

The Spirit, the Flesh

Part 1

Speaker	Frank Wallace
Duration	00:49:59
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/fw013/the-spirit-the-flesh

Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Our brother brought before us this afternoon the wonderful liberty into which we have been brought, and it is wonderful liberty.

To be set free from the fear of the law, the curse of the law, the claims of the law, to be set free from the power of sin, to be set free from the world. We trust tonight to see how we can be set free from the flesh.

These are wonderful blessings. Thank God that through many years we have had the truth ministered to us for our encouragement in these last days that we might be here at the end in faithfulness to our absent Lord.

Our brother reminded us this afternoon that because of the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit, we are brought into this liberty and praise God, nothing can destroy it.

This liberty belongs to us because it's the fruit of the work of Christ. [00:01:06] It's secure in him for all his people at all times for their encouragement, for their blessing. Thank God when we are set free from all the limitations of earth, we'll enter into that liberty in a fuller and greater way.

My exercise tonight is to occupy our minds with this great and tremendous opposition that is against us, that is the flesh, and to see that there is a greater power, the power of the Holy Spirit, that power to overcome all the features of the flesh and produce in us that which is pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to notice the authorized version, verse 17, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. Now, we believe that to be a faulty translation. If that were true, then we might as well throw up our hands in despair and say there's no [00:02:01] use going on.

We believe the right translation is that we should not do the things that we would. That is, the Spirit, he desires that we should not do the works of the flesh.

The flesh desires that we should not do the works of the Spirit. Who's going to win?

I think this is where our practical obedience comes in, that we throw ourselves unreservedly into the hands of the Lord and cry to him to help us by his Spirit that we might refuse every feature of the flesh and express the fruit of the Spirit, and what a triumph that is. First of all, we want to refer to verse 13, for brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.

Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

[00:03:02] That's the beginning of the portion that we read. Verse 26 is the end, let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Now, it seems to me that all that comes in between these two statements is to indicate to us how we can operate or live with each other and set forth the fruit of the Spirit so that we are together with all those features of the fruit of the Spirit circulating amongst us. I know that in verse 22 and 23 some have suggested three different areas, what we are to God, what we are to others, what we are in ourselves. Now, first of all, I'm going to say the Scripture doesn't say that. The Scripture just mentions a nine-fold fruit of the Spirit. I'm going to suggest to you that the main force of the Scripture is these features of the fruit of the Spirit in you, in me, in every believer to promote the, shall I say [00:04:04] this, internal joy and blessing that belongs to the liberty of the position that we've been brought into.

Oh, how wonderful it is when we view the thing objectively in Christ. How wonderful to see what he has secured. Nothing wrong with that. It's perfect. But when we come to the maintenance of this liberty in the Christian company, that leaves much to be desired.

About 150 years ago, many devoted saints, a great sacrifice to themselves and great difficulty separated from many things that shackled them as to the liberty of the Holy Spirit.

It cost them a great deal. It wasn't easy. They were breaking away from long entrenched tradition, breaking away from many things that were hoary with age and tradition, and brought themselves under a great deal of reproach to get away from the organizations of men, to get away from all that was centered in [00:05:03] their minds, and to come into the liberty of the Holy Spirit, to gather to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in simplicity, in humility, and to desire the free activity of the Spirit in their midst to bring Christ before them and to maintain the things of God. Our brother mentioned this this afternoon. I want to emphasize it. Don't let's give it up.

Don't let circumstances govern us. Let the truth govern us.

This is what we require in these last closing days, to hold on to the truth that has been ministered to us for so many years in the simplicity that is in Christ and in obedience to this word that has been set before us.

I want to say, dear brethren, and I think you will all agree with me, that having been liberated from the shackles that existed in men's organizations, much is to our shame [00:06:03] in the maintenance of this liberty in a practical way amongst us.

I suggest to you that one of the reasons, not all the reasons can be stated in one way, but one of the reasons is that the flesh has found too much place in our meetings. The flesh has found too much place in our lives individually, and this has resulted in the divisions and sorrow and strife that we find amongst those called brethren.

