

“THE SPIRIT OF A SOUND MIND”

(Discourse by A. J. Eshelman, St. Louis convention, starting on page 34 of the 1916 convention report.)

I am delighted to be with you at this time, dear friends, and to address you upon the subject assigned me for the occasion, namely, “the spirit of a sound mind.” This, we believe to be a broadly comprehensive subject, and we trust we have your prayers for the occasion that we may have a very profitable consideration of the subject.

Our text is found in 2 Tim. 1:7: “God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind.” Unquestionably St. Paul is the greatest reasoner and logician the earth has ever known. In his text he infers that members of the human race today are troubled with a spirit of fear. And we find it even so as we look abroad in the land. This quality of mind largely predominates in the minds of the unconsecrated, the worldly. But St. Paul reasons here that the Christian is living on a higher plane. The child of God, possessing God’s holy power and influence, is a giant in comparison with his former self and the world of mankind. His fears are quelled, his heart is established, his faith is rooted and grounded and his soul is anchored sure and steadfast within the veil. Thus he is held from being driven to the rocks of disaster when the stormy winds of trouble prevail.

A spirit of fear in the Christian marks a lack of faith and a lack of the Holy Spirit, and also indicates a lack of appreciation of God’s word, as well as His providences. Those who are filled with the spirit of our Heavenly Father are a power which has often caused amazement to their enemies. The apostle argues, the spirit of divine power casts out this quality of fear. It is not our claim that the gospel of Christ takes hold upon the strong-minded and strong-bodied merely, but that those who have the indwelling spirit are made strong in him and the power of His might. The truth effects a wonderfully transforming influence when received into good and honest hearts. We remember that as in the case of all the apostles, and all the members of the body of Christ, selected during this gospel age, chiefly the poor of this world have been chosen, as the apostle reasons in 1 Cor. 1:27, 28, “God hath chosen the foolish things to confound the wise, and the weak things to confound the mighty, and the things that are not to put to naught the things that are [considered worthy of esteem in the minds of the world].” Then the weak things of this world are made mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds (entrenched weaknesses of the flesh) as well as battling against the influences of the world and the adversary. Thus by the indwelling spirit of our God we are made powerful in His might, enabling us to overcome the spirit of fear.

Similarly, the apostle says this spirit is the spirit of love. However, not the selfish love so frequently predominating the minds and hearts of the natural being, but the love which is

from above, all other loves excelling. Based upon the principles of truth and righteousness, this love becomes deepened, broadened and intensified. This 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) The effect of this love is shown us in St. John's writing (1 John 4:18): "perfect love casts out fear." Thus we see these two qualities, power and love, from above, have much to do with the warfare in overcoming the spirit of fear.

But the greatest manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Lord's people is found in the latter part of our text, denominated the spirit of a sound mind. This has much to do in overcoming the spirit of fear. We do not mean, however, that the gospel of Christ in selecting the members of the royal priesthood, selects merely those who are naturally more perfect, more sound physically or mentally. On the contrary, as we noticed before, the very reverse is generally true. God hath chosen the weak things to confound the mighty, lest any flesh should glory in His presence. Whenever the truth is received into good and honest hearts, and brings forth its legitimate fruitage, whether naturally strong or weak (mentally), their judgments then become clearer, truer, more trustworthy than before. This is because they have the explicit directions of the Lord's word in respect to what they shall do in thought, word and deed, respecting their Christian living.

As a result of the fall of our race into sin and death, the whole world is unsound mentally and physically. As the apostle informs us in Rom. 3:10, "There is none perfect, no not one [none sound either in mind or in body]." Figuratively, all are covered with wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. (Isa. 1:5, 6) The curse of sin has laid its heavy hand upon the entire man, mind and body.

