

CHIEF MINISTRIES

September 2019

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7) “I like your Christ; I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ” (Mahatma Gandhi).

How do you recognize the Holy Spirit? How do you know you are not being deceived? I know what it is to be deceived, let down, disillusioned, and betrayed by those I have loved and trusted. It is enough to make a person a professional cynic. But I have survived.

In America we will sometimes use the phrase “the real deal” when a person really and truly is absolutely genuine. Pure gold. But how do you know a piece of metal is gold? How do you know when you’re holding counterfeit money? None of us wants to be deceived. How can you be sure that what I have written is true?

FOUR THINGS THAT PROVE YOU HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are 4 things that give us a pretty safe tip whether or not we are witnessing the Holy Spirit. They are: fearlessness, power, love and self-control.

Jonathan Edwards said that one thing Satan cannot produce in us is a love for the glory of God. He can bring about many things, but not that. He wrote this when endeavoring to show whether a person’s affections have truly been set on God and that these feelings were motivated by the Holy Spirit and not the flesh. So, said Edwards, and I agree, a love for the glory of God is one thing that Satan cannot produce in a person. Only God can make that happen. So too when it comes to the Holy Spirit, there are 4 things by which you may know you have not been deceived. For some there may always be a lingering doubt. There may be an apprehension that we’ll be caught off guard if a dove suddenly turns out to be a pigeon. What I want to submit now is what I judge to be the nearest you get to knowing for sure that you have not been deceived by strange fire.

FEARLESSNESS

God has not given us a “spirit of fear” said Paul to the fearful young Timothy. The Greek word translated “fear” is *phobos* from which we get words such as claustrophobia. *For God will never give you the spirit of fear, but the Holy Spirit who gives you mighty power, love, and self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7 TPT).* “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you again a slave to fear, but you received the Spirit of Sonship. And by Him we cry, “Abba Father”. (Romans 8:15). Paul here contrasts the spirit of bondage – which comes from living under the Mosaic law – with our loving heavenly Father. You do not need to be afraid of your heavenly Father or fear you will not come up to His standard, but also don’t think He doesn’t have standards. Our Father accepts us as we are, and we don’t have to prove anything to Him, unlike what many fear with their parents.

In any case, a spirit of fear is alien to the Holy Spirits. God never oppresses us – Satan does. A spirit of fear is a perpetual anxiety that governs a person – worrying that something will always go wrong, that you will displease someone. You are always looking over your shoulder. People governed by a spirit of fear have a constant dread of disapproval. It does come down to this: the fear of man. *“Fear of man will prove to be a snare.” (Proverbs 29:25).*

If you are obsessed with what people think of you, this is a spirit of fear; it did not come from God, says Paul. Apparently Timothy was governed by a spirit of fear (1 Corinthians 16:10). Paul pointed out that such an attitude did not come from the Holy Spirit. We all have attitudes that come from the flesh, not the Holy Spirit. Even Paul was once so depressed that he “despaired even to life” (2 Corinthians 1:8). There is not a single one of us who has not had an off moment – a time we would die a thousand deaths if anyone were to see us. The point is that such feelings do not come from the Holy Spirit. It certainly does not mean that we are not Christians; it does not even mean that we are not spiritual or pleasing God generally. Were God to hide His face from us – even for 5 minutes – most of us might get all kinds of thoughts or attitudes, that would make the Angels blush.

Fearlessness is not courage. Of course, one seems to have courage when there is no fear. But you can have courage when you are scared to death. You just press on.

Fearlessness is when there is simply no fear. I wish I felt this way every day. But I have known this – at times. There is nothing like it. It is when the Dove comes down and the whole landscape changes, like a sunrise that reveals what was hidden in the night. “Fearlessness”, a hymn from the 1860’s – verse 2 says this: “Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand, never foe can follow, never traitor stand; not a surge of worry, not a shade of care, not a blast of hurry touch the spirit there. Like a river glorious”

Fearlessness is a mind that can only be achieved by the Holy Spirit. You can’t work it up. You can work up courage. But you can’t make yourself feel no fear. If you have it, admit it; just say, “I’m afraid. I’m anxious. I’m nervous. I don’t know what is happening.” It is no disgrace to feel like that. But when the Holy Spirit comes down, all fear is gone, at least for then. It may not last forever. But when this calm sets in, you know God has come. It’s the real thing. Only the Holy Spirit can bring this about.