Oh, it's sad, and I'm sure you all feel it, and I'm sure you would desire to see it rectified and the saints of God walking together, shoulder to shoulder, as this word says here, walking in the spirit, and that particular word at the end of the chapter means walking in order, lying all in a line, walking in the same way, governed by the Holy Spirit.

So again, we find in verse 13, you have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty [00:07:06] for an occasion to the flesh, but by love, serve one another.

I remember reading a book about the French Revolution, and there was a picture in the book, a woman called Madame Roland, who was about to be guillotined, and she's pointing her finger to the Statue of Liberty.

And the caption in the picture was, Oh, liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name? Now, it seems to me this underlines what we're saying here. The chapter that we read this afternoon, the liberty that we have in Christ Jesus, and no one can take that from us. Oh, but what crimes have been committed in the name of liberty?

Liberty to express myself in any way that I wish. Liberty to go what I like, do what I like, say what I like. [00:08:03] Liberty to say I'm free from the shackles of man's organization, and I can please myself. No, Paul's writings don't present that to us.

In Romans chapter 8, verse 1, it says, The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death.

Thank God for liberty from the law of sin and death, but we come under another law, the rule of the spirit, the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus.

It seems to me, dear brethren, and I speak for myself, I think I speak for you, that there's a great deal to be desired in the expression of this kind of life individually and collectively.

So we find that we are to serve one another by love.

Now this service is the service of bondmanship, just as the Lord Jesus Christ served. [00:09:04] What an example for us. You remember in Philippians 2, it says clearly there that he took a bondman's form, served in that way, serving the will of God.

Now here as bondmen, we are to serve each other, the same example that the Lord Jesus Christ set as he served his God, did his Father's will.

So we are to serve as bondmen.

Not my will against your will or your will against my will, but together, submitting to each other in the fear of the Lord and seeking to love each other in this way. Now I know that we say, well, we cannot do this, there are all sorts of problems and difficulties and trials, but I think we'll see in a few moments that, thank God, there is power to do this.

Now in verse 16 says this, I say then, walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the [00:10:03] lust of the flesh.

There is an introduction to the subject. The spirit, the flesh.

They're both opposed to each other, diametrically opposed. There cannot be any mixing. They're both opposed to each other, and thank God, the spirit is the greater.

Now we want to state briefly what we understand by being in the spirit and in the flesh.

In the flesh first could be viewed as in the physical body. We find that in relation to the Lord Jesus. You remember it says, in the days of his flesh, Hebrews chapter five, that's his physical body. But then there are other expressions in the flesh which refer, as far as we are concerned, not to the Lord, as far as we are concerned, it means an unconverted state. All people who are in the flesh, that is the fallen nature, all people who are in the flesh are unconverted.

[00:11:03] In the epistle to the Ephesians, chapter two, Paul says to them, when you were in the flesh, that's when they pleased themselves in all the evil that they followed. But then in Romans eight, we are told we are not in the flesh, we are in the spirit.

That is our state before our God.

Praise God for that.

We are not in the flesh, we are in the spirit.

We sometimes speak about the dual nature that we have. God doesn't view us in the dual nature.

God only views us in Christ.

As far as God is concerned, the evil nature that we all possess is gone in the death of Christ.

It's condemned. Sin in the flesh is condemned, once and for all, completely out of sight, as far as God is concerned. But as a practical thing, we know it exists.

[00:12:01] God views us in Christ Jesus.

God views us in the spirit.

Our position is in Christ Jesus at the right hand of God. Our state is in the spirit here upon earth. He indwells us.

He guides us.

He directs us.

He blesses us. Now, this is what Paul is saying at the very outset. He says, walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

We want to mention one or two scriptures about the flesh.

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

There is nothing in the flesh that pleases God.

There is no such thing as cultured, educated flesh. There is no such thing as sanctified flesh.

