

The Spirit Of Bondage

Spirit of Fear

Martin G. Collins

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As I visited the brethren in Africa a few weeks ago, I found that they have the same concerns and fears that we have here in the United States. Brethren around the world have a certain amount of anxiety, even fear, at any moment in time, no matter where we live—and the reasons are many.

Fear puts us into a condition of bondage. Quite often, our fear is a fear of the unknown: What does the future hold for me? What should I do about this illness? How can I stand this pain any longer? Why am I having this trial? What have I done wrong? How can I overcome this problem I have? Where will my next meal come from? Am I worthy to escape the horrible things of the Tribulation? And on and on the list goes of the things that worry us.

The origin of human fear in the Bible is the result of sin and can be traced from the time of Adam. After he ate of the forbidden fruit, he responds to God by saying, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid.” It is no exaggeration to say that after that terrifying moment in the garden, the human race has lived with the constant possibility and even threat of being afraid.

There are many forms of fear, some positive, some good; but most are of a negative nature. We know that a reverential fear of God is a good fear and is essential to a healthy and right relationship with our God. Although there is a desirable reverential fear of God, the Bible also portrays God’s actions as being causes of terror, especially, but not only, for those who do not obey God and even for those who do not trust God.

Hebrews 10:26-31 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

For those who deliberately continue sinning after knowing the truth, there is no other sacrifice that will cover these sins, only judgment. The word *fearful* here is also rendered *terrifying* in other translations. The same Greek word is used in both verse 27 and in verse 31. It does not mean, in general terms, something very bad, but specifically, a thing to be feared. The word *fall* in verse 31 seems to be too weak for this context; the wording in the Greek is much more pointed than in the English. It may be better to restructure the words in this verse to express some degree of aggressive control. For example, “If the living God grabs hold of a person, it is something to be greatly feared.” Or in another version, “If the living God seizes a person who is sinning willfully, it is something terrifying.”

But we did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, or in other words, we did not receive a spirit that makes us a slave again to fear.

The apostle Paul saw the hopelessness of the pointless life of the world around him and realized that God’s people can easily slip into anxiety and even fear. Therefore, he made a great effort to be encouraging and to carefully point us toward our hope. Notice what he wrote to the Christians in Rome:

Romans 8:12-14 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Why did the apostle Paul make this statement? What principle was he trying to teach? The answer is given in verse 15.

Romans 8:15-17 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

In verse 15, the word *fear* is from the Greek word, *phobon*, whose root means to be put in fear, alarm, or fright; to be extremely afraid, fearful, terrified. For, Paul says, the spirit which you have now received is not a spirit of slavery, to you once more in bondage to

fear. Apparently, it is possible to slip back into fear, into that bondage. In other words, *for* links the statement up with something that has gone before, and Paul has a definite point in mind in writing these words.

He is anxious to save the Roman Christians from a spirit of discouragement, a spirit of depression; from a spirit of fear. They may have been suffering from it at that time, or even if they were not at that moment, he seems concerned that they may succumb to it sometime in the future, as we do in this day and age as well.

He wants to provide them and us with a solution for this spiritual depression and fear, against the spirit of bondage, the spirit of defeat, the spirit of discouragement that, as we have seen, is always threatening us in God's Church and in the Christian life.

Paul always places a powerful statement like this within some context as he warns us about a potential problem. He does not just suddenly throw out a statement like this and not connect it with some very practical solution. It is important to bear in mind that these admonishments and doctrines are always introduced with some practical purpose in view, with a pastor's concern for the members. These letters are pastoral letters, written primarily because Paul was concerned to help people to rejoice in the truth and to live God's way of life.

What is the cause of the potential discouragement and fear in this case? It is nothing less than, in the positive sense, the challenge of living God's way of life; in the negative sense, it is the problem of dealing with sin. Paul has been dealing with that problem from the beginning of Romans 6, and he is still dealing with it here in chapter 8. The people to whom he is writing have been converted and have believed in Jesus Christ, but now they are up against the challenge of living this new way of life, which they have received in a world that is antagonistic and totally opposed to them.

They have to live it also in the face of certain things that they find within their own nature. It is a fight; it is a battle. There is a temptation to sin outside in the world, and also inside them. They are concerned about following Jesus Christ and living their lives as He lived His life in the world.