One reason the devil cannot produce fearlessness is that he is full of fear himself. He is the embodiment of fear. He is running scared 60 seconds a minute; 60 minutes an hour. He knows that his time is short. (Revelation 12:12). The next time Satan remind you of your past, remind him of his future. All those who oppose us – Mark it down – are the ones who are afraid. “*Do not fear what they fear*” (1 Peter 3:14). So, if you have been given the grace of fearlessness, you have an inner strength for which there is no natural explanation.

Total fearlessness is what Peter had on the Day of Pentecost. No fear. He was not the slightest bit bothered by thousands of intimidating Jews around him – some of them high-ranking. It was what he later felt when he told the Sadducees, “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen or heard*” (Acts 4:19-20). It was what Peter and John felt when they left the Sanhedrin having to pinch themselves that they were chosen to suffer the shame of Jesus’s name (Acts 5:41). It is what Elijah felt when God swore an oath to him, he knew there would be no rain unless God said so (1 Kings 17:1-2). It is what he experienced on the top of Mount Caramel when poking fun at the desperation of the false prophets (1 Kings 18:27).

When you have no fear, you do not need to raise your voice. You will not panic if you think you are losing an argument or lacking the exact words. The greatest freedom is having nothing to prove. This freedom – fearlessness – can only be produced by the Holy Spirits. When this fearlessness has set in you know it is the Holy Spirits and not you. And when you find yourself governed by fear, except the plain truth: God did not give you that fear.

The flesh or the devil can never manufacture this fearlessness.

These things said, the word fear can be tricky in this discussion. In the days following Pentecost, everyone was filled with fear or awe (Acts 2:43). Strange as it may seem, the same Holy Spirit who imparts utter fearlessness in a person can simultaneously impart an astonishing awe of God. Indeed, the greater measure of the Spirit is in us, the greater will be our genuine fear of God. You will respect God and His word more than ever. Never

forget that the “eternal gospel” is a command: “*fear God and give Him glory (Revelation 14:6-7)*. The more I love God, the more I fear Him; the greater my measure of the Holy Spirit who instills calm and joy will be matched by the greater my desire to glorify God.

POWER

Power is what Jesus promised to the disciples at Pentecost (Luke 24:49, Acts 15:8). One could argue that the 1st and foremost evidence of the Holy Spirit’s power. The Greek word is *dunamis* from which we get the word dynamite. You could say that at least 2 things were working in Peter at Pentecost: an absence of fear and the presence of power. Fearlessness would not have been enough. Peter’s power at Pentecost consisted of two things: 1) The exact words to say. Clearly manifested that day was a fulfillment of Jesus’s promise that we are to take no thought what to say but it will be “*given to us what to say; it will be the spirit of Your Father speaking through you*” (Matthew 10:19-20). And 2) the Holy Spirit working effectually in His hearers. When Peter finished preaching, the crowds weren’t arguing back. No one was scoffing. No one was laughing. They had one question; “*What shall we do?*” (Acts 2:37). They were prepared to do whatever Peter suggested. He told them what to do – “*Repent and be baptized*” (v38). Three thousand were converted on the same day (v41).

Peter had no time to get his thoughts together before he addressed the crowd on the Day of Pentecost. He had no time to prepare a sermon. He had no idea he would be speaking. But when the Spirit came down and the crowds gathered, he knew he should speak. He also knew exactly what to say. The Holy Spirit brought to his remembrance what he should say (John 14:26). This is the anointing of the Spirit. It is not something you can work up, plan for, or aim for. It is there or it isn’t.

And it may not last forever. Indeed, some years later when he did not want to be sitting with Gentiles – but excused himself when he saw Jews coming – the cowardly old Peter was on display. “*Before certain men came from James, [Peter] used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group*” (Galatians 2:12). This was not Peter’s most glorious moment. Paul rebuked him before everybody (v11). The same Peter who denied Jesus before the Galilean servant girl (Matthew 26:69-70) more or less resurfaced. It is not unlike Elijah, who had extraordinary power on Mount caramel but ran for his life when threatened the next day by Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 19:2-3).