The flesh in the sight of God is filthy, it's sinful, and Paul's reckoning and connection [00:13:01] with it, in my flesh, good does not dwell.

It cannot be justified.

Our brother reminded us of that this afternoon. No flesh can be justified in the sight of God.

No flesh can glory in the sight of God.

As far as God is concerned, it's finished.

It's hateful in his sight, and he ended it in the death of Christ. Now, surely our desire would be to be in consistency with God's thoughts in relation to it, and that's a lifelong struggle as far as we are concerned.

Those of you who have read something of the life and service of Mr. Darby will remember that right at the end of his life, an ill man, there were those who visited him and they had a Bible reading.

Someone asked a question, and Mr. Darby replied very sharply, and then confessed that he had [00:14:03] spoken in the flesh.

Godly man, man of God, servant with prodigious labors, at the end of his life, confesses that he had spoken in the flesh.

Flesh doesn't improve.

Right to the end of our days, suppose we are the most spiritual and most godly, doesn't improve the flesh. Oh, how evil and wicked it is.

Paul's desire is that this liberty might not in any way be impaired in a practical way because of our failure. He says, walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

That's the promise for you, for me, for every believer.

So he goes on to mention in verse 17, the flesh lusteth against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary or opposed the one to the other. [00:15:01] Oh, what an awful conflict this is.

Never lets up, never stops, there's never any armistice here, any truce, it's a fight all the time.

The flesh always intruding, and you know this as well as I do, you know it, that even in the moments when you feel nearest to the Lord, how easy it is for something to intrude. Some feature of the flesh, some feature of self-will, some thought that comes into your mind, something that expresses itself, oh, what a hateful thing it is, what an evil thing it is.

Thank God, this is the promise, that the Holy Spirit is opposed to it, just as resolutely, or should I say, more resolutely than the flesh is opposed to the spirit. There's never any let up. Now you know this, now I know it, this is a continual thing in our lives, and we want to get help from the word of God to see how we can oppose the flesh.

[00:16:04] Now from verse 18, we should refer to, but if ye be led of the spirit, ye are not under the law.

Now, I don't believe that any unconverted person is ever led by the spirit. There may be the convicting work of the spirit in bringing home to their conscience that they require salvation, that's a different matter, but to be positively led and guided by the Holy Spirit is something that belongs to every believer. You remember in the Gospel by Luke, the Lord Jesus, the humble dependent man, was led by the spirit into the wilderness. Oh, what a moment that was for him.

And then under the power of Satan, the temptings that were expressed towards him, he showed that he was the Holy One.

He showed that he was perfect in every detail. [00:17:01] It wasn't a trial to reveal that there might be the possibility of him failing, oh no. The trial was to express in a most wonderful way that the man who was there in the wilderness with Satan was a different kind of man altogether from the man who was in the Garden of Eden. He was the Holy One, intrinsically so, and all the temptings of Satan find no inlet into his life.

And I believe the leading of the spirit was to place him in that situation to demonstrate to Satan that he was another kind of man. Oh, how thankful we are for that.

So we find here Paul saying, those who are led by the spirit, they are not under the law. Thank God for that.

What an onerous, burdensome thing the law was. Brother reminded us of this this afternoon, that the law revealed how sinful we were. Whenever the law says, thou shalt not covet, it immediately brought to our minds how covetous we are.

[00:18:02] And so we're thankful that those who are led by the spirit are led in power and liberty and led into the pathway that's pleasing to God and pleasing to Christ. Now we're not going to talk about all the different features of the flesh. They're awful.

We know some of them. Thank God if we've been delivered from the others. Thank God if we've never known anything about them in our lives, those features of the flesh that are so grossly evil and so depraved.

But I think if we go down the list, we have to confess that we know something about them. Then we find in verse 22, the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. As such, there is no law.

I want to suggest to you that the fruit of the spirit here is what is normal to those [00:19:02] who are in the gain of the liberty that Christ has secured for us.

These are the features that the Holy Spirit will delight to produce in us as we are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, our wills submissive to the Lord, our desire to be led by the spirit.