It is very often face-to-face with that particular challenge that discouragement tends to come in, and this is a very common problem, particularly with the conscientious-type of person who takes God's truth very seriously and is trying very hard to live God's way of life.

What is the essence of this problem? It is that there is a failure on their part to realize

certain truths concerning what is possible for us as Christians, and it is ultimately a failure to understand doctrine; it is another failure in the area of faith. People often fail to realize that they have to apply their faith, and others get into trouble because they do not see that they have to continue and persist with this application of faith. It is not enough to stand well in place, but we have to go on, and we cannot relax for a moment. We have to be constantly, persistently, pursuing God's way of life.

The difficulty seems to be a failing to realize that faith must be used. If we do not use it, it will not help us. Failure to understand...that is one of the strangest things about us, and the result is sin.

Have you ever found yourself reading a scripture, which you have read many times before and which you thought you knew, and suddenly finding that it becomes alive and reveals something in a way that it never has before to you? That happens to every one of us in God's Church as we read scriptures. Every time we read it, we can apply it to something else in our lives, or in a different way. We must all have had this kind of experience many times. The inspired written Word of God is dynamic; it is not static, it does not just sit there, but it is alive, with the Spirit of God, in the help that it gives. There is always something different to learn every time we go back to read and study it, and the principles within it apply universally.

But how easy it is to read the scriptures and give a kind of superficial agreement to the truth we find there, and yet not use what it tells us. That is the very essence of this particular problem that we are considering now, because it always tends to produce what Paul calls a spirit of bondage. "You have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear," Paul says. What does Paul mean by "the spirit of bondage"?

He is referring to the danger of having a servant's spirit, a serf-like spirit and attitude. The spirit that binds is the spirit of a slave, and that produces only fear. The slave attitude generally arises from the tendency to turn God's way of life and living the Christian life into a burden of servile toil. We heard some of that in the sermonette today, in reference to the Pharisees and what they did with portions of God's truth.

The slave is under constant fear and anxiety, but the spirit of adoption is the spirit of freedom, and of confidence. It is the spirit of children and not slaves.

In their former state, under the threat of final punishment under the law, and prior to their receiving God's spirit, the Romans who became Christians were in a state of servitude. Servitude often had a persistent tendency to produce anxiety and fear. Every sinner is subject to such fear, because deep down within himself, he knows he is sinful.

God has made sure of that; it is deeply embedded in everyone's mind. Whether he wants to or not, he has an inner fear of punishment, especially of God's judgment.

But there is so much denial in this world that people have convinced themselves, as Satan has himself, who is the father of lies. He has lied to himself; he calls people to lie to themselves—that there are no consequences for their actions.

God is angry with the person who refuses to obey him, and his conscience troubles him. He may lie to himself that nothing bad will happen to him, but he cannot rid himself of the guilt and fear. But that is not the case with the Christian.

The apostle Paul's associate Timothy had every reason to be encouraged and to have spiritual enthusiasm in his ministry when Paul wrote his second epistle to him. Paul loved him and prayed for him. But Timothy's experiences in growing up in the church and through his early life had been preparation for his ministry. Paul was confident of the genuineness of Timothy's faith; the spirit within him would give all the power needed. Notice what Paul advised the pastor Timothy:

II Timothy 1:6-7 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

These three virtues, each supplied through God's spirit, should characterize the Christian. The Greek for the term *fear* is *deilia*. A Biblical synonym is timidity. In non-Biblical literature it refers to one who flees from battle. It has a strong derogatory sense, referring to cowardice. In stark contrast, a mark of the Holy Spirit is boldness.

Proverbs 28:1 The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.

We know lions to be the kings of the jungle.

Notice what happened to Christ's disciples when they received the Holy Spirit:

Acts 4:31 And when they [that is, the disciples] had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

In what sense is the Christian bold? Some have made the mistake of thinking that it means to speak or teach in a forcefully and in-your-face way, cramming one's own interpretation of the Bible down someone's throat. Of course, it does not mean that; boldness is not an offensive arrogance at all. Godly boldness is tempered with love, humility, meekness, and prudence.

Notice the three virtues from II Timothy 1:7. First, the virtue of power. God's Spirit provides the power to encounter enemies and dangers, and the power to bear up under trials. The power to triumph in persecutions; it inspires the mind with righteous courage.

