE SPIRIT OF A SOUND MIND

The Spirit of God in His People Casts Out the Spirit of Fear--Mankind in General Unsound Mentally and Physically--The Sense in Which the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of a Sound Mind--The Operations Producing this Result--The Evidences of the Spirit of a Sound Mind.

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

BY EVERY law of language, the spirit of fear is here put in contrast with another spirit. If the Spirit of love, power, a sound mind, be a person, or three persons, then in all reason the Spirit of fear should be considered another person. The fallacy of such an argument is so apparent as to need nothing more than a mere statement for its disproof.

In proportion as the Lord's people are filled with his holy Spirit or influence, and are expanded more and more by it, and enlarged, they have the less of the spirit of fear. The spirit of fear in a Christian is the spirit of doubt, and marks a lack of faith, a lack of the holy Spirit. The spirit of fear is a fruitful source of evil in spiritual matters, in every feature of the Christian growth, individually and as a Church; and it is also closely identified with physical weakness and disabilities. The child of God who is filled with the holy Spirit is a giant in comparison with his own natural self; because his fears are quelled, his heart is established, his faith is

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rooted and grounded, and his soul is anchored sure and steadfast, within the veil. Thus he is held from being driven onto the rocks of disaster, when the stormy winds of trouble prevail. The holy Spirit is thus a power to those who possess it, which has often caused amazement to their enemies.

It is not our claim that the Gospel of Christ takes hold upon the strong minded and strong bodied, and that therefore those who are his are strong; quite to the contrary of this, we hold, as a matter of fact, as well as a matter of Scriptural testimony, that the Gospel of Christ usually takes hold upon the weaker ones, who feel their weakness, and who realize

more than do the stronger their need of help. Yet such is the transforming influence of the holy Spirit upon those who receive it, that in their weakness they are made strong. The weak things of this world are made mighty through God (through the Spirit, the power of God) to the pulling down of strongholds of error and sin, and to the endurance of a good fight as good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, much to the surprise of those naturally their superiors.

1 Cor. 1:27; 2 Cor. 10:4; 2 Tim. 2:3,4

This was true in times past, when the weak ones of the world espoused the cause of Christ, and were firm to the very end of life, as martyrs, enduring unwaveringly trials and difficulties before which the strongest of the world quailed. And the same thing is still true of the same class, for although the particular features of persecution have greatly changed, nevertheless it is still necessary to "endure hardness as good soldiers," and to "lay down our lives for the brethren"; and the weak things of the world, yea, those that are naught, whom God hath chosen, are still confounding the wisdom and might of this world. ***1 Cor. 1:27,28***

This Spirit of God in us is not only a Spirit of power, but a Spirit of love, says the Apostle. The love here mentioned is not the natural love possessed to some extent by all mankind, and even by the brute creation--in large measure a spirit of selfishness. In those who receive the holy Spirit of love this natural love should become intensified, broadened,

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deepened, and should more and more lose its selfish characteristics, and become a generous love, a self-sacrificing love, based not upon selfishness, but upon principles of righteousness, truth, goodness, and the possession in general of the Spirit, disposition of God. And this Spirit of love should continue, increasing and abounding more and more, until that which is perfect is come and that which is in part will be done away. ***1 Cor. 13:10***

There is no more wonderful manifestation of the holy Spirit in the Lord's people than that which the Apostle in our text denominates "the Spirit of a sound mind." The Lord's people, by nature, are not more sound of mind than are the world's people. Quite the contrary. As we have already seen, the tendency of the Gospel is to attract the more imperfect, who realize their own impotency and their need of grace and strength from on high, rather than to influence those who are of stronger and sounder minds--who, comparing themselves with others, have a self-satisfied, self-righteous

spirit or mind.

But whenever the Truth is received into good and honest hearts and brings forth its legitimate fruitage, and the Lord's people become partakers of his holy Spirit, whether naturally strong or weak, they thereby obtain the "Spirit of a sound mind"--their judgments are clearer, truer, more trustworthy, than before; because they have before their minds, first of all, the explicit directions of the Lord's Word in respect to what they should do, and what they should not do--directions which cover almost every feature and aim of life. Those who have accepted the Lord as their instructor and teacher, and who have his Spirit of obedience to the Father's will, have the "Spirit of a *sound* mind," because they do not trust merely to their own judgment, not merely to their own understanding, but by obedience to the Lord's directions they are preserved in the vicissitudes of life from the snares and difficulties which befall those who have not the guidance and direction of superhuman wisdom.