The question then obtrudes itself upon our minds, wherein or how does the impartation of the holy Spirit to the Christian serve to repair his judgments, and become to him the spirit of a sound mind? We answer, the divine mind is absolutely perfect, sound, logical and in proportion as we empty our minds of selfishness, and of our own judgments, in that proportion we can be filled with the Lord's mind. Thus we learn gradually to rectify the errors of our own judgments and this holy power and spirit of God becomes to us the spirit of a sound mind—God's mind. Let us illustrate practically, how this can be accomplished: Suppose we have a clock, and we recognize it to be a very inaccurate timekeeper. Suppose again our neighbor lends us his chronometer, and we hang the two side by side, thus gauging our clock by the exactness of the chronometer. We learn that our clock loses 30 minutes every 24 hours. We observe on the back of our clock a little hand called the regulator. On either side we find the initials, one F, the other S. If our clock is too slow we move the regulator towards "fast"; if our clock is too fast we move the regulator towards "slow". Thus, we mean to represent our physical and mental emotions, which by continuous, persistent effort can be regulated by the perfect standards the Lord has placed before us in word and in example.

I was greatly amused on this speaking tour to notice the different temperaments of the Lord's people, laboring side by side in the service of Him whom we love supremely. One will be very emotional, rather impulsive and eccentric at times. Unto such the Lord would say, move the regulator to slow, if you please. Another brother in the same ecclesia may be too deliberate and slow in consideration. Unto such the Lord would say, move the regulator towards fast. There is an inclination in some of the Lord's people, in that they wish to rectify such mistakes in *others*. But we should remember that the Lord is working in each of us individually, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Let us leave this work of correction unto Him who is able to do it unerringly.

We see many evidences of unsoundness in the world today. Who has not noticed in his friends and neighbors (as well as in himself) abundant evidence of such unsoundness at times that they are unable to manage their own affairs creditably, needing the assistance of guardian, relatives and friends? Who has not noticed that many such people, nevertheless through self-conceit, attempt to manage the business affairs of others? These are busy-bodies in other men's matters though evidencing thorough incapacity to attend to their own affairs. Is this not a measure of insanity—the evidence of an unsound mind? Do we not find the same principle carried to a still greater extreme in the cases of those so mentally unsound as to be driven into an asylum? The asylum statistics tell us that a large majority apparently are driven there by self-conceit, approbateness and fear, the remainder being generally demonical obsessions. Let us notice: in the asylum you will find one individual laboring under the delusion that he is a king or extremely wealthy, and that all other individuals should bow in subserviency to him. Again we find others securing a fortune in delusion, and imagine the entire human family is opposed to them. Others think the whole world has gone mad and they alone are sane. Others think they have committed the unpardonable sin, and through fear of eternal torment think they are eternally lost.

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. Rapidly the human race is being driven to the rocks of disaster, mentally, morally and physically.

What these need, as well as all mankind, are sound minds. The gospel church obtains through her Lord and His word, His holy Spirit, the spirit of His sound mind, which is the same as the Father's mind or spirit. 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. Those who are too self-confident and esteem themselves too highly are blessed by the Scriptural admonitions and are enabled to think only properly of their own abilities and talents, etc. The apostle says, Rom. 12:3, "I say to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought, but to think soberly, etc." Again the Master says, "Blessed are the meek

for they shall inherit the earth.” The writer, James, enjoins upon us, “God resisteth the proud and giveth grace unto the humble.” The apostle Peter then admonishes “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time.”

Likewise, those who are too humble (too lacking in self-confidence, to accomplish anything in life: these are encouraged and uplifted and made useful to themselves and others. The Lord has promised them “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” “The Lord is very nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and of a contrite spirit.” “My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.” Thus we see the over-confident in themselves, as well as the too humble ones, are both brought to an equilibrium. The apostle James says (1:9), “Let the brother of a high degree rejoice in that he is brought low, and let the brother of a low degree rejoice in that he is exalted.” St Paul then tells us that a thorn in the flesh was given him, etc., lest he should be exalted above measure. The “measure” we believe to be the measure of his apostleship. Let us each by the spirit of a sound mind properly consider and estimate our own talents and abilities, as God hath given them. 1 Peter 4:11.

You remember Solomon’s prayer (when he prayed for wisdom) is typical of the real heart desire of all of God’s people. What we all want and what we all need is more of the spirit of a sound mind in all the walks of life.