It is the Holy Spirit that empowers us to be able to serve and worship God in spirit and in truth. By it, we can overcome fear and weakness. It gives us power for witness and for service as Christ reveals.

Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

That happened to them, as recorded in Acts 4:31.

It is futile for us to try to serve and worship God without that spiritual power. Talent, training, and experience cannot take its place. Not even a highly intellectual mind can live acceptably to God without this bold power of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to completely or fully please God without that.

The second virtue mentioned is love. God's spirit provides the love necessary for true sacrifice to God and to others. The tendency of this also is to cast out fear and to make the mind bold and steady. Nothing will do more to inspire courage, to make a person fearless of danger or ready to endure privation and persecution, than love. Even the most timid person is empowered and motivated to use bold speech and action for the sake of the love of God, the love of a spouse, children, friends; the love of the Church, the love of country, the love of something we hold very dear, especially when his loved ones are insulted or assaulted. The love of Christ and the truth steels the nerves and motivates that Christian to succeed in great spiritual accomplishments. Also, love sustains the heart during its deepest sadness and distress and fear, because it casts out fear.

God's love flows to us through His spirit. If we have love for others, who are both inside and outside the Church, we will be better able to endure suffering and to accomplish the

work of God. True Christian love, energized by the Spirit, enables us to sacrifice for others and not be afraid while doing it. In contrast, selfishness leads to fear because if we are selfish, we are interested only in what we will get out of serving. Self-absorbed people are afraid of losing prestige, and power, and money.

The third virtue is a sound mind. The Greek word translated *sound mind* suggests one of a sober mind, a person of forethought and discretion. The state of mind indicated here is a well-balanced mind that is under the right influences. A sound mind sees things righteously and justly, in their true scope and right relationship. It is not overly emotional and excessively excitable. A well-balanced mind considers the end result and knows that all things must be done in their proper place and at their proper time. A sound mind puts the spiritual things first and then the physical. This word is related to the words *sober* and *sobriety* that we often find in I Timothy and Titus.

Self-discipline may be a slightly better translation of *sound mind* in some cases. It describes the person who is sensibly minded and balanced, who has his life under control. The Amplified Version reads, “calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control.”

Philippians 2:5-8 tells us that we are to have the same mind as Christ, characterized by humility and obedience. That mind of Christ is a stable mind; it is a sound mind, and it is characterized by humility and obedience, which we should have as well if we want to have that sound mind.

Let us move on to the spirit of adoption, which involves the same three virtues and more.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

The Spirit of adoption signifies affection, love, and confidence, which have relevance to children, not the servile, trembling spirit of slaves, but the temperament and affection of sons. The word *adoption* in the New Testament means the giving to anyone the name, and place, and privileges of a son who is not a son by birth.

There are three general types of adoptions mentioned in scripture. Natural adoption is the first. For example, Pharaoh’s daughter adopted Moses, and Mordecai adopted Esther. There is also national adoption: God adopted Israel. The third is spiritual adoption; this is an act of God’s grace by which He brings us into the number of His

redeemed family and makes us partakers of all of the blessings He has provided for us. Adoption represents the new relationship into which the believer is introduced by justification and the privileges connected with it

Privileges are very important to understand. We have so many wonderful privileges to be thankful for. This includes receiving God's special love; a spiritual nature; member status in His family; physical and spiritual protection; consolation; fatherly discipline; and a future glorious inheritance. All wonderful and positive things and much, much more than that.

We come into God's family by birth, but the instant we are initially born from above into the family, God adopts us and gives us the position of an adult son. A baby cannot walk, speak, make decisions, or draw on the family wealth, but the believer can do all these things the instant he is initially born from above. He can walk, and he can be led by the spirit. The verb *led* in Romans 8:14 means willingly led. It says there, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." So willingness is involved in that.

We yield to the Spirit, and it guides us by God's Word, day by day. We are not under bondage to the penalty of the law and afraid to act. We have liberty of the spirit and are free to follow Christ. We can also speak; we cry, "Abba, Father." But could a new-born human baby look up and greet his father like that? Of course not.

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

First the Spirit says, "Abba, Father" to us, and then we say it to God. *Abba* is a very endearing name or term, similar to *Papa*.