As a result of the fall of our race into sin and its condemnation,

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death, the whole world is unsound, mentally as well as physically--but in varying degrees, according to circumstances and heredity. As some are physically less sound than others, so some are mentally less sound than others, yet all are unsound, as the Scriptures declare, "There is none righteous [perfect, sound, either in mind or body], no, not one." (*Rom. 3:10*) Figuratively, all are covered with wounds and bruises and putrefying sores--mental and physical. (*Isa. 1:5,6*) The curse of sin has laid its heavy hand on the entire man--mind and body.

It is a well-recognized fact that suffering in one member of the body causes ailment to the entire body, including the mind. The mind could not be perfectly sound, while supported and nourished by an unsound body. The deranged stomach of a dyspeptic has a direct effect upon his mind, as well as upon his entire physical system. The person whose lungs are diseased cannot avoid a degree of mental impairment corresponding; likewise, when other organs, the heart, the liver, the kidneys, are diseased and perform their functions imperfectly, the effect unquestionably is disordered blood, and a disordered nervous system, the center of which is the brain. Likewise the brain that is harassed by pain or imperfectly nourished through malnutrition, or fevered through failure of the action of the secretive organs, is sure to be impaired in all its various functions: it cannot

think and reason as correctly, as logically, as if in perfect condition. Derangements of the mind are so common, that the word derangement is not applied except in quite extreme cases of more than average unsoundness, unbalance. But no one of judgment and experience will question these conclusions.

The question arises, How or wherein does the impartation of the holy Spirit to the Christian serve to repair his judgment, and become to him the Spirit of a sound mind? We answer that the divine mind is perfect, "sound," and consequently to whatever extent Christians are able to set aside their own minds or judgments, on any or all matters,

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and to accept instead the divine mind, will, judgment, for the control of their lives, to that extent they will have the *spirit* or disposition of a sound mind--God's mind. We do not mean by this that the brains of Christians undergo a change or a reversal of the order of nature in their operation, but that under the guidance of the holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Truth, such learn gradually to *rectify the errors* of their own judgments in respect to all the various questions which come before them, to harmonize with the teaching of the holy Spirit through the Word of God. To illustrate: suppose we had a clock, a poor timekeeper, and without means for regulation; suppose also that we had access frequently to a chronometer of absolute correctness, which showed us that our clock lost thirty minutes every twenty-four hours, we would learn how to correct it, by resetting every twenty-four hours. Moreover, we would learn also how to estimate its error at any point in the day. So with our judgments, and the various matters and affairs of life: when we measure them with the perfect standard, we find that we are either too fast or too slow, too weak or too strong, in our mental and physical emotions. And while we are quite unable to alter our methods of thought and action so as to have them perfect and in full accord with those of our Lord Jesus, our standard, nevertheless we are enabled to regulate our thoughts, our judgments, according to the standard which is before our minds, in a way and to a degree which those who have not this perfect standard, or who are not seeking to be regulated by it, will neither appreciate nor be able to copy.

Who has not noticed in his friends and his neighbors (as well as in himself) abundant evidence of such unsoundness of mind that they are unable to manage their affairs creditably,

and who nevertheless cause great annoyance by their attempts to manage the affairs of others? Through self-conceit they are judging others, gossiping busybodies in other men's matters, though evidencing thorough incapacity for the management of their own affairs. Is not this one evidence

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of an unsound mind--a measure of insanity? Do we not find that the same principle, carried to a still greater extreme, is noticeable in the cases of all whose judgments are so unsound that they are obliged to be confined in an asylum? Undoubtedly self-conceit, approbateness and fear are the bases of the mental troubles in the majority of those who are confined in insane asylums--many of the remainder being demoniacal obsession. If we enter an insane asylum we find some of the inmates laboring under the delusion that they are very wealthy, or that they are kings, or queens, or nobles, or princes, and correspondingly full of pride and touchiness, and easily offended. Others have endured fancied wrongs, and imagine that they are not sufficiently appreciated, and their friends are endeavoring to get them out of the way, for fear of their influence, or to hide their ability, or to prevent them from securing a fortune. Others, through fear, imagine that every one is seeking their life, that the whole world is mad, and that they alone are sane; or that God is against them, and that their fate is eternal torment, because they have committed unpardonable sins, etc.

