

THE MIND A BATTLEFIELD

NOTE: Paul instructs us to put off the old man . . . with his deeds (Colossians 3:9). Not deeds . . . as the old man . . . but the life (psuche as the old man . . . for he died (Colossians 3:3).

Now put on the life (zoe) and the many members . . . the new man.

The mind of man is his organ of thought. Through it he is equipped to know, think, imagine, remember, and understand. Man's intellect, reasoning, wisdom and cleverness all pertain to the mind. Broadly speaking the mind is the brain. Mind is a psychological term whereas brain is a physiological term. The mind of psychology is the brain of physiology. Man's mind occupies a large place in his life because his thought easily influences his action.

Before Regeneration

According to the Bible the mind of man is unusual in that it constitutes a battlefield where Satan and his evil spirits contend against the truth and hence against the believer. We may illustrate as follows. Man's will and spirit are like a citadel which the evil spirits crave to capture. The open field where the battle is waged for the seizure of the citadel is man's mind. Note how Paul the Apostle describes it: "though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy *arguments* and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every *thought* captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). He initially tells us of a battle—then where the battle is fought—and finally for what objective. This struggle pertains exclusively to man's mind. The Apostle likens man's arguments or reasonings to an enemy's strongholds. He pictures the mind as held by the enemy; it must therefore be broken into by waging war. He concludes that many rebellious thoughts are housed in these strongholds and need to be taken captive to the obedience of Christ. All this plainly shows us that the mind of man is the scene of battle where the evil spirits clash with God.

Scripture explains that before regeneration "the god of this world (had) blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). This verse concurs in what the other verse just quoted said by declaring here that Satan holds on to man's mind by making it blind. Some people perhaps may consider themselves extremely wise in their ability to advance many arguments against the gospel; others may take for granted that unbelief is due to dullness of understanding; but the truth in both cases is that the eyes of man's mind have been covered by Satan. When firmly held by Satan the mind of man becomes "hardened"; man "follows the desires of body and mind (as) children of wrath" and so "is estranged and hostile in mind" because "the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God" (2 Corinthians 3:14; Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 1:21; Romans 8:7).

Upon reading these various passages we can see clearly how the powers of darkness are especially related to man's mind, how it is peculiarly susceptible to Satan's assault. With respect to man's will, emotion and body, the powers of evil are helpless to do anything *directly* unless they first have gained

some ground therein. But with man's mind they can work freely without initially persuading man or securing his invitation. The mind appears to be their possession already. The Apostle in comparing men's minds to an enemy's strongholds seems to imply that Satan and his wicked spirits already have established a deep relationship with the minds of men, that somehow they are using them as their bastions in which to imprison their captives. Through man's mind they impose their authority and through the mind of their captives they transmit poisonous thoughts to others so that these too may rise up against God. It is difficult to estimate how much of the world's philosophy, ethics, knowledge, research, and science flow from the powers of darkness. But of one point we are certain: all arguments and proud obstacles against the knowledge of God are the fortresses of the enemy.

Is it strange to behold the mind in such close proximity to the authorities of wickedness? Was not the sin which mankind first committed that of seeking the knowledge of good and evil, and that at the instigation of Satan? Hence man's mind is especially related to Satan. If we were to peruse the Scriptures carefully and to observe the experiences of the saints we would discover that all communications between human and satanic forces occur in the organ of thought. Take, for instance, Satan's temptation. Every temptation with which he entices man is presented to his *mind*. It is true that Satan often uses the flesh to secure the consent of man, yet in each instance of enticement the enemy creates some kind of thought by which to induce the man. We cannot separate temptation and thought. All temptations are offered us in the form of thoughts. Since the latter are so exposed to the power of darkness, we need to learn how to guard them.

Prior to regeneration man's intellect obstructs him from apprehending God. It is necessary for His mighty power to destroy man's arguments. This is a work which must occur at the hour of new birth—and it does happen then in the form of repentance. The original definition of repentance is none else than "a change of mind." Man in his mind is at enmity with God; therefore God must alter man's mind if He would impart life to him. In his unregenerated state man has a darkened mind; at his regeneration it undergoes a drastic change. Because it has been so united with the devil it is vital for man to receive from God a change of mind before he can receive a new heart (Acts 11:18).