No matter what degree of power may be given us for a moment of need, let no one ever think he or she has arrived and will always have such power and boldness. We are all as weak as baby kittens before people if God does not supply the power. He can give it or withhold it. He can give mercy or withhold it. “*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*” (Romans 9:15). This means that God was showing mercy and compassion to Peter at Pentecost. And yet not for Peter sake, but for the spreading of the gospel. Wherever God uses us powerfully or chooses to display His authority in us, it is not for us. It is for those around us who need what we have to say. This should keep us from becoming smug and self-righteous. The moment we think we have arrived – and have an inner revocable anointing of *dunamis* God will look down from heaven and say, “Really?”, and let us show our weakness and be embarrassed before people and the highest heavens.

This power can be in great measure or it may come in small measure. Peter had it in great measure. For a good while, not only at Pentecost but also before the Sadducees days later. After the 40-year-old crippled man was instantaneously healed, Peter use the platform not to call attention to himself but to preach the gospel (Acts 3:1-26). Thousands more were converted. This power was on display when Peter severely warned Ananias and Sapphira before they were struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-10). The power of the Holy Spirit later resulted in a rather bizarre vision given to Peter at Joppa. It led to the conversion of Cornelius and to Peter’s being given an extraordinary new perspective regarding Gentiles (Acts 10). Power – clearly outside of Peter’s hands – was further on display when he miraculously escaped from prison, with angels going before him and opening iron doors (Acts 12:6-10).

All of the gifts of the Holy Spirit show God's power – whether with wisdom, healing or prophecy. It is the same Holy Spirit. He can do what appears to us as spectacular. It is as easy for Him to cure cancer as it is to heal a headache.

Whereas you cannot successfully imitate fearlessness, it is possible for unscrupulous ministers to assimilate what would seem to some as power. Perhaps this is why some faith healers of our day don't want the wheelchair-bound down in front – putting the evangelist on the spot. They would rather pray for people with less outrageous illnesses and have them fall down - which may be impressive to the undiscerning. The person who falls may or may not be healed, but the claim is always that they were. People shout "praise the Lord" without giving it another thought. The gift of discernment is needed when it comes to preachers claiming power, for people can be so gullible. Maybe we've all been deceived at times. A pigeon can look like a dove.

The power manifested in the Book of Acts was not doubted. *"What are we going to do with these men?" They asked. "Everyone in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:16).* But sadly, most claims made nowadays for extraordinary healing have a way of remaining under this "doubt cloud".

People understandably love to laugh at reports of people falling on the floor, shaking, laughing, etc. One might laugh a little less if they were at the high-water marks of the Azusa Revival or moments of the Great Awakening or the Cane Ridge Revival or the Toronto Blessing or the Brownsville Revival in Pensacola, Florida - not to mention what it was like on the Day of Pentecost when people were accused of being drunk! My own 1st reaction to seeing people shaking and jerking and laughing and falling at the Brownsville revival was – "what is this crazy stuff?" I had never seen anything like it. This was in 1997 and I had grown up in the church! Could this be of God? I didn't want it to be at first because it was so way out of my comfort zone. If it really was of God, surely I would have experienced this by now! I saw jerking, shaking – for hours on end. I saw a little old grandmas go to lay hands in prayer on big brawny man and without even touching them, then literally get lifted off their feet and shot backwards up to 10 feet sometimes. One guy hit the back festival doors and knocked it off its hinges. An hour later he got up and literally said, "what do I need to do to be saved?" He had shown up drunk to drag his wife, who was sneaking out of their beach condo to take in the services and drag her home by her hair (he gave this testimony later on Sid Roth's TV show "Supernatural"). I saw opaque blind eyes open right before my eyes. Prostitutes walking by (the Brownsville region of Pensacola is the project area – this church set in the middle of this area) feeling compelled to come in, they'd get saved. In 5 years more than 3,000,000 people visited this church and I was blessed enough to be there for 3 ½ years. God let me know He can do whatever He wants, whenever He wants to whomever He wants, and it may not look like I think it should (yes, I to experience some jerks and shakes and wonderful times 'out' under the power of Almighty God and He spoke so clearly to me.

Here are two scriptures that come to mind: 1) God's ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9) and 2) He chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). It is easy to make fun of things like this. A loving caution. Don't do it. You have no idea what you may be criticizing. Never forget that nobody dreamed at the time that Jesus dying on the cross was God's way of saving the world. The crucifixion in some ways could have appeared as distasteful, disgusting and ridiculous then, just as falling down, etc. etc. does now. Like it or not, God seems to love showing up in a manner that takes the most learned and sophisticated off-guard.

