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“The Power of Your Thoughts” August 2023

Dear Friends,

Many sermons have been preached about alcohol, drugs, immorality, foul language, trashy movies and music, gossip, unforgiveness, and other behaviors that all Christians should purge from their lives. But there is another area wherein far too many Christians struggle, and that is with their thought life. It has been my experience that the thought life is one of the last areas some Christians seem to address when it comes to living a life representative of Jesus. In fact, it has even been said that it doesn't matter what Christians think. That is absolutely outrageous!

What we think will absolutely mold our character and control our destiny. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, our sin nature is removed and replaced with the life and nature of God. However, our mind is not changed at all because it is not a part of our sin nature. Consider what God revealed about our existence in 1 Thessalonians 5:23,

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Despite what some contend, Christians are triune beings; we are a spirit, having a soul, and housed in a physical body. The soul is the realm of our thought life. Just like a computer, our minds contain what is put in them. We are a reflection of how we think. God even said as much in His Word,

‘Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: ⁷For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. (Proverbs 23:6-7)

Notice in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 the Apostle Paul wrote that God is the one who sanctifies us. However, he prayed that our spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless while awaiting the return of Jesus. If God were the One preserving us blameless Paul would have written, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly and preserve your whole spirit and soul and body blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In other words, God is the One who sanctifies but He is not the One who preserves us blameless, that is our responsibility.

Consider what David wrote in Psalm 19:14,

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

If God were creating the meditation of our hearts (our thoughts), there would be no question as to whether or not such meditations would be acceptable in His sight (meeting His approval).

One of the most powerful revelations in scripture concerning our responsibility to develop our thought life is found in Romans 12:1-2,

¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ²And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Using expanded definitions of Greek words used in this passage, this is what we're being told by the Apostle Paul as he wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

¹Therefore, based on everything I have written to you so far, I beg, implore, encourage and plead with you my fellow Believers, by the unfailing and eternal mercies of God, [now that you are washed in the blood of Jesus, born again, and adopted by God as His child] that you subdue your fleshly emotions and feelings and present every part of your being unto God as a holy, living sacrifice, which is acceptable and well-pleasing in His sight, the doing of which is a perfectly logical, sensible, reasonable, and intelligent act by all Christians.

²Do this in the pursuit of no longer remaining conformed to the world's way of acting, doing and thinking: but be ye transformed and changed, experiencing a metamorphosis by the renovation and renewing of your way of thinking, mental acuity, mindset, and manner of deductive reasoning, all of which will enable you to fully comprehend, understand, discern and distinguish every aspect of the full totality of God's will for your life.

The Apostle Peter wrote something very similar to Romans 12:1-2,

¹³Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: ¹⁵But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:13-16)

The responsibility for our salvation rests on two parts: our faith and God's grace (Ephesians 2:8). The responsibility to change our way of thinking, or gird up our minds, so it is aligned with who we have become in Christ is primarily up to us. All of which leads up to some very good questions: How do I preserve my soul (mind and thoughts) blameless as I await the return of Jesus? How do I renew my mind? Those are excellent questions, and we can find the answers in the Bible.

In the above paragraph I wrote that the responsibility to change our way of thinking so it is aligned with who we have become in Christ is primarily up to us. I say primarily and not exclusively because God has not left us to our own devices when it comes to changing the way we think. He has given us the tools necessary to make these changes, but it is up to us to use those tools. This, naturally, leads to another question, "What are those tools?"

Prayer can help, worship can help, and fasting can even be of assistance. But there is one set of tools that will make more impact than anything else when it comes to transforming our thought process: every verse in the Word of God. God's Word originated in His heart and mind. He then spoke it to humanity through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit divinely dictated to various individuals what God wanted recorded (2 Timothy 3:16).

Some Christians seem to dismiss the need to impact their thinking with God's Word, as though just being born again or attending church will bring about such a transformation. However, God has given us a very clear and distinct instruction concerning our approach to the Bible.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

He also tells us what His Word will do for our way of thinking,

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

Not only this, but throughout the Bible God has given instructions and examples of the need to make reading His Word a priority in our lives. Consider the following verses:

The sower soweth the Word. (Mark 4:14)

¹Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. ²But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. ³And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (Psalm 1:1-3)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)

I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. (Psalm 119:15)

Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. (Psalm 17:4)

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Psalm 119:11)

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. (Psalm 119:130)

Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word. (Psalm 119:148)

²⁰My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. ²¹Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. ²²For they are life

unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. (Proverbs 4:20-22)

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. (Proverbs 30:5)

²⁴Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ²⁵And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. (Matthew 7:24-25)

³¹Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; ³²And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31-32)

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Peter 1:4)

I once asked God, “Why do so many Christians struggle in their thought life?” He answered, “Because they have more world input than Word input.” The more we fill our minds with His Word, the more it begins to separate and subdue thoughts that hinder our spiritual growth. The mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), His way of thinking, and His thoughts become more and more dominant in our life. The meditations of our heart line up with His own meditations.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5)

*In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.
(Psalm 94:19)*

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. (Isaiah 26:3)

An evangelist once shared the story of how, after a service at a college campus, a young man who was a student approached him and desperately pleaded for the evangelist to meet him in his dorm room. The evangelist arrived at the dorm room, knocked on the door and when the student let him in, he was shocked to see the walls covered with centerfolds of women from various pornographic magazines. Tearfully, the student looked at the evangelist and begged, “Please,

you've got to pray for me. I have a terrible problem with lust." He had become a product of what he fed into his mind. This is precisely why Psalm 101:3 says, ***I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.*** Do not for one moment doubt that you will ultimately conform to whatever you meditate on.

The more we allow God's Word to be that sharp, two-edged sword in our minds, it will become much easier to do the following,

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

Personally, I not only enjoy reading the Bible, but I also like to sow it into my mind and heart by listening to it being read while I drive or work on my computer. God's Word is spirit, it is life, it is victory, and it is a revelation of what He has done for us, who we are in Christ, and what we can do as He moves through us. May your hunger for God's Word increase daily!

In His Grace,

Jim

PS – Use the form below to request a CD of my sermon, *Your Thoughts Will Govern Your Life.*" It is the perfect companion to what I have shared in this letter.

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