After Regeneration

But even following repentance the believer's mind is not liberated totally from the touch of Satan. As the enemy worked through the mind in former days, so today will he work in the same manner. Paul, in writing to the Corinthian *believers*, confided that he was "afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your *thoughts* will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). The Apostle well recognizes that as the god of this world blinds the mind of unbelievers so will he deceive the mind of the believers. Even though they are saved their life of thought is as yet unrenewed; consequently it remains the most strategic battleground. *The mind suffers the onslaughts of the powers of darkness more than any other organ of the whole man.* We should realize that satanic spirits are directing special attention to our minds and are attacking them unrelentingly—"as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning." Satan did not assail Eve's heart first but rather her head. Similarly today, the evil spirits first attack our head, not our heart, in order to have us corrupted from the simplicity and purity which is

towards Christ. They fully understand how it is the *weakest* point in our entire being, for it had served as their fortress before we believed and even now is not yet entirely overthrown. Attacking the mind is the easiest avenue for them to accomplish their purpose. Eve's heart was sinless and yet she received Satan's suggested thoughts. She was thus beguiled through his deception into forfeiting her reasoning and tumbling into the snare of the enemy. Let a believer accordingly be careful in his boast of possessing an honest and sincere heart, for unless he learns how to repulse the evil spirits in his mind he will continue to be tempted and deceived into losing the sovereignty of his will.

Paul continues by telling us from whence this danger comes: "if some one comes and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted" (vs. 4). The peril for the Christian is to have false teaching injected into his thought life so as to lead him astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. These are the works the "serpent" is perpetrating today. Satan has disguised himself as an angel of light to lead saints to worship with their intellect a Jesus other than the Lord, to receive a spirit other than the Holy Spirit, and by these to propagate a gospel other than the gospel of the grace of God. Paul pronounces these to be nothing else than the deeds of Satan in the Christian's mind. The adversary translates these "doctrines" into thoughts and then imposes them upon the mind of the Christian. How tragic that few appreciate the reality of these activities! Few, indeed, who would ever think that the devil could give such good thoughts to men!

It is possible for a child of God to have a new life and a new heart but be without a new head. With too many saints, the mind, though their heart is new, is still quite old. Their heart is full of love whereas their head is totally lacking in perception. How often the intents of the heart are utterly pure and yet the thoughts in the head are confused. Having become saturated with a mishmash of everything, the mind lacks the most signal element of all, which is spiritual insight. Countless saints genuinely love all children of God, but unfortunately their brain is stuffed with a hodgepodge of theories, opinions and objectives. Quite a number of God's best and most faithful children are the most narrow-minded and prejudice-filled. Already have they decided what is the truth and what truth they shall accept. They reject every other truth because these do not blend in with their preconceived notions. Their head is not as expansive as their heart. Moreover, there are other children of God whose mind can conceive no thought whatever. No matter how many truths have been heard they can neither remember nor practice nor communicate them to others. These have certainly heard a lot, yet they possess no ability to express any of it. For many years they have received truths, but not even a little can they supply for the needs of others. Perhaps they may even brag how full they are of the Holy Spirit! What creates such symptoms is an unrenewed mind.

Man's head damages people more than man's heart! Were believers to learn how to distinguish the renewal of heart from the renewal of head, they would not commit the mistake of believing in man. Christians ought to realize that even one who maintains a most intimate fellowship with God may nevertheless unknowingly have accepted Satan's suggestions in his mind, which consequently precipitate errors in his conduct, words and viewpoints! Aside from the plain teaching of the Bible no man's words are entirely trustworthy. We must not live by a man's words just because we admire or respect that man. His utterance and conduct may be most holy but his thought may not be spiritual. What we therefore

observe is not his speech and behavior but his *mind*. Were we to believe, because of one's life conduct, that what a worker says is God's truth, we would then be making man's word and demeanor our standard of truth instead of the Bible. History is strewn with innumerable cases of sanctified saints who propagated heresies! The simple explanation is that their hearts were renewed but their minds remained old. We will undeniably acknowledge that life is more important than knowledge. Indeed, the former is a thousand times more consequential than the latter. Nonetheless, after some growth in life it is essential to seek the knowledge which proceeds from a renewed mind. We should see how urgent it is for both heart and head to be renewed.

