

Soundness of Mind

*“God hath not
given us the spirit
of fear; but of
power, and of love,
and of a sound
mind.”*

—II Timothy 1:7

THE WORDS OF OUR TITLE

imply that a mind may also be unsound. A mind which is unable to reason properly, and thereby make good choices and come to logical and wise conclusions, may be afflicted with physical disease and impairment, such as can happen with any part of the human organism. In these instances, the individual is unable to think correctly through no fault of his own. In some cases, such as those involving people afflicted with Alzheimer's disease or severe dementia, there may be no awareness at all by the individual that their mind lacks soundness. While science continues to look for answers and cures for physical diseases of the mind, we are thankful to rest our hope in God's kingdom, which will heal all man's diseases, and he will no longer say, “I am sick.”—Isa. 33:24

There is another sense in which a mind may be unsound. Although not physically diseased, a mind may become impaired as a result of an improper

course of conduct in life, sinful influences from our surroundings, and the ever-present power of Satan, the arch-enemy of sound thinking. These aspects of our subject are those which we will presently consider. The Scriptures point out the remedy for such mental unsoundness, which if applied properly and used daily, will give us the guidance needed to “walk in wisdom.”—Col. 4:5

PAUL’S WORDS TO TIMOTHY

At the time of writing his second epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul was nearing the end of his ministry. He was not only in prison but was also out of contact with most of the brethren. He was under strict surveillance by the authorities, and anyone who visited or cared for him would be subject to close scrutiny and possibly arrest. In spite of the obvious risks, Paul did not hesitate to ask Timothy to visit him and give him much needed comfort and fellowship.—II Tim. 1:3,4

From the viewpoint of worldly thinking this action by the Apostle Paul seemed to be unwise, exposing Timothy to almost certain arrest and persecution. It would seem that Paul was not showing the real spirit of love and sacrifice. However, the Apostle associated his request with the enlightenment of mind that resulted from God’s Holy Spirit being operative in Timothy’s life. In verse 6, we read, “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”

The laying on of hands was the means whereby the apostles were authorized by God to convey the Holy Spirit to those whom the Lord had called.

(Acts 8:17; 19:6) Apparently Paul desired to remind Timothy of the great gift he had received and the responsibility associated with it. This responsibility stemmed from the enlightenment of his mind with respect to God's plans and purposes, as it does also in the individual lives of all who have been blessed with the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul expresses the thought thus: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."—I Cor. 2:16

HOLY SPIRIT'S EFFECT ON JESUS' MIND

There is no greater example of the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the mind than what we see in Jesus. Although we do not have much information concerning him as a young man, we are told that during this time, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." (Luke 2:52) This text speaks volumes if we read between the lines. It is evident that he was looked up to and was even respected by his elders and peers. To be in favor with God would seem to indicate also that Jesus was able to, and did, keep the precepts of the Law. However, he was a man, and even though perfect, was limited to human reasoning and understanding.

At the age of thirty, Jesus came to John to be baptized. John recognized him as one set apart, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) When Jesus was immersed by John in the River Jordan, the Bible states that "the heavens were opened unto him" and that John "saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon" the Son of man.

(Matt. 3:16) The thought implied in the heavens being opened to Jesus is that, because of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, the hidden things with respect to God's plans and purposes were now to be revealed to him. He was already thoroughly familiar with all that was written in God's Word. However, he did not understand the full meaning of the types and shadows and the prophecies until it was revealed to him as the result of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 40:6 is a prophecy concerning Jesus at the time of his baptism and enlightenment by the Holy Spirit: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." The phrase, "mine ears hast thou opened," has the thought of the opening of the inner ear cavity, and well pictures the opening of the mind to the revealing of truths which had previously been hidden.

This new discernment caused Jesus to understand that the sacrifices and offerings performed under the Mosaic Law did not accomplish God's ultimate purpose. It was also revealed to Jesus that he was the one pictured in the many sacrifices offered for sin under the Law and that, to fulfill these, it would be necessary for him to die as the great and only efficacious sacrifice for sin. The reaction of Jesus to this revelation of God's purpose for him is stated in these words: "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first [the Law sacrifices], that he may establish the second [the better sacrifice]." (Heb. 10:9) Thus Jesus immediately began laying down his life in the prescribed way, which finally ended in death on the cross.

