

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. (1 Cor 14:1)

2 (1:7) **Fear—Power—Love:** second, do not fear. God has not given us the spirit of timidity. Too often believers—laymen and ministers alike—fear using their gifts. They fear speaking up for Christ and the gospel—they fear...

- ridicule
- embarrassment
- mockery
- criticism
- opposition
- abuse

Being very honest, we have all experienced these fears at one time or another. We failed to witness—to use our gift in speaking up for Christ and in proclaiming the gospel lest we suffer persecution. But note the charge; it is clear and forceful: we are not to fear.

- ⇒ We are not to fear the face of man.
- ⇒ We are not to fear the trials that may come our way because we are living for Christ.
- ⇒ We are not to fear the ridicule and persecution that may be launched against us because we are witnessing and ministering for Christ.

Is it possible to keep from fearing if we live for Christ in this world, a world that is so evil and abusive? How can we keep from being apprehensive if we witness for Christ day by day? How can we keep from being cowardly when the world thinks that religion is to be kept in the church and not out in the world? How can we stand up for Christ when people mock and poke fun at anyone who lives for Christ?

This verse tells us how: we let God equip us. God's equipment does not include fear. The fact is clearly stated: God does not give us the spirit of timidity; God gives us the spirit of love and power, and of self-discipline. The word *spirit* means the believer's spirit: the Holy Spirit of God actually injects power, love, and self-discipline into the spirit of the believer.

1. The Holy Spirit actually infuses power into the believer's spirit. But note: we do not receive power until we begin to minister. Power is not needed if we just sit around and remain silent about Christ. The Holy Spirit gives us power only when we begin to minister and actually need it. It is when we begin to live for Christ—to use our gifts to bear witness for Him—that the Spirit of God injects power into our spirit. When we begin to live and proclaim Christ, the Holy Spirit endows us with power, enormous power...

- power to face the strain of difficulties and trials.
- power to stand tall in living and witnessing for Christ.
- power to take on the job and to do it well—to the very best of our ability.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33)

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the

saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, (Eph 1:18-19)

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, (Eph 3:16)

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, (Eph 3:20)

Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully (Col 1:11)

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (2 Tim 1:7)

But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin. (Micah 3:8)

2. The Holy Spirit infuses love into the believer's spirit. This is *agape* love, the kind of love that loves people even if they are sinners and enemies. It is a love that arises within the mind and will, not in the emotions. It is the kind of love that says, “I will love this person no matter what he does to me. I will care for, nourish, and nurture him. I will share Christ with him. I will treat him just as I would want him to treat me if he knew Christ. I will love him and be responsible to him, no matter how he treats me.”

Note: this kind of love—the kind of love that can love sinners and enemies—is a gift of God's Spirit. No man can stir or work up *agape* love. *Agape* love is God's love. God alone possesses it; therefore, God alone can give it to men. He gives it to all who live for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and who proclaim Him (cp. v.8-10).

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23)

And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Eph 5:2)

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Col 3:14)

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)

3. The Holy Spirit infuses self-discipline into the believer's spirit. “Self-discipline” (*sophronismou*) means self-control; the ability to control one's emotions, feelings, and thoughts in the midst of trials and circumstances, no matter how severe and stressful. It is just as it says, self-discipline—the mastery over one's mind, over one's heart and life despite the trial or opposition. When the believer

begins to live and bear testimony for Christ, the Holy Spirit gives him self-discipline—a most glorious gift.

Thought 1. Think for a moment. Picture a genuine believer...

- who is living for Christ: walking in Christ and sharing Christ all day every day.
- who honestly loves people and treats people just like he should—no matter how they treat him.
- who is controlled—who controls his passions, feelings, behavior, and thoughts.

Picture such a person: Could God let that person live in timidity? Could God fail to keep from giving that person strength, that is, spiritual power and love and self-discipline? The answer is obvious. The person who truly lives for Christ and bears testimony for Christ is delivered from timidity:

- ⇒ he is given power, enormous power.
- ⇒ he is given love, great love for people, no matter who they are.
- ⇒ he is given self-discipline, peace, stability, and security in a dying and insecure world.

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. (Rom 8:5-7)

So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. (1 Th 5:6-7)

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (2 Tim 1:7)

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. (Titus 2:6)

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Pet 1:13)

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. (1 Pet 4:7)

3 (1:8) **Gospel—Witnessing:** third, do not be ashamed of the gospel nor of strong believers who are living and witnessing for Christ. The point and verse are clear enough. No believer is to shrink...

- from identifying with the gospel and the Lord of the gospel.
- from identifying with strong believers who are living for and sharing Christ.

We are to share the gospel—share by living for Christ and by speaking up for Him, bearing testimony of His saving grace. We are to stand up for those who share Christ when they are being ridiculed and persecuted. In fact, note the verse: we are to share in the sufferings of the gospel. Any of us who truly live for the gospel will be opposed and misunderstood by the world. Why? Because we do not

live like the world; we do not live sensual, immoral, ungodly, and worldly lives. We do not follow after the things of the world. Therefore, our righteous and godly lives convict the world of its ungodly deeds. Hence, the world ridicules and persecutes us. But we are not to let this stop us: we are not to shrink from living for and sharing the gospel. We are to jump right in with the strong believer and share the gospel with a starving and lost world that reels under the weight of evil, corruption, and death.

Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. (John 15:20)

"All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you. (John 16:1-4)

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, (Phil 1:29)

So that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. (1 Th 3:3)

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, (2 Tim 3:12)

Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. (1 John 3:13)

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. (1 Pet 4:12-13)

4 (1:8-10) **Gospel:** fourth, share in the sufferings of the gospel. As stated above, this is the duty of believers. If we live for Christ—live for the gospel, live godly lives—the ungodly of the world will persecute us. There is no escape from it. But we are not to shrink from our duty. We are not to fear, nor are we to be ashamed of the gospel. We are to live for the gospel and proclaim the gospel. Scripture gives three strong encouragements, three strong reasons why we should stand up for Christ and the gospel.

1. We are to stand up for the gospel because God has saved us and called us with a holy calling. And note: God saved us by grace, that is, freely. We did not have to work one iota for salvation. We did not have to pay a cent nor do a single thing for salvation. God Himself saved us...

- He has delivered us from sin and the bondages of the flesh (sinful nature).
- He has delivered us from death. Think about it: we shall never die. When our time comes—at the last moment, in an instant of time, in a split second—God will transfer us from this world into His presence. We are saved from ever having to taste death.
- He has saved us from judgment and condemnation, from the punishment of hell.