All these are but *extremes* of mental conditions and characteristics which the observing may see about them every day in all the walks of life. The tendency of the world and the spirit of the world, with its ambitions and pride, its superstitions and errors and fears, is to intensify these natural conditions; and as a result we find that insanity in the extreme form is making rapid increase throughout the civilized world.

What these need--what we and all mankind need--are sound minds: but the time for the general healing of a world's mental and physical ailments at the hands of the Great Physician is the Millennial age, when fully introduced; but that age cannot be introduced, and its relief and blessing cannot come, until the due time. Meantime, however, the called-out Gospel Church obtains, through her Lord and his Word, *his* holy Spirit--the Spirit of *his*

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sound mind, which is the same as the Father's mind or Spirit. And in proportion as each member utilizes his privileges in this connection he will be helped over the natural mental and physical troubles which beset us in common with the whole world of mankind. The Word of the Lord through the Apostle directs us thus--"I say...to every man that is among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly [not according to the flesh, but according to his new nature] according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (*Rom. 12:3*) It is a life work with many, to conquer their too high appreciation of themselves, and to obtain the Spirit of a sound mind as respects their own talents, but they are assisted in this work of rectifying their pride, by the words of the Master, which say, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." They are assisted also by the words of the Apostle, which declare that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace [favor] to the humble." "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." *Matt. 5:5; Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5,6*

But, as a matter of fact, not many great, not many wise, according to the course of this world and according to their own estimation of their own wisdom, hath God chosen; but rather the poor of this world, rich in faith--who trust not to their own wisdom, nor to their own righteousness, but accept Christ as their wisdom, their justification, their all.

Likewise, also, those who have the "spirit of fear" are helped to counteract it by the "Spirit of truth," the "Spirit of love," if they receive it--for, "Perfect love casteth out fear." (*1 John 4:18*) As they learn to know God through his Word and the gracious plan of the ages therein set forth, it removes from their minds the great incubus of fear and dread which torments so many. It gives them instead of fear, hope--a hope that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts through the holy Spirit--the Spirit of a sound mind.

Thus also those who are too humble (too lacking in self-confidence)

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ever to accomplish anything in life, are encouraged and uplifted and made useful to themselves and to others, by the same Spirit of truth which reproves and corrects those who are over-confident, self-assertive, self-conscious, self-conceited. The former are encouraged by assurances of God's aid; the latter are restrained, moderated,

brought into subjection and taught what is pleasing to God and helpful to themselves: as the Apostle says, "If any man [confidently] think that he knoweth anything [of his own wisdom], he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

(*1 Cor. 8:2*) But transformations of character, let us remember, come not from saying, Lord, Lord, nor from having a Bible in one's possession; nor from joining a human organization called a church; but from joining Christ, and receiving from him the Spirit of his Word, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of a sound mind--his holy Spirit and the Father's.

The man who has, by the grace of God, and his own acceptance of that grace, come into possession of the Spirit of a sound mind, has much advantage every way over the remainder of mankind; for the Spirit of a sound mind is a Spirit of wisdom. Such an one values more correctly than others the things of this life--wealth, fame, social position, etc. From his new standpoint he sees things connected with all these which others do not notice. His mind, instructed from the Lord's Word, discerns that if he should amass all the wealth of the world, he could take none of it with him when he dies. He sees that fame is a very hollow and very transitory thing, and that in the busy rush of life the dead are soon forgotten. He sees that society is shallow, and its professions of esteem, etc., often insincere, and that its effervescence terminates with death--if not sooner in financial disaster. They see, in the language of the world, that--"The game [of chance for earthly fame and wealth and pleasure] is not worth the candle." And indeed, from the standpoint of the average man and woman of the world, life is but a

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game of cards--unsatisfactory in its results, because even to the most successful it means comparatively nothing in the end.

On the other hand, the children of God, now begotten of the holy Spirit to the "high calling" of this Gospel age, have something offered to them which attracts their minds away from the trifles and delusions which captivate and often frenzy the minds of mankind in general. Theirs are higher joys, higher ambitions--for a higher social standing, for greater riches and for a Kingdom--for heavenly riches and a heavenly and eternal Kingdom. The ambitions inspired by these heavenly promises are *holy* ambitions, full of mercy and good fruits, and operate along the lines of love, while the operations of the earthly ambitions are along the lines

of selfishness.