A baby cannot withdraw money from the bank or write checks, but the child of God, by faith, can draw on his spiritual wealth, which we receive from God, because he is an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. The spirit of adoption enriches our lives and leads us into doing the will of God.

Christ teaches us through the spirit with the written Word of God, and then we receive God's spiritual wealth by faith. What a thrilling thing, and a tremendous blessing it is, to have the spirit of adoption at work in our lives! We must appreciate this and thank God for this glorious privilege, because it is glorious; it is beyond anything that we can imagine humanly. We must not allow ourselves to succumb to spiritual defeat. Submitting to God is the same as yielding to God's spirit, which strengthens our faith,

enabling us to overcome our discouragement and fears.

Through adoption, God treats us as His children and He receives us into His intimate relationship, though we were by nature strangers and enemies. This implies several things: we, by nature, had no claim on Him; therefore, the act of adoption is one of kindness, mercy, and love. We are now under His protection and care. We are obligated to manifest toward Him the spirit of children and yield to Him in obedience.

Notice what Paul says about this:

Galatians 4:1-7 Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ["Under the law" means under the penalty of the law.] And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

What a privilege, and an honor, and a blessing! Words cannot express how wonderful that is. As children who need protection and help, the normal spirit of a child of God is to express toward God the feelings due to a father: to call upon God with an attitude of affection and endearing confidence and to seek His protection and support. We have assurance through faith that we are God's children. Hebrews 10:22 says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." The full assurance of faith means unwavering confidence, a fullness of faith in God which leaves no room for doubt. So many things in life are an issue of faith.

What parent would feel that his child came with any right feelings and attitude, to ask a favor of him, who did not have complete confidence in him? And would a child even bother to ask? God's family is a spiritual organism; therefore, as His children, we are in a spiritual relationship in which we learn and acquire the characteristics of God's spiritual family. The loss of those characteristics causes dissatisfaction, followed by division within the Church. In reality, we regress back to the spiritual characteristics of Satan, our former degenerate father.

Before God intervened in our lives, we, too, were the children of Satan, because we

were exhibiting his spiritual characteristics. However, God began to redeem us and call us into a relationship with Him, which was symbolically an adoption. God was not our original father, but He took on that role after He extracted us from the clutches of Satan, sin, and this world. Of course, in a physical sense, God is our Father. But Satan was our spiritual father before we were in the church—at least he tried to be. But God is now our spiritual Father.

The characteristics of God's spiritual family are manifested in living a holy, Christian life. It is not just a great task that we have to take up and apply to ourselves; to do only that is to fall short of our duty and potential. Holiness is not a chore; it is not something that we plan and organize in our lives and merely introduce certain disciplines to enable us to carry it out. That is what members of mainstream Christianity do: They depend upon their own efforts to make themselves holy. Of course, that does not work; it is something God does with us.

Israel was called to be a holy people; meaning, on the one hand, they are to be different and distinct from other peoples on the basis of the relationship with God, as we are as well. But there is an added ethical dimension: there is to be a moral and just difference in Israel. As a holy people, Israel is to reflect the moral holiness of God. Similarly, but even more so, members of God's church are called "the saints," and we are to be holy in character and our behavior is to reflect God's inspiration in us through His spirit. This holiness is to reveal itself in perfect moral integrity or purity, and in the manifestation of the gifts of the spirit.

Isaiah 26:12 Lord, You will establish peace for us, for You have also done all our works in us.

Yes, we do make effort; we may make a lot of effort, but it is God who is actually doing all of our works in us. All that God can do and all the He has promised to do will be done according to what He has done, by the power of the Holy Spirit, which works strongly in the children of God.

Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power [that is, of the Holy Spirit] that works in us...

We have our responsibility to do the best that we can, but it is God who works in us.

Philippians 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with [and I will add “reverential”] fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

This spirit of adoption is in stark contrast to the spirit of bondage. The spirit of bondage always brings with it, and in its train, a spirit of fear; and we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.

In what sense does the spirit of bondage produce a spirit of fear? In the first place, it tends to introduce a wrong fear of God. There is a right fear of God, and we neglect and ignore that to our own peril. There is also a wrong fear of God, and that is a cowardly fear; a fear that has torment; a fear without perfect love.