I feel convinced, dear brethren, that if this were so, this is what would happen. There would be an expression towards each other of love and joy and peace and these other six features.

And what a tremendous blessing that would be indeed. Now then, how is this going to be secured, as Paul tells us, by the spirit?

But how does it work practically?

And recently, I have sought to express what I have felt in my own experience and have proved that it works, and that's the great and blessed thing. [00:20:02] It's not only to be able to tell you the doctrine of the matter, but to be able to say something about the practical way in which it works.

If we take for a moment evil thoughts, and that's a very, very prevalent thing, oh how often Satan puts into our minds the most evil suggestions.

How are we going to overcome them? I believe it's at this point, feeling our own weakness, our own inability to combat these things, that we cry to the Lord.

We express our inability to deal with the thing, and we ask him to help us by his spirit to overcome this evil suggestion and to implant into our minds pure things, things that please him. And I say, thank God it works.

I believe, first of all, we have to express our utter weakness, that in ourselves we cannot [00:21:05] do these things, no matter how hard we try.

The flesh is so powerful.

But the moment we express our weakness and cry to the Lord to help us, and the only way he does help, that's through his spirit, then he will. Oh dear brethren, if we could only feel this at all times, when we feel the workings of sin, the workings of the flesh in our hearts and in our minds.

I'm going to try and show from each scripture, each reference rather, to the different features of the fruit, how this operates in the Christian company as we find in the New Testament. Now the first reference is love.

Now I've put them on a piece of paper here in case I forget. In 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 22, Peter, preaching the same kind of message that Paul [00:22:02] preached, exhorts the saints to love each other, but he doesn't stop there.

He says, fervently, fervently, now that seems to me an excellent word.

To love one another fervently.

It's not the, what shall I say, the technical way of loving by fulfilling some obligations that we feel have to be fulfilled, a handshake and that kind of thing, but a fervent love that overcomes any restraint or any suspicion or any distance, a fervent love that is ready to express itself in any given situation.

A fervent love towards each other that is warm, that is encouraging, that's real and sincere and true.

You remember when Judas came to the Lord Jesus, says he covered him with kisses, same kind [00:23:03] of kisses that the father gave to the son when the son returned from the far country, the story

in Luke 15, exactly the same. Covered him with kisses, but what a hypocrite he was. There was no love behind those kisses, there was no warmth behind those kisses. It was all outward, external, show, cover up.

What a sad thing. We don't want that kind of love amongst us, dear brethren. This is the love that the spirit produces. In Peter's epistle, it's the love that springs from the new nature, born again, and because we're born again, this love can be expressed, fervent love.

Now this is where the difficulty comes in. Can't love that brother or that sister, they're awkward.

I'm frustrated by my attempts to love them, they keep me at arm's length. I've tried so hard, but I'm always rebuffed, and it's so easy to give up.

[00:24:04] Well, the fruit of the spirit is love.

An activity of the flesh is to be overcome, to be defeated. Oh, how wonderful that in the spirit we have the power to love in the way that Paul desires we should love, in the way that Peter desires we should love, in the way that John desires we should love.

All these dear servants of the Lord united in pressing this great matter in the commandment of the Lord, love one another.

Would there have been so many divisions amongst the saints of God if love had been shown? Would not many of the problems that have existed amongst the saints been overcome if love had been in operation?

Not love at the expense of truth, love bolstered up by truth. John says, I have no greater joy than to see my children walking in truth. [00:25:03] Oh, how he spoke about love too, connected with it.

Love in the power of the Holy Spirit, that must be a pure love, without any ulterior motive, without any thought of any gain attaching to the one who loves, but rather desiring the blessing of the one who is loved.

The fruit of the Spirit is love.

Oh, how prominent it is in all the writings of the New Testament. It's not a sentimental, frothy kind of thing, it's a very solid kind of love. The love that's expressed in 1 Corinthians 13 is a love that can stand any test, it never fails.