These are some of the thoughts the Apostle Paul wanted Timothy to call to mind. By the Lord's grace he had been one whom God had called to be part of the spiritual seed of Abraham and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. The Scriptures had been opened to Timothy so that he could discern the will of God in his life and be confident in knowing the source of his understanding—God's Holy Spirit. It is this same spirit that motivated Jesus to obedience even unto death, and it is the also the spirit that Paul urged Timothy to stir up within himself.

NOT THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

As the apostle states in our theme text, this spirit that God has given to us through his Word is not the spirit of fear. The word translated fear in this text means "timidity." Timidity implies a lack of courage, boldness or determination. The lesson we should derive from the text is that anyone who truly has God's Spirit does not lack a strong conviction in his purpose and that his determination to carry out the Lord's instructions will never falter, regardless of the consequences.

When Jesus sent his disciples out into the various towns and cities of the Jews to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," he knew they would meet all kinds of opposition, even violence. (Matt. 10:7,16-22) Since the disciples would not receive the Holy Spirit until Pentecost, Jesus felt it was necessary to instruct them how they were to act under stress.

In verses 23-28, he said, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another. . . . The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his

master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul [being].”

Following successfully the instructions that Jesus gave manifests a mind controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is dominant over the natural fleshly inclination to escape from pain, suffering, and confrontations. To avoid those things under the circumstances Jesus outlined would manifest the spirit of fear. What have the footstep followers of Jesus to fear as far as violence to their bodies is concerned? Their bodies of flesh are already reckoned dead.—Col. 3:3

SPIRIT OF POWER

The apostle says we have been given the spirit of power. The Greek word translated “power” denotes miraculous power, usually by implication a miracle itself. The power of the Holy Spirit and its enlightening influence over the minds of the footstep followers of Jesus is truly a miracle. It reveals to us our true relationship to the Heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul expresses the thought in this way: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption [sonship], whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; . . . if so be that we suffer with him

[Christ], that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:15-17

The force of this text is that it emphasizes the reality of our sonship and the necessity for suffering to realize our hope. An adopted child may partake in all the privileges of the family, although it is not begotten and born in the family. However, we are begotten of the Spirit and are therefore sons of God by his miraculous power. (John 3:6) Thus it is the Spirit of true sonship that enables us to cry “Abba, Father.” *Abba* is the Aramaic word for Father, and when used together as “Abba, Father,” it conveys a feeling of closeness, love, confidence and trust. Its New Testament usage is only found with regard to those who have received the gift of begetting by the Holy Spirit of God. The word was also used by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, to emphasize his closeness to the Heavenly Father. “Abba, Father,” he prayed, “all things are possible unto thee: . . . nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”—Mark 14:36

The power of the Holy Spirit on our minds is evidenced in all that we see or understand. God has revealed himself to us through his Word, and we see his character in the qualities of justice, love, wisdom, and power demonstrated in his plan. Everything—whether it be the handiwork of creation, or our experiences in the narrow way—we relate to this divine arrangement which has so graciously been revealed to us and of which we have been invited to partake.

The Apostle Paul expresses the thought in a most eloquent way. Speaking of God’s grace, he says, “Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom

and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. . . . In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”—Eph. 1:8-10,13

The “holy Spirit of promise” is God’s Holy Spirit. We have been sealed with it, set apart and specially identified, showing that henceforth we are part of his family and privileged to share his thoughts. In sharing the thoughts of the Father, we are expected to bring our own thoughts into full harmony with his. We do this by looking to, and following, the example of his Son, Christ Jesus. Our goal in this, Paul says, is to bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”—II Cor. 10:5

SPIRIT OF LOVE

Our text also states that we have received the spirit of love. The spirit of love is the essence of God’s Holy Spirit. As a result of being Spirit begotten, we were given the ability to recognize and appreciate true love. We saw it manifested in its highest form in the Heavenly Father’s plan for redemption for the world, and in our Lord’s selfless sacrifice of his own life on the cross in order to provide the means for that redemption. This was done, “while we were yet sinners,” that the beneficent purposes of God toward his human creation might be realized.—Rom. 5:8,9

It follows that anyone who truly has the Lord's Spirit will feel compassion and love toward the poor groaning creation and will earnestly desire to be a part of the arrangement that God has designed to end the world's suffering. The desire to be an agent of blessing thus becomes a strong power which greatly assists us in our determination to conform our lives to the divine pattern. The Apostle John, in defining this highest form of love, states, "By this we have known love, because he laid down his life on our behalf; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John 3:16, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) Jesus said, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12,13) It is by conforming our lives to this pattern of unselfish love that we will become qualified to be an instrument of blessing in the Lord's hand in the next age.