The power of the Holy Spirit cannot be successfully duplicated. If a person is supernaturally changed and given a love for God's glory. God did it. If a person is truly healed, God did it – whoever – prayed for the healing. Moreover, if God gives words that are so filled with truth that the opposition cannot talk down on – as when Stephen's enemies *"could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke" (Acts 6:10)*, that is Holy Spirit power.

Whenever power defies a natural explanation that sets people free, it is not what the flesh or the devil did.

LOVE

The third thing Paul mentions to Timothy is that God has given us the spirit of love, not a spirit of fear. Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). As light makes darkness disappear, so love makes fear go away. According to Paul's list in Galatians, the first fruit of the Spirit is love (Galatians 5:22-23). I think the case can be made that if you truly have the unfeigned fruit of love, the other fruit will follow; joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

This is agape love, which is self-giving and unselfish, caring about others. It is described in beautiful detail in 1 Corinthians 13. For those of you who have been blessed to experience a KAIROS event on your units, you know exactly what this is. This love goes right against nature. When we have been hurt, maligned, lied about, or treated unfairly, the most natural feeling in the world is to get even – to see the other person punished. Perfect love casts out fear; fear has to do with punishment. You want to throw the book at the offender. You pray that God will get that rascal. Perhaps some of us are reaping what we've been sowing? But Jesus comes along and says, *"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."* (Luke 6:27-28).

Agape love is as alien to our nature as is dunamis power. When there is true agape love, however, it is proof of the Holy Spirit. The flesh cannot demonstrate agape love. The heart is deceitful above all things and incurably wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). The devil can't manifest agape love. He is full of hate, a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). Only the Holy Spirit can love. And because we have the Holy Spirit we can love. We need to prove it to those around us who are longing to see Christians behave like this.

Love "keeps no record of wrongs," said Paul (1 Corinthians 13:5). Why do we keep records? To prove we paid our bills. Why do we keep a record of wrongs? To use it against an enemy – or one's spouse – when it comes in handy. Love tears up that record of wrongs so that their bad comment or deed can never be told again. One of the saddest statistics to emerge in recent years is the proportion of Christian marriages ending in divorce which is not much different than non-Christian marriages. What an embarrassing testimony for Christians. Agape love must parallel (but not replace) eros love sooner than later or the marriage is doomed. Eros love may cause a man and a woman to want to get married, but it is not the love that will sustain the marriage. If marriages are to survive the long haul, we certainly must have a love that keeps no record of wrongs.

God has not given us the spirit of fear – but of love – which means every Christian has it within his or her grasp the need to forgive – totally. Total forgiveness is an act of the will. You don't wait for God to knock you down. You obey Jesus' teaching. You just do it! When Paul says God has given us this love, it means we are without excuse. I'm sorry, but that is our responsibility, which any Christian can make happen. We can all do it. It may be the hardest thing in the world to do (and it is) but it is what lies within our grasp because we have the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9).

These 4 proofs of the Spirit that God has given us – fearlessness, power, love and self-control – are equally divided the first two only God can make happen, fearlessness and power. The last two – love and self-control – are within our grasp to do. The proof of the Holy Spirit in fearlessness and power; the proof of the Holy Spirit equally is love and self-control. These prove the Holy Spirit is at work in you. Learning the power in forgiveness has helped transform me. Many people say, "Lord give me the grace to forgive them." This is a copout, and the reason many Christians today are filled with bitterness and will go to their grave like that. Such doesn't mean they aren't saved. It means they will be saved by fire and lose any reward that could have been theirs (1 Corinthians 3:14-15).

Do you have this love? Only God can give it. But you have to show it. Total forgiveness is a choice – an act of the will.

How do I know I have truly forgiven? When I don't tell anybody what they did to me. When I stop letting anybody be afraid or nervous around me. When I stop pointing the finger and making another feel guilty.

When I let them save face rather than rubbing their noses in it. When I protect people from their darkest secret. When I keep doing it – day after day – even year after year. Finally, total forgiveness reaches its zenith – an ultimate expression – when I sincerely pray for the person who has been unjust. I don't merely say, "Dear Lord, I commit them to You." No – it is when you pray from your heart that God will bless them, prosper them and keep them from getting caught. Oh my. But yes, that's total forgiveness.

Do you want to wait until the judgment seat of Christ to see how God Himself will handle this? I wouldn't miss it for the world, and neither would I want to mess things up by vindicating myself here on earth. When you do these things you show the proof of the Holy Spirit.