A very reliable kind of love, and I believe that love can be produced in you and in me in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank God for that. It's not something that belongs to those who are extremely spiritual or extremely knowledgeable. It's a love that can be produced in every believer because every believer has the indwelling [00:26:02] spirit, potentially they can love.

Oh, how wonderful that is.

No one can opt out of this.

No one can say they'll take the soft option, as our brother reminded us this afternoon. No one can do that when they have the power of the Holy Spirit to help them to do that, which is right in the sight of God, in the sight of Christ.

Second reference is to joy.

I'm going to refer you to the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 12, and it's in connection with the body. Remember, Paul says, if one member suffers, every member suffers.

He says, if one member rejoices, all the members rejoice.

Now that's a very testing thing, very testing thing indeed. Few of us were talking about the one body, and we venture to say I don't think there is a company of believers that talk so much about the body of Christ as brethren. [00:27:05] It's always in their mouths, gathered in the ground of the one body, always referring to the truth of the one body. Indeed, this was the great truth that they set out to demonstrate at the very beginning, 150 years ago, not to create the truth of the one body, but in some measure to work it out in practice.

Oh, how sadly it has failed.

Oh, how sadly it has failed.

But nevertheless, the truth is still there.

And that's a very challenging matter in 1 Corinthians 12. It might be comparatively easy to suffer with each other.

Our compassions, our feelings, our hearts go out to those who suffer in whatever way the suffering is known.

Different matter to rejoice with each other. When someone is advancing, when someone is being blessed, when it's very obvious the [00:28:04] Lord has laid his hand on someone, and he's progressing spiritually, and the Lord is blessing him, oh, how easy it is for the seeds of envy to be in the heart and in the mind. What says Paul?

We are to rejoice with each other. Can I do that?

Yes. We can all do it in the Spirit's power.

It's the fruit of the Spirit.

The Spirit is always true to himself.

Sometimes we aren't. But he's always true to himself in producing the features that are pleasurable to God and to Christ.

And this rejoicing with each other is a very great matter indeed. You remember the story of Mordecai and Haman in the book of Esther? Oh, it was a sad, sad thing in Haman's life every time he passed

Mordecai.

In all his exultation, in all his prominence, in all his greatness, there was this niggling [00:29:03] thing that frustrated him. This man would never bow.

Now Mordecai couldn't bow to the exultation of Haman for the simple reason he knew the evil that was behind that man.

The time came, of course, when the position was reversed. And instead of Haman being exulted, Mordecai was exulted. And my, there was rejoicing in Israel when Mordecai was exulted. There were no envious hearts of those in Israel because Mordecai had got this place of supremacy.

So it was with Joseph when he was exulted. There was no envy in the hearts of his brethren when they saw him in the place of exultation. I believe this is one of the body features that we can express in the power of the Spirit to rejoice with each other when we see each other's prosperity. This joy produced by the Spirit that someone is being blessed, someone is moving forward in the pathway that's pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ. [00:30:03] What a wonderful thing it is. Oh, it's so easy when we see a Christian connected with another company and being blessed by the Lord to cast some doubts upon the blessing, to be a bit skeptical as to the truth of the reports that we hear.

That's not the feature of the body. We were mentioning this morning about one of the early incidents amongst the dear brethren when in a prayer meeting, the floor of the prayer meeting was wet with tears because a Christian in another part of the town, not connected with brethren, had failed in his testimony.

They didn't say, well, what can you expect of those people? They didn't talk like that. They were concerned about the glory of the Lord. Here was a Christian who had failed in his testimony, and so they wept. They felt it.

Here was true body feelings. It wasn't exactly suffering on his part.

[00:31:04] It was that he had failed. But they felt it so much as it stood related to the Lord that they were crying about it. They weren't disparaging the person. They were concerned about what had happened. Oh, how easy it is for us to say, well, it's just those people. What can you expect of them?

I'm sure you've heard that, but that's not the feelings that are proper to the body of Christ.

And so joy is something that can be produced in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then there's peace.