If a Christian's mind is not renewed his life is bound to be lopsided and narrow. Work becomes nigh to impossible for him. The popular teaching nowadays stresses that there should be love, patience, humility and so forth in the Christian life. These traits of the heart are highly significant, since nothing else can replace them. Even so, can we regard these as meeting *all* our needs? They are important but not inclusive. It is equally vital for a person's mind to be renewed, enlarged and strengthened. Otherwise we shall witness an unbalanced life. Many hold that spiritual Christians should not be common sensical, as though the more foolish they are the better. Now except for the fact that such spiritual believers live a little better than the rest, they have no other usefulness and cannot be entrusted with any work. To be sure, we do not advocate worldly wisdom and knowledge, because God's redemption does not call for employing our former sin-stained mind. But He does desire it to be renewed as is our spirit. God wishes to restore our thought life to the excellent state it had when He created it so that we may not only glorify God in our walk but may glorify Him in our thinking as well. Who can estimate the multiplied number of God's children who, due to neglecting their mind, grow narrow, stubborn and obstinate, and even sometimes defiled. They fall short of the glory of God. The Lord's people need to know that if they want to live a full life their mind must be renewed. One of the reasons why the kingdom of God lacks workers today is because too many cannot undertake anything with their head. They neglect to seek its renewal after they are saved and hence permit their work to be obstructed. The Bible declares emphatically that we must "be transformed by the renewal of our mind" (Romans 12:2).

A Mind Under the Attack of the Evil Spirits

If we carefully examine the mental experiences of a Christian we shall see that not merely is he narrow-minded but that he contains many other defects too. His head, for instance, may be teeming with all kinds of uncontrollable thoughts, imaginations, impure pictures, wanderings and confused ideas. His memory may suddenly fail; his power of concentration may be weakened; he may be obsessed by prejudices which arise from unknown sources; his thoughts may be retarded as if his mind were being chained; or he may be flushed with wild thoughts which revolve unceasingly in his head. The Christian may find he is powerless to regulate his mental life and make it obey the intent of his will. He forgets innumerable matters both large and small. He carries out many improper actions, without knowing why and without so much as investigating the reason. Physically he is quite healthy, but mentally he does not comprehend the explanation for these symptoms. Currently many saints encounter these mental difficulties, but without ever knowing why.

Should a person discover that he manifests the above-mentioned signs, he needs to check out a few matters to determine the origin of those signs. He need only ask himself a few questions: Who controls my mind? Myself? And if so, why can I not control it now? Is it God who manages my mind? But according to scriptural principle God never governs the mind for man. (We shall enlarge on this principle subsequently). If it is neither I nor God who regulates the mental life, who then is in control? It obviously is the powers of darkness who foment these mental symptoms. So whenever a child of God notes that he is no longer able to govern the mind, he ought to perceive at once that it is the enemy who is managing it.

One fact which we must always bear in mind is: man possesses free will. God's intention is for man to control himself. Man has the authority to regulate his every natural endowment; hence his mental processes should be subject to the power of his will. A Christian ought to inquire of himself: Are these *my* thoughts? Is it *I* who am thinking? If it is not I thinking, it must then be the evil spirit who is able to work in man's mind. Since I will not to think (and my mind usually follows my will) then the thoughts which presently arise in my head cannot be mine but rather are those which emanate from another "person" who uses the ability of my mind against my own will. The person should know that in case he has not intended to think and yet there are thoughts arising in his head, he must conclude that these are not of him but of the evil spirit.

To determine whether an idea is of himself or of the wicked spirit, a Christian should observe how it arose. If in the beginning his mental faculty is peaceful and composed and is functioning normally and naturally according to the circumstances he is in, but suddenly a thought or a complete