SELF-CONTROL

The Greek word translated self-control is *sophronismos*. The King James version uses "sound – mind" that is a reasonable translation, but it is more aptly to be translated self-discipline or self-control. In the last (but not least) of His list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23 Paul uses the word *egkrates* – self-control or self-discipline. In the ancient Hellenistic world it referred to the power or Lordship that one has over himself. It meant superiority over every desire, actually to food, sex, and the use of the tongue.

Like love – an act of the will – so too is self-control – one may wish that the fruit of the Spirit guarantee a spontaneous joy, peace, patience, and so forth, but that is not the case. God has not given us the spirit of fear but of self-control. And because we have the Holy Spirit, we can demonstrate self-control. Indeed, the proof of the Holy Spirit is not the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit but self-control. The obligation is on us to show we have the Holy Spirit not because we may speak in tongues, but mastery over our bodies.

Food, Texas, the second-highest state for obesity. It is scandalous. In much the same way Christians dismiss their bitterness and forgiveness, so to do an alarming number of Christians who are vastly overweight. Few ministers will tackle this problem. I remember hearing a pastor say he was going to broach the subject "Fat Christians" – I thought, "oh, good." But he was lamenting that Christians are overfed spiritually but do not win their neighbors. It was a good sermon but did not touch the problem of obesity.

Self-control is what we have in the Holy Spirit. But we must exercise it. It means watching our intake of food and drink – not only for our personal health but also our testimony. I'm still trying to figure out why so many gifted singers are obese. Where is the self-control?

Sex. There is nothing that brings disgrace upon the name of our Savior like sexual sin in the church. Sadly, it is happening all the time. Ministers showing lack of self-control regarding sex are being found out in every denomination weekly. There is no correlation with regard to one's doctrine and self-control. This issue has cross denominational and theological lines many times. I speak from experience here. There are fallen ministers everywhere due to pornography, drugs, lifestyle changes, etc. The sin issue has always been a matter of a lack of self-control.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit – however you define it – certainly gives us impetus to glorify God and to live a holy life. And in the days of afterglow after initially being Spirit-filled, perhaps one is less vulnerable to temptation. But sooner or later – we all come down from the mountain of glory and have to come to grips with our sinful nature. It is then through self-control that we demonstrate that we have the Holy Spirit.

Control of the tongue. "We all stumble in many ways", said James (Jacob) I am so glad he said that. It makes me feel better, "*If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check*" (James (Jacob) 3:2). The truth is we aren't perfect, no one is, and no one will ever be in this present life. That is what glorification is for.

But James (Jacob) does give us a checklist by which we may know the difference between wisdom from "above" and wisdom from "below". The wisdom from below is harboring bitter envy and selfish ambition in

our hearts. This brings us back to the issue of agape love. In a sense we have come full circle. You will recall that whereas fearlessness and power are out of our hands – only God can make these happen – love and self-control are put firmly in our hands. This is because we have been entrusted with the Holy Spirit. If He remains ungrieved in us, we may be sure we will not displease the Lord or bring disgrace upon Christ's name. The wisdom that comes from "above," then, is "*First of all power, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere*" (James 3:17).

Self-control brings honor and glory to God. What's more, people admire self-control. No one looks up to a person filled with bitterness, one who cannot control his or her tongue, appetite or sexual urges. If we claim to have the Holy Spirit – and want the Holy Spirit to be given the respect due Him – we should care about Him enough that we discipline our tongues and our bodies. I don't know how long I will continue this letter writing ministry. I know one thing, I want to end well, to finish well. If I practice what I have preached these past 13 years, I will. So will you.

My closing word to you is this. If your heart yearns for God more than anything in the world, don't give up! And if you see the slightest way forward by which you can demonstrate the courage of your desires, take full advantage of this. Don't wait for God to knock you down. *Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart* (Psalms 37:4). I have no regrets about my ministry here in the prison. None. I would make every single decision I made all over again. Why? I follow the principle of John 5:44, seeking not your praise, but God's. Am I disappointed I haven't been more successful? Of course. I am still waiting for real revival, but that phenomenon is out of my hands. I have been obedient. There is no possibility of ultimate disappointment when your highest goal is to know you have pleased the Father.

Be Fearless! Be Powerful! Be Loving! Be Self-Controlled!

Revival is coming!

Chief

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Christ's

Heart

In

Every

Felon