I love the portion at the end of the 14th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. I think it's one of the finest chapters to read to help us to get on with each other. True brotherly relationships. It's a wonderful chapter.

And Paul says, now, don't destroy each other over trivial matters, trivialities. Don't get at each other's throat because of these things. [00:32:02] The kingdom of God doesn't exist in those things. It exists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. So he goes on to say, now, pursue the things that

make for peace and things whereby ye shall build up each other or edify each other. Now, there are excellent exhortations for us all.

Pursue the things that make for peace.

Not the political compromise.

That's not the principle in the Bible at all. True peace in the Bible is always based upon righteousness. The Lord Jesus Christ died to establish righteousness, and the effect of that is peace. Praise God in the affairs of believers, this is exactly the same. Pursue the things that make for peace, and when there is peace, thank God, there is building up. You know very well that there is no building up. There is no progress when there is dispeace amongst the saints of God. [00:33:04] Endless nights, endless talking, but no progress. But when there is peace, when there is that tranquility, the sense that things are ordered according to the mind of the Lord, there is the forward movement, or shall I say the upward movement, edification, building up.

Here is a strengthening instead of scattering or demolishing. Peace established in righteousness and the building up process for God. Oh dear brethren, you can pursue the things that make for peace, so can I.

The fruit of the Spirit is peace.

If we feel a tendency in us to create trouble, and that's possible in each of us, easiest thing in the world, then let us cry to the Lord to overcome that tendency and to produce instead the things that make for peace.

[00:34:02] Real peace amongst the saints of God. One of the best ways, I think I can say humbly, I've experienced is to act in forgiveness. When it's a question of personal affront, things that affect one personally, it's a good thing to practice forgiveness. Let it go, it doesn't matter, it's something about me personally. If it's a matter about the Lord Jesus, his honor, his glory, some vital matter of truth, then fight for it tooth and nail. But if it's about yourself, let it go. Moses was the meekest man in all the earth, that is in relation to himself, but when it came to the things of God, my, he was as bold as a lion.

He could speak and act in a way that was very, very severe indeed when it was in relation to God, but not in relation to himself. So this matter of peace is a very wonderful thing to pursue amongst the people of God. [00:35:04] Now we come to long suffering, and I understand that the word that is translated long suffering here has to do with each other, it has to do with persons.

Those of you of Mr. Darby's new translation will find in a footnote in the epistle to James how he describes the two words, long suffering and patience, or endurance. And this word long suffering that we have in Galatians 5 has to do with persons. That is, we are long suffering towards each other. Well, that's a very, very good trait indeed.

So easy to give the cold shoulder, so easy to turn aside and say, what's the use?

But we have to be long suffering. And remember, this is a feature of God himself. The long suffering of God is salvation.

We continue in the spirit of love and peace and grace and kindness towards each other. [00:36:06] Well, maybe sorely tried in our spirits, not forgetting we may try others too. But this long suffering is to be an activity all the time towards each other. Not hasty decisions, not rushing into conflict, but long suffering towards each other, praying for each other, helping each other, considering each other. I know it does produce results, thank God.

We've seen in the past that two hasty confrontations produces sorrow. But patience and praying and waiting often secures the desired result.

And the spirit's fruit is in us when we are long suffering. It's something that can be maintained in us and promoted in us by the spirit of God. As we said at the outset, no one can say that this is impossible as far as I'm concerned. If you say that, it's tantamount to say that the Holy Spirit is not powerful [00:37:04] enough to produce this in me, and so we just humbly wait, and we act in long suffering towards each other. If I can refer to Moses again, what an object lesson he was for us in this respect. 40 years leading the nation of Israel, complaining and groaning and opposing.

What a trial that man had in his life.