I John 4:17-18 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Not only is there faithlessness involved, but we are not perfect in love either, they go hand-in-hand. People with the wrong kind of fear are those who regard God as a taskmaster, as someone who is constantly watching to discover faults and blemishes in them, and to punish them accordingly. Others think of God as a stern law-giver, far away and at a distance.

It is not only a fear of God; it is also a fear of the greatness of the task. Having outlined the task themselves, they begin to fear it, and that is why they think it can only be lived if you segregate yourself from the world. The extreme of this is that a person cannot possibly be in business or engage in any profession, and live the Christian life. That is totally unbalanced; it is not the life of a sound mind.

As a result, it becomes a kind of dread and terror. They are afraid of it, and that is their attitude toward God's way of life. It is a burden to them, and they see no joy in it, because of the gigantic nature of the task. It is something that fills them with a spirit of fear, and they are spiritually in trouble about themselves and the possibility of ever really living this life as it should be lived.

Another way in which the spirit of fear manifests itself is that people tend to be afraid in

the wrong way of the power of Satan. Let me qualify that by saying there is a right fear of Satan and his demons. You will find that right fear of Satan mentioned in Peter's first epistle and also in Jude's.

I Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. [Remember, we are given power, as a lion, if we have God's Holy Spirit.] Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

At the beginning of this sermon, I said that when I was in Africa, I found the same fears and the same concerns, as I do here in the United States.

Jude 9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

There are superficial, spiritually ignorant people who make jokes about the devil simply because they are totally ignorant of him and his power. On the other hand, we must not be subject to a cowardly fear of Satan and his demons. Superficial Christians are afraid not only because they are aware of demonic power, the spiritual power set against them, but they are equally afraid of sin which is within themselves, and they spend their time denouncing themselves and obsessing about their own sinfulness instead of doing something about it.

We must be balanced, and a Christian must be aware of his own human tendency towards sin. People who are not very aware of indwelling sin are either just beginning to understand God's truth or are very weak in the faith. The spirit of fear which results from the spirit of bondage in this type of Christian is ultimately a fear of failure. They doubt that they can live God's way of life. So much is expected; they see the standard of righteousness as too high. The fact is, it is impossible to reach God's standard of righteousness without God's help through the Holy Spirit.

The spiritually weak Christian all but gives up trying to rise to such great heights of character, because he humanly reasons and focuses on the fact that God's standard of righteousness cannot be reached by human beings. With this consciousness of his own weakness, and of the greatness of the task, and the power of Satan against him, he enters into or remains in this spiritual bondage and is held down, troubled, worried, and

full of fears.

It is to those people in that condition that the apostle Paul turned to and said, "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear." "Yes, you were in this spiritual bondage and fear, but you have been brought out of it. Why go back to it?" That is what Paul is telling us.

What is the antidote to this condition? It is that we must realize and understand the truth concerning the power of the Holy Spirit within us. That is the apostle Paul's message, and that works out in two ways as two principles. The first principle is that as we confront the seemingly overwhelming task of denying ourselves and suffering with Jesus Christ. We must realize that we are to walk through this world as Christ walked. It sounds so simple, but if you look at Christ's life and how He never sinned, it just looks overwhelming to the average human being.

Once we have been baptized and have received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have all the power we need to repent of and overcome our own human nature, Satan, sin, and the world. Paul deals with the challenge of how to stop living according to the flesh by crediting God's spirit.

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear...

We must understand that we are not living by ourselves, and that it is an issue of faith. We cannot allow ourselves to think of this great Christian life of ours as if we were alone and by ourselves, because we are not. We know that we are forgiven, and we thank God that our sins are blotted out and washed away, and that we can call upon God in genuine repentance for the forgiveness of the occasional sin that we inadvertently commit as we go on through life.

But that is not all of the help that we get. We are not then left to live God's way of life on our own. If you think that, it is not surprising that you are in a spirit of bondage and fear, because the whole thing is entirely hopeless. But you are not hopeless, because the spirit of God dwells in you, if you are one of God's saints.

In reality, Paul deals with this right through the entire 8th chapter of his epistle to the Romans. For example, he says:

Romans 8:3-4 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

What does Paul mean by “what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh”? He means that the law cannot save anybody. The law cannot enable anybody to live the Christian life, because of the weakness of the flesh. There is no flesh in the law; you obviously cannot talk about the weakness of the “flesh of the law.” What it means is the law was given, but the weak man is commanded to keep it. The weakness of the flesh is in the man, not in the law. The law is not weak; it is the man who has to carry it out who is weak.