The spirit of love manifests itself by works devoid of self-interest. We do this by serving the brethren and doing good as far as possible to all men. (Gal. 6:10) Because of our love for the Heavenly Father and his plan of salvation, we are also constrained to witness concerning his love and to tell others about the kingdom. This could bring to us suffering and persecution. We may rarely think of love in this setting. In the final analysis, however, the activities to which the highest form of love motivates us, including those which may result in suffering, will prove us as worthy followers of the Master.

The Apostle Paul exemplifies this when he states concerning his own suffering, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is

behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1:24) Here the apostle surely had in mind some of the experiences such as are recorded in I Corinthians 4:11,12 and II Corinthians 11:24-28: "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it." "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

It is no wonder that the apostle could properly admonish the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (I Cor. 11:1) All the experiences Paul recounted came as a result of his ministering to the brethren and preaching the message of the kingdom. His zeal was fueled by his love for the Heavenly Father, the brethren, and the Gospel. It was in this way that he partook of the afflictions of Christ. It was not that his suffering added anything to the efficacious merit of Christ's sacrifice, but rather that Paul and every other potential member of the body of Christ must suffer.

It is through suffering that we learn to be submissive and to develop the fruits and graces of the Spirit. All will not have the same experiences, but all must suffer in some way because of their service to the Lord. Jesus said, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.”—Mark 8:34,35

A SOUND MIND

The spirit of power and of love that has been given to us by the Lord enables us to overcome the spirit of fear. In this way, our spiritual minds are prepared to develop in a way that will enable us to make prudent judgments—that is, exercise a sound mind—on matters that are spiritual. The phrase “sound mind” in our text has the meaning of discipline, self-control, or moderation. This implies a mind that exercises control over the selfish propensities of the fallen flesh.

The process of developing a disciplined mind is outlined for us in Romans, the 12th chapter. As this process continues, it will result in far-reaching and sweeping changes of viewpoint. Apostle Paul states in verse 2, “Be not conformed to his world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” From the context of this verse, it is obvious that the renovation of our minds is associated with a complete reversal of our previous way of thinking. Who among our friends in the world would think of yielding himself as a “living sacrifice,” even for the cause of Christ? (vs. 1) As we delve

farther into the lessons of the chapter we find that those facets of character the apostle stresses we are to strive for are, in many instances, quite contrary to those which are approved by the world.—vss. 9-21

The apostle stresses this very point in another place: “For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.”—I Cor. 1:26-31, *Revised Standard Version*

The point that is of vital importance in this lesson is that we, as the footstep followers of Jesus, have been figuratively beheaded, and we have accepted Jesus as our Head. (Rev. 20:4) His wisdom in matters concerning the things of the spirit becomes our wisdom if we have been completely severed from the things of the world. Indeed, we are to develop “the mind of Christ,” the soundness of which is unflawed and perfect.—I Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5

In the verse following our theme text, Paul further admonishes Timothy: “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.”

(II Tim. 1:8) The apostle's request gave Timothy the opportunity to manifest his love for the Heavenly Father, the Truth, and his brother in Christ—Paul. If the spirit of power and of love, devoid of fear, were sufficiently in control of Timothy's heart and mind, he would exercise the spirit of a sound mind and come to visit and minister to Paul if the opportunity were made available. In spite of the consequences, he would consider that the experience was his "reasonable service."

Let us who have named the name of Christ likewise be "put . . . in remembrance" to "stir up the gift of God" which is in us. Let us put aside the spirit of fear, and exercise the spirit of power, and the spirit of love, and the spirit of a sound mind—God's Holy Spirit—to the end that we might share in his glory in the kingdom. ■