But the Lord helped him, the spirit helped him to lead the nation right up to the borders of the promised land, and how successful he was in his service towards them. But then, he was just acting like God. God bore with their manners, 40 years, long suffering towards them. Bore with them that he might help them, and he did help them, and he blessed them. So long suffering is a possibility for you and for me in the Christian circle. [00:38:01] Then it speaks about gentleness, and I want to refer you to Colossians 3 verses 12 and 13. Please don't look it up, I'll just read it out to you. I find kindness is nicely situated here with three beautiful features before it, and three beautiful features after it, and kindness right in the center. I suggest to you that here is a cluster of features that are so wonderful in the Christian realm. If you look it up some other time in Colossians 3, 12 to 13, the saints are described as holy, beloved, and full of compassion.

And then, they are described as having lowliness, and meekness, and long suffering.

So, three features before, kindness in the center, and three features afterwards, and it seems to me that's a real good sandwich. Kindness in between, what a wonderful feature kindness is. You remember the kindness that David showed to the household of Saul [00:39:06] when he blessed Mephibosheth, what kindness he showed to him. And if anybody was entitled to show the opposite, it was David. He always remembered how he was hunted because his Psalms express it. If you read the headings of some of the Psalms, when David was chased as a partridge upon the mountains, in many of those Psalms, he expresses how he felt. But his heart was moved towards the house of Saul to show kindness to them. He had been injured, and yet he desired to show kindness.

How easy it is for us to act in a spirit of injured feelings.

They've said something wrong about me. They've done something wrong to me. So I can't express kindness, which is another way of saying, I want to do the very opposite of what the Lord says. The Lord says, show kindness to your enemies. [00:40:01] If you show kindness to those who show you kindness, you're just a Pharisee. Thank God in the Spirit's power, we could show kindness to each other. Thank God for that. It's a wonderful Christian virtue, kindness. I think it's, well, it's connected with all these different features of compassion, and care, and concern.

You want to express yourself towards the person in some way to indicate that you're concerned about them, you feel for them, and your kindness goes out towards them, and thank God it can in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then we find faith. Now you say, how can we operate in faith towards each other? I want to suggest to you that this is a very, very important thing in any company of believers. In 1 Corinthians 12, you remember there are many gifts mentioned, which are given by the Holy Spirit. The gift of faith is one of them. [00:41:04] Now it might be that the brethren gather together, and they're concerned about some spiritual matter in relation to the assembly. And there's problems.

What can be done? How can we approach this matter? I believe it's a distinct possibility for the spirit to give someone a particular gift of faith. To indicate how we can move forward, governed by the truth, to deal with this particular matter. The gift of faith. I remember many years ago, an assembly in Scotland, they required a new hall.

And it was going to cost a great deal of money. 23,000 pounds, still a fair amount of money today. Well, various ideas were brought forward as to how this money could be acquired. Various suggestions were made, and eventually they were all discarded as unworkable. Well, they came to full stop, what was to be done. [00:42:05] One brother said, brethren, when we gather together in Lodge in the morning, let's have a collection and see how we get on. All right, and the next Lodge in the morning, they got 23,000 pounds. Now, that brother was governed by faith. He indicated the way ahead. Oh, what a wonderful thing it is when someone acts in faith. Thank God for men of vision in the past. Men who can indicate the way ahead. God has given to them the gift of faith. They can direct in the local company as to what should be done. And that's a very, very wonderful thing indeed. And specifically in 1 Corinthians 12, it says, and another one, the gift of faith by the same spirit. So here is the spirit of God empowering someone in faith to act in relation to the local company. [00:43:03] Am I allowed a few moments, Arthur? Meekness.

I've got two references here, and they're both in connection with restoration. Oh, what an important matter this is, restoration. A few weeks ago, some brethren were gathered together in Newcastle, and they were very, very much concerned about the great matter of shepherding amongst the saints of God. I trust those who were there will hold this in their minds and affections, that it might not be lost. It might not have been a nice meeting where good things were said, but that it might be something that will be carried out in exercise and all the different companies concerned, shepherding. What a concern. Oh, how many dear saints have been lost to the meetings. [00:44:01] They've slipped away, and no one has been concerned about restoration. Even in matters where gross evil has come in, they've been allowed to go, as if there is no forgiveness for gross evil. They are beyond redemption. Better to get rid of them. No, that's not the spirit that we find in the New Testament. In Galatians chapter 6 and verse 1, we find that those who are spiritual are to restore those who are overcome.