The Christian possessing the spirit of a sound mind has many advantages over the world in many respects, especially as respects wealth, fame and honor, and in general the good things of this life. The Christian, having the mind of the Lord is proportionately relieved from the pressure of inordinate desires permeating the minds and hearts of earth’s millions today. He recognizes that if he could amass all the wealth in the world, and all the honor the world could bestow, he could take none of it with him when he passes away. This reminds us of a little episode we wish to relate at this time: two Irishmen were discussing the estate of a deceased rich man. One inquired of the other “How much did he leave?” He responded quickly, “He left it all, he took none with him.” Every hope that terminates at death is entirely unavailing and fruitless. The professions of esteem and effervescence of joys the world gives all terminate in death. But the Lord’s people have higher joys, hopes, aims and ambitions; they are placing their affections upon heavenly things, laying up treasures where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through and steal. These view the affairs of this present life differently from the average person’s judgment. They recognize it is imperative upon them to provide things decently and honestly in the sight of all men. They are in the world and obliged to live, but all the while they are seeking chiefly the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, recognizing the promise on their behalf that God will supply all things needful.

It was Jesus 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 his being for anything, wealth, fame or office, but we see what are considered to be the wisest and more intelligent persons living, spending their time and energies in the accumulation of wealth, social standing and preferment; in vainglory, display and pleasure of sin. Sooner or later these will recognize that they have not obtained what they sought, and the wealth or fame they leave behind them will remain a perpetual 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) Through environment and heredity many are inspired to thus spend their entire lives in the acquiring of a few joys and pleasure of this life. Thus many leave the world weaker in character than when they entered it, and additionally oft-times, leaving a legacy of weakness upon their offspring.

The world in general think the Christian is unsound. An illustration of this: I remember a young lady in the Truth, whose former friend and companion judged her to be unsound because of forsaking the joys and pleasure of life in the interests of the Bible Students' meetings and the service of the Truth in general. He had paid great devotion and love towards her, and when he recognized her love for him and for earthly things getting cool, he inquired of her, "What have I done that you are thus led to forsake me measurably?" She answered, "I have now set my affections upon heavenly things and consecrated myself to God." He said, "You come and marry me and I will help you get rid of all that consecration business and foolishness." He further asked, "Do you mean to tell me that you appreciate those Bible Students more than me?" She replied, "Yes." "Do you mean to tell me you enjoy that meager lunch that those folks provide between meetings more than going with me to the swellest dinner that the hotel can spread before us?" She said, "I do." He said, "You surely are losing your mind." This reminds us of the other illustration used: the unsound man thinks the whole world has gone mad and he alone is sane. So in this case, we are the sane ones because of having the mind of our God. The world of mankind will get their healing, mentally as well as physically, in the new dispensation; they will then say too, this is our God, we will love and serve Him.

On the other hand, the Lord's people having His Holy Spirit, the spirit of a sound mind, are spared from going to the opposite extreme. While they recognize that the love of money is the root of all evil, yet the Lord's mind protects them from slothfulness, indolence and indifference respecting this life. They remember the Scriptural admonition not to be 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 as Bunyan's "muck-rake," gathering unto themselves treasures of no real worth. They consider a nickel to be worth 5¢ and a dollar 100¢. They recognize that all moneys belong to Him whom we love supremely, and should be wisely expended on our own

persons as well as in the interests of His service, in other words, as done unto the Lord in thought, word and deed—glorifying God in whatsoever we do or say.

While we cannot now live in the future and in the heavenlies, yet the Christian is inspired to live wisely and discreetly in respect to all the vicissitudes of life, having in mind the future, the eternal reward.

The spirit of a sound mind broadens and deepens the character along all good lines. It not only assists us in taking the correct view of ourselves, recognizing our own deficiencies and disabilities, mental as well as physical, but additionally helps us to take the proper view of our brethren and the world of mankind. Gradually this love becomes patient, more loving, more sympathetic, more generous, more Godlike. It leads us to not only discountenance evil or malicious words or deeds, but assist us in regulating our very thoughts, discountenancing evil sentiments, intentions, motives. The spirit of a sound mind will, therefore, gradually but surely, make us better husbands, better wives, better brothers and sisters, better neighbors, and better members of the ecclesia. It will do this because the basis of thought and word and conduct has changed from selfishness to love. We do not mean that it will make of us the best characters in every particular, because as we have already seen 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, of the things that are not (of value) and to uplift them in proportion as they come into consecration to the Lord and receive the spirit of a sound mind. Thus we should strive diligently to have the truth and its sanctifying influence permeate our very lives, thoughts, words and deeds, giving evidence that we have been with Jesus and have learned of him; that we have imbibed into our being the spirit of his sound mind.