The man or woman whose aim is lifted from these earthly toys and vanities and ambitions, and placed upon the heavenly, certainly has much better opportunities for exercising a sound judgment in respect to all the affairs of this present life--because he looks upon them from a comparatively disinterested standpoint. He is in the world, and obliged to live, and to this end to provide things needful and decent and honest in the sight of all men; but being relieved of inordinate ambitions toward worldly things, he is proportionately relieved from the pressure of avarice, covetousness, pride, etc., and the better enabled to think and to act justly, and to exercise kindly sympathy toward all. This Spirit of a sound mind, or better judgment of the experienced Christian, is not reckoned as a correction or repair of his earthly or fleshly mind, but as a *new* mind or disposition, begotten in him from above by the exceeding great and precious promises of the Word of the Lord. (*2 Pet. 1:4*) He is thus helped by reason of his new disposition, the Spirit or disposition of a sound mind, the holy Spirit of the Lord. And his mind will be sound in proportion as he receives and is filled with the holy Spirit. And this will be

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rapid or slow in proportion as his love for the Lord and his righteousness is fervent or cool.

It was the Master who inquired, "For what will a man exchange his soul [his being--his existence]?" (*Matt. 16:26*)

A man with a sound mind would not exchange the most valuable thing which he possesses (his being), for anything--wealth, fame or office. And in proportion as any receive the Spirit of a sound mind, this will be their estimate.

On the contrary, we see the world today doing the reverse, and thus proving their mental unsoundness. What are known as the wisest men of the world are spending their labor for that which satisfieth not--in the accumulation of wealth; in strife for honor, social standing and preferment; in vainglorious display and pleasures of sin. Even were there no future life, all who have the Spirit of a sound mind can see that such courses are unwise; for the majority spend the present life in getting ready for enjoyment, and then lie down in death, realizing that they have not obtained what they sought--and that the wealth or fame which they leave behind them will soon be scattered, or if not scattered, that it will remain a monument of their folly, avarice and unsoundness of mind.

The world's life, devoid of reasonable aims and ambitions, is what the Apostle calls "your *vain* [fruitless] conversation [life] received by custom from your fathers." (*1 Pet. 1:18*) The custom of laboring for unworthy objects is hereditary; men do not stop to reason the matter out, but drop into the grooves in which their parents moved. But the Apostle points out that our change of course is because we have learned that we were *redeemed* by the precious blood of Christ. We have discovered through the Word of grace that the course of the world is vain and that all follow the vain course because of depravity--unsoundness of mind through the fall--and having learned of the great purchase we

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gladly consecrate to him who redeemed us and receive of his Spirit--the Spirit of a sound mind.

When the present life is viewed from the standpoint of the holy Spirit, presented in the Holy Word, it is seen to be but a schooling season, a preparation for a future life, for all who see that prize and hear the "call." However, only those whose eyes are opened and who see from the *inside* can realize how unwise is the course of the majority, who, so far from curbing their own selfish propensities, and cultivating the nobler and truer elements of their fallen nature, are in many instances undermining character, and leaving the world at death weaker in character than when they were born into it, with oftentimes a legacy of weakness also entailed upon their offspring.

On the other hand, while the Word of God and the holy Spirit of that Word restrain our ambitions for earthly riches, and assure us that the "love of money is the root of all evil" (*1 Tim. 6:10*), they protect us from the opposite extreme of slothfulness, indolence--instructing that each should provide things honest in the sight of all men, and especially for the necessities of his own household. They exhort us to be "Not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." (*Rom. 12:11*) Thus, those who have the Lord's Spirit are guarded against the folly of those who spend life with Bunyan's "muck-rake," gathering to themselves treasures of no real worth; they are also guarded against the unsoundness of indolence, and exhorted to be energetic in all good services, which will be helpful to humanity and which will meet with the divine approval, and be accepted as a service "done unto the Lord," which will have his abundant reward in the life everlasting.

The Spirit of a sound mind sees in the present life opportunities

for the attainment of riches of character, riches of grace, and for the laying up of treasures which neither

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moth nor rust will consume, but which will be enduring--eternal joys. Not that the Spirit of a sound mind leads us to live in the future, to the neglect of the present: rather it lives wisely in the present, by keeping in memory the future.