Picture a man digging a garden with a shovel, and as he kept digging, the handle of the shovel kept breaking. He pointed out that there was nothing wrong with the shovel as such, it was alright, but the handle was too weak.

Romans 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

That actual shovel itself was strong and made of metal; the failure was in the handle, which was made of wood, and therefore, too weak.

Notice how Paul works it out:

Romans 8:5-14 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. [Those who do not have God's Holy Spirit cannot please God.] But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

The essential difference between the natural man and the Christian is that the latter has the Spirit of God and Christ in him. Whatever experiences a man has had, if he does not have the Holy Spirit, he is not a Christian. That is what Paul tells us in verse 9: “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”

In verse 15, Paul comes back to the same argument:

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear...

Why not? Because the Holy Spirit is in you, and it will empower you and strengthen you. Paul is always repeating the message, because repetition is one of the best ways to learn and to remember.

We are to work out our own salvation. How? With fear and trembling. People do not fear at the point of conversion, and they have no need to fear afterwards. They do not know the meaning of “trembling” because it is God who works in you, both to will and to do according to His good pleasure. That is the Spirit again; I am speaking of the ideal.

This is the way to get rid of the spirit of bondage and that false spirit of fear. We are to realize that the Spirit of God is working in us, and we must look to God; we must seek His help, and we must rely on Him to provide His Spirit to us. It is an issue of faith, because God’s Spirit cannot be seen, or touched, or tasted, or smelled, or heard by the human senses.

That does not mean that we are to be passive. It means we believe and know that as we are wrestling with life’s challenges, God’s Spirit is empowering us, and we would not even have bothered to exert ourselves unless God had called us to do so. He works in us, and we work it out. As we realize this, we prepare to conquer any spiritual obstacle or temptation. What was impossible for the human mind is now possible, because we have a heart and mind that is led by God’s Spirit.

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of

His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

The Father gives the Spirit, and it is the same spirit that is in the Son that is given to us. The Spirit that enabled Him enables us.

Let us look at the second principle. The presence of the Holy Spirit in us reminds us of our relationship to God. “You did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’.”

The presence of the Holy Spirit within us reminds us of our son-ship and our adult son-ship. We are not infants, and the very term means that we are grown sons and that we have reached full age or full maturity. We are sons in the fullest sense, and in possession of all our faculties. The clear realization of this gets rid of the spirit of bondage again to fear. It does not do away with reverence and Godly fear, but it does away with the fear that the spirit of bondage brings.

How does it do that? It enables us to see that our purpose in living God’s way of life is not simply to attain a certain standard. It is more than that; it is primarily to please God because He is our father, and the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father!” The slave was not allowed to say, “Abba.” That slave spirit does not regard God as father. The slave spirit has not realized that He is father; he regards Him still as a judge who condemns. As Christians, we must learn to internalize, by faith, the fact that God is our Father.

Christ taught us to pray, “Our Father.” This eternal, everlasting God has become our Father, and the moment that we realize that, everything tends to change. He is our Father, and He is always caring for us. He loves us with an everlasting love. He so loves us that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for our sins. That is love—“Greater love has no man than this, than to give his life for his friends.”

That is our relationship to God, and the moment we realize it, it transforms everything. Our desire is not only to keep God’s law, but to please our Heavenly Father. Love and reverential fear is so different from that old, servile fear. Reverential fear of God is a controlling motivator of the Christian life in spiritual and moral matters. It is not a mere fear of His power and righteous retribution, but a wholesome dread of displeasing Him. We want God, our Father, to think highly of us.

It is a fear that influences the outlook and attitude of those who are guided by trusting God, through the indwelling Spirit of God. The reverential fear of God will inspire a

constant carefulness in dealing with others. It is very careful not to offend needlessly. The moment we grasp that reverential fear is based on the desire to please our Father, we lose the fear of bondage. Our Christian living is not only a matter of rules and regulation, but even more so, it is manifested in our desire to show God our gratitude for all that He has ever done for us, and will do for us.

