

The Spirit of Bondage To Fear

(Rom 8:15)

- The context is still the assurance of justification by faith
- I. Practical application- of the doctrine of the “Spirit of bondage to fear”
 - A) The Spirit of bondage precedes the Spirit of adoption
 - 1. The regenerate person has been brought to see the ¹spirituality of the law, ²something of the holiness of God, and ³something of their own inward depravity
 - i. This is not simply the fear of hell, for even pagans have that fear
 - ii. Gal 3:24- “The law is a schoolmaster”
 - B) The Spirit of bondage is something that we should test or prove (2 Cor 13:5)
 - 1. 1 John 4:1- “Try the spirits....”
 - i. 2 Cor 11:14- Satan transformed into angel of light
 - ii. Satan is always looking to lull a person into a false sense of security and peace concerning their spiritual condition
 - C) Not all experience it to the same degree or intensity (as say Luther)
 - 1. This is obvious from the scriptures (compare the 3000 in Acts 2, the Philippian jailer, Lydia, etc.)
 - i. This lack of intensity is especially noted in those that grow up in “Christian households”
 - a) Many times these people struggle because they do not have that dramatic moment of conversion as some others do
 - b) “I almost with I had grown up a drunkard or harlot”- MLJ’s wife
 - 1) But certainly any doctrine or thinking that places a premium upon sin must be wrong
 - (a) This is Paul’s argument in Romans ch 6
 - 2) Some pervert the teaching of the Lord’s parable:
 - (a) Luke 7:36-50- Parable of the 2 debtors
 - (1) This is not stressing the number of sins, but the self awareness of our sin itself
 - ii. Beware of those that make this about the intensity of the feelings or the “experience”
 - 2. But at the same time we must beware of “easy believism” of “Finney-ism”
 - i. The emphasis in the phrase in the word “bondage”
 - ii. Many hear the good news without ever have understood the bad news
 - a) They hear Christ presented as Savior, and they say “I believe those words,” and then someone pronounces them saved

- b) These types are generally the ones that never have any doubts not ever examine their salvation
 - 1) Example of MLJ and the drunkard in his church
 - 2) Example of Billy Graham in Britain
 - c) Being disturbed and made to examine ourselves is a good thing
- D) It is the very nature of the Holy Spirit that He must make our sin known to us if He has began to reveal the truth in us
 - 1. 1 John 1:5- He is holy and all Light and reveals the Son to us Who is all light as well
 - i. John 3:17-21- The Light must of necessity expel darkness and bring hidden things out in the open
 - a) “Just and holy is Thy name, I am all unrighteousness; Vile and full of sin I am, Thou art full of truth and grace. - Charles Wesley
- E) John 3:30- “He must increase, I must decrease”
 - 1. This has always been the testimony of the saints
 - 2. One of the marks of sanctification is a growing awareness of sin/self and a desperate need of Christ
 - 3. “Growing in grace” requires growing in the knowledge of my unworthiness
- F) This has also been the experience of the saints in times of great revivals
 - 1. Revival always starts in the church, not with the lost
 - i. A person may have been saved 30 years and then all of a sudden the begin to experience a deep feeling of their sin and go on to a deeper reliance and appreciation of Christ
 - ii. It was saints lifting their feet in the pews during Edwards “Sinner In the Hands of an Angry God”
 - a) Granted this is not the “Spirit of bondage to fear” coming again, but it does give an illustration of the method of the Holy Spirit
 - iii. Isa 6:5- Isaiah (already a man of God) is made to cry “woe is me”
 - a) It wasn’t due to the number of his sins, or the heinousness of them, it was seeing God that brought him low
 - 1) “Take off thy shoes, you are standing upon holy ground”
 - 2) Rev 1:17- John fell down as “one dead” at the sight of Christ
 - 3) Luke 5:8- Peter says “depart from me, for I am a sinful man”
 - 4) Rom 7:24- “Oh wretched man that I am
- G) The person who has never experienced the Spirit of bondage also never knows the Spirit of adoption
 - 1. The Holy Spirit working in us must provide us with some sense of our own personal darkness, as He is all light
 - i. Therefore the bondage always precedes the adoption
 - a) This is the order of the presentation of the gospel in scripture:

- 1) Gen 3:15- 1st gospel was in the form of a curse
 - 2) Paul's order in Romans is clear
 - 3) Puritans called this the "preliminary legal work"
- H) Concern about my spiritual condition, lack of assurance and especially my lack of love toward God is itself the work of the Holy Spirit and an assurance
1. Rom 8:7- The unregenerate are never concerned about their lack of love to God
 2. Those Satan beguiles, he never causes them to doubt
- I) Phil 1:6- If the Holy Spirit has begun this work, it will not stop or go away
1. We may block it or run from it
 2. We may ignore it and seek distractions
 - i. But if it is the Holy Spirit at work, He will not leave you alone
 - ii. No matter how small the Spirit of bondage may be in a person, it will always be there, and will be one of the main thoughts he keeps coming back to
 - a) The person that is made scared of hell or God by another means is able to quench it
- II. Relationship to God
- A) This awareness of the Spirit of bondage to fear and subsequently the Spirit of adoption is proof of our relationship to God
1. It is drawing near to God that causes these things
 2. It is not limited to those with the most or worst sins
 3. It is always in proportion to growing in our knowledge and relationship to God that we are made to see our own filth and vileness