The Spirit of a sound mind broadens and deepens character along all its good lines; it not only helps its possessor to take correct views of himself, but also to take correct views of his fellows in degradation, and it enlarges his sympathies. He realizes the impairment of his own mind and body through the fall, and his own need of mercy and helpful correction, as well as the similar derangement of the whole world of mankind, and the general need for sympathy and aid for correction. As he learns to rectify the deficiencies and inequalities of his own mind, he sympathizes the more with others who are without this regulating principle, this Spirit of a sound mind, and who are hindered from accepting it by reason of the opposition of the Adversary, "the god of this world," who blinds the minds of them that believe not, lest the glorious light of divine goodness, in the face of Jesus Christ, should shine into their hearts, and should bring to them the Spirit of a sound mind. **2 Cor. 4:4**

In proportion as he develops in this holy Spirit of his adoption, a "new creature in Christ Jesus," he becomes, through its operation, gradually more patient, more sympathetic, more generous, more loving--more Godlike. And these benevolences of character will affect not only the outward acts of his life, but also his words and his thoughts. In proportion as his holy Spirit discountenances a dishonorable or dishonest action, in the same proportion it discountenances a dishonorable or a dishonest word, in respect to friend or neighbor or enemy; and similarly it discountenances the slightest injustice or unkindness of thought to any of these.

The Spirit of a sound mind will therefore gradually but surely make the husband a better husband, the father a better

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father, the son a better son, the wife a better wife, the mother a better mother, the daughter a better daughter. It will do this, because the basis of thought and word and conduct has changed from selfishness to love. The one possessed

of this Spirit of a sound mind, the holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, will, in proportion as he comes into possession of it, be less touchy in respect to his own rights, privileges, preferments, and more considerate for the rights and feelings and preferences of others. The will of the Lord must, of course, stand first, but next to pleasing the Lord he will take pleasure in pleasing others with whom he may come in contact, especially those of his own family: and in harmony with this desire to serve and to please the Lord first, and then the Lord's family, and all men as he may have opportunity, his thoughts will operate, his words be guided and regulated, and his conduct shape itself.

It does not follow that the man or woman who has received the Spirit of a sound mind will therefore be the best husband, the best wife, the best brother, the best sister, the best father, the best mother, in every particular; because, as we have already suggested, the mission of the gospel of Christ, in its effect upon the civilized world, is to take hold of the mean things of this world, and the things that are not [of value], and to uplift these in proportion as they come into consecration to the Lord, and receive the Spirit of a sound mind. On the contrary, some were better born, on a higher plane, are more inclined to self-righteousness, and to decline the assistance which the Lord offers. These may be noble husbands, noble wives, noble children, noble parents, by reason of being of more noble birth, by reason of inheriting through Christian parents minds of better poise and greater wisdom. But unless such accept the Savior, and the offer of the new mind, they are very sure to degenerate, and their kindness, gentleness, etc., to become more of a matter of outward form, covering an inward selfishness, which

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soon or later will crop out in their posterity, bringing them in turn to a lower plane.

The thought we wish to impress is that on whatever plane of mental decrepitude, immorality or unwisdom the truth and grace of God shall reach a man or woman it will lift him up and make him or her the nobler, the purer, the kinder, the gentler, the more considerate of others--in proportion as he or she receives this new mind, the Spirit of a sound mind.

The unsoundness of the human mind in general is illustrated in the matter of the reckless propagation of the human race. It progresses almost without regard to the laws of health, and almost without provision for the proper sustenance

of the offspring, and in utter violation of the laws of nature, recognized in breeding of lower animals, cattle, sheep, horses, dogs. No wonder the Apostle enjoins upon the believers the exercise of a sound mind in the use of man's highest natural power, procreation, saying, "Husbands, deal with your wives according to *knowledge*." (*1 Pet. 3:7*) If this advice were followed, if the Spirit of a sound mind prevailed, how much more consideration would be shown for delicate and overburdened wives, by husbands who truly love them--dealing with them according to knowledge.

But only the servants and handmaids of the Lord have yet received this holy Spirit of God--this Spirit of a sound mind. Thank God the time is near when through the ministries of these servants and handmaids, glorified and empowered with the King of glory, all the world shall be blessed and the Lord shall pour out his holy Spirit, the Spirit of a sound mind "upon all flesh."