However, that does not exhaust the matter:

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

If we are children of God, we must be related to Jesus Christ. He is the firstborn of many brethren, and we are related to the Father as children and heirs. Listen to our elder brother, Christ, as He prays to His and our Father:

John 17:23 “I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

That love sees no difference: it loves Christ, it loves us, and it is from God. Jesus says there that God the Father loves us, as God loved Him, the only begotten Son; so we begin to realize that we are sons of God, children of God. We have this new dignity, this new standing, this new status, this glorious position in which we find ourselves.

Christ says that we are to glorify His and our Father in our lives in this world, exactly as He glorified His Father. That is the reason for living God’s way of life: it is to realize that you belong to God and that you must glorify Him. God’s Spirit is in His children and is enabling us to do it. God transforms our outlook and we lose the “spirit of bondage again to fear.”

Paul emphasized to the Corinthian brethren that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us.

I Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

This is the way to overcome the sins of the flesh. When you think you have a problem or difficulty, and fear enters in, and you worriedly say, “I have been praying about this,” remind yourself that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and you are owned by God. So what can man, or disease, or injury really do to us spiritually? Nothing, nothing at all.

Prayer is always essential, but thought is essential too. Prayer can be just an escape mechanism; it can be almost a cry in the dark by people who are desperate, defeated, and afraid. Prayer must be intelligent, and it is only to those who realize that their bodies are members of Christ and the temples of the Holy Spirit that the answer will be given and the power will come.

The Holy Spirit within us reminds us of our destiny: “If children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” Paul constantly uses that truth and ends up with what he says at the end of Romans 8.

Romans 8:37-39 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. [You know that the Christian is absolutely certain of his destiny; he is convinced beyond any doubt of his destiny.] For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is not a matter of keeping a standard, although that is certainly a part of it. It is not a matter of vainly striving to do something, although we must seek and obey God. It is a matter of getting ready for the eternal, spiritual life to which we are going: to submitting to God, to obeying Him. It is an issue of preparing to receive our inheritance as family members of the Kingdom of God. It is an issue of being worthy of the name of God, as His children, and of being an acceptable living sacrifice in His service as sons.

The way to get rid of the spirit of bondage and fear is to know that if you are a child of God, you are destined for eternal life in God’s Kingdom and for glory, and that all things that you see inside yourself and outside yourself cannot prevent that plan from being carried out—unless you continue to sin, habitually and flagrantly.

Our Christian life is a matter of preparing for that. We are sanctified and adopted by faith. But faith in what? Faith in God, that through His Son and by His Spirit, He will see to it that we reach our ultimate destiny.

It is very wrong to be in the spirit of bondage and of fear, which is a lack of faith. A lack of faith is the fastest way to the realm of discouragement and fear. Jesus wonders if He will find any faith at all when He returns. But though the faith of some may be weak, there is always room for it to grow. If you are in Christ, rise to it over sin, and over fear, and over worry.

There is nothing that is so faith-building as the realization that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; that our destiny is certain and secure, and that nothing can prevent it, as long as we are submissive and obedient to God. Realizing that, we purify ourselves even as He is pure, and we feel the urgency that there is no time to waste.

Tomorrow is Pentecost, the Feast of Firstfruits. It reminds us every year that we, the Church, are only the first small harvest of God's calling people for salvation, out of a world that is completely and totally, except for us, cut off from God. It has been that way since Adam—the world as a whole is still cut off to this day. We have been predestined to be called now, and we have been called to receive the Holy Spirit.

And what is the Holy Spirit? It is that second spirit; it is the impregnation of God-life, which makes us His children now. Heirs, but not yet inheritors. It is a spirit of understanding, imparting to the physical brain spiritual intellect and the ability to comprehend spiritual knowledge. It is the love of God placed within us, a divine love. It is the faith of Christ, the same faith with which Jesus performed His miracles, now given to us, placed within us.

It is also spiritual power to overcome, the spiritual power to help us turn from and resist the self-centered way of hate, and turn to the God-centered way of love. It is the power by which we may develop the holy, righteous, perfect character which is God's purpose for having put humanity on earth—so that God may reproduce Himself.

As we come to God's Feast of Firstfruits, let us bear in mind that we in God's Church must be made ready. Jesus Christ is coming soon, and we are not yet completely ready to be instantly changed and caught up to meet our Lord as He comes to the earth.

I will leave you with this final scripture:

Hebrews 13:6 So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"