Now, don't think for a moment that that overcoming, being overcome by a fault, as it says in the authorized version, is something that's trivial. Doesn't mean that at all. It's a very, very serious thing indeed. And the person has been taken over, has been overcome by a sudden temptation. And those who are spiritual are to go, but how are they to go? They are to go in the spirit of meekness, lest they themselves be tempted. [00:45:02] Oh dear brethren, what a delightful spirit to go to someone who needs help. The spirit of meekness, not to abrade, not in any way either to condone or compromise, but in the spirit of meekness to help and encourage. Oh dear brethren, what a need there is for this kind of action amongst the people of God. Real concern that there might be restoration.

If I remember rightly, the 34th chapter of Ezekiel was referred to in the meeting in Newcastle, and just

read it for yourself and see what the evil shepherds did not do. So, twist it round, and the good shepherds should do the things that the evil shepherds didn't do. Searching, binding up, feeding, helping, caring, all the different things that were necessary. This is real restoration.

What a wonderful thing. The same thing is mentioned in 2 Timothy chapter 2, where there is to be [00:46:04] the spirit of meekness in helping those who have gone aside in relation to the truth. Oh dear brethren, again I say, what a wonderful feature to be operating amongst the saints of God, the spirit of meekness and trying to help each other. And who hasn't gone astray in mind or in practice? Who hasn't need help at one time or another? We all have and trust that in the days that are ahead, having been restored, we might be a help to those who require restoration.

And lastly, temperance, self-control. Now, here is a very wonderful thing. Self-control, well, some of us might be a bit hasty in spirit. Thank God, we have a greater spirit than our spirit, that is the Holy Spirit. And he can help us just to check that swift retort that might come to the lips when anger rises and feelings rise.

[00:47:01] Self-control, I find this linked with knowledge. Now, it's one thing to have knowledge, it's another thing to apply it. Mr. Darby once said that spiritual things in the hands of an unspiritual person is like a sword in the hands of a drunk man. Well, you know the damage that can be done by a drunk man if he's a sword. He's absolutely irresponsible and what awful damage he can cause. And a great deal of knowledge about the Bible and about truths in an uncontrolled way, as far as one's spirit is concerned, can cause far more damage amongst the saints than good.

The impressing upon the saints of one's mind without any gracious consideration. But this self-control, what a wonderful feature it is. Not anger, not oppressing in a self-assertive spirit in applying this knowledge, but using it in patience, in meekness, under the control of the spirit [00:48:05] of God, self-control.

What a wonderful thing that is. We hear a lot today, excuse the expression, about blowing one's top. That's out as far as the Christian company is concerned. Shameful thing when brethren express themselves in this way when they gather together to talk about the things of God. Things that we may be speaking about today, the liberty that we have in Christ Jesus, and many, many other features of truth. And yet we think we can express ourselves in anger, in self-assertiveness, in talking about divine things. It's surely a nauseous thing in the sight of heaven. The spirit of meekness, the control of the Holy Spirit, self-control in dealing with these things.

So we find that Paul says at the end of the portion, that they who are Christ have crucified the flesh, that is, it's been done once and for all. [00:49:02] They recognize that in the death of Christ, the flesh was ended once and for all. A death that never needed to be done again, never need to be repeated. The work of Christ was done once, never to be repeated, and those who belong to Christ recognize that. And having recognized it, they walk in the spirit.

Oh, dear brethren, whatever else we may forget, please remember this, that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, every true believer in Christ, and we can walk in the spirit.

The power is there. Have we the heart to forget ourselves, or shall we say, condemn ourselves, and walk in the spirit of self-judgment, and let these ninefold features of the fruit of the spirit be expressed in us individually and collectively.

May it be so, for his name's sake.