The thought we wish to impress is that on whatsoever plane of mental decrepitude, immorality, or unwisdom the truth and grace of God shall reach a man or woman, it will lift them up, and make him or her the nobler, the truer, 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.

During this gospel dispensation only the “servants” and “handmaidens” of the Lord have yet received this Holy Spirit of a sound mind. Thank God, the time is near when through the ministry of these, God’s spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, and all shall know Him from the least unto the greatest of them. The effect this will have upon the world is prophetically stated in Mal. 3:18: “Then shall ye return and discern [by the spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of God coming upon the members of the fallen human race] between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not.” In days gone by, Satan had so blinded men’s minds that they knew not the difference between righteousness and unrighteousness—between truth and error. Some were led to persecute God’s people, as also they did Jesus, thinking (through

unsoundness) they verily did God service. In the new dispensation they will understand between the righteous (one Jehovah) and the wicked (one Satan). They will also discern between the righteous servants and the wicked ones. Thus the world of mankind will be helped, mentally as well as physically.

Just a few thoughts in respect to our own selves in a practical way, as we endeavor to develop this spirit of a sound mind. Sometimes we find the Lord's people evidencing a little unsoundness in attempting to look into the unexpected things of the future, and unsoundly worrying or fearing because of the things that have not yet happened. We believe the spirit of our Heavenly Father to teach us to live one day at a time. If we fight faithfully the battles of today unquestionably we will be ready for the struggle of tomorrow. The prophet David gives expression to this matter in Psalms 90:12: "So teach us to number our days and apply unto our hearts wisdom [soundness of mind]." We cannot number our days in the sense of understanding how many days remain for our character development, but we can number each day with its privileges and blessings. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Let us each apply this scripture for our encouragement in the various experiences of life: "As *my* days so shall *my* strength be." Our Father will never leave us nor forsake us.

Our Heavenly Father is very much pleased to have us exercise the spirit of His sound mind in respect to our little privileges of service, whether we colporteur, lecture, volunteer, or whatever service it may be. Our Father is carefully watching our motives. Let us not only seek to serve Him in thought, word and deed, but to do so acceptably in the spirit of Heavenly wisdom, soundness and logic. "For God hath not given unto us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Amen.

SOMETHING INTERESTING

Brother Russell.—I am very pleased to be with you all, and pleased with the many testimonies I have heard, and rejoice with you all in the love of our great heavenly Father, and the great assurance he gives that all things are working together for good to those who love him, the called ones according to his purpose. Then in this city of the "saints" from the standpoint of our Mormon friends, we find a great many things in their proposition, as we find in other propositions, which we think are unreasonable and contrary to the Lord's Word; but notwithstanding, we can see that various companies of God's people from time to time have been striving after the truth, and we may assume that the Mormons as well as other people, are sincere; and the only explanation we have of all these various churches and systems all of which are to our understanding contrary to God's Word, God's plan, is, that they have crystallized around some ridiculous thought, some human idea, and that the adversary has been the great helper of mankind in this way; but he could not entirely blind us to everything; he had to admit some little truth here and there,

but he covered it all up with errors, falsehoods and misrepresentations. So our friends of Salt Lake, for instance, have the thought that the Bible teaches of saints and the gathering of saints, all of which we agree to—just the same as many Presbyterians, and Methodists, and Baptists, and so on—and yet there is a lack of that beauty, and fullness, and harmony that comes from a knowledge of the truth. I am glad to have the privilege of being here this morning and adding my testimony.

(10:30 A. M. Praise and Testimony Meeting led by Brother G. DeFreese of Dallas, Texas. Convention at Salt Lake City, Utah, June 21, 1911. Page 68 of the 1911 Convention Report.)

Sincerity is to speak as we think, to do as we pretend and profess, to perform and make good what we promise, and really to be what we would seem and appear to be.—
Tillotson.

The only conclusive evidence of a man's sincerity is that he give himself for a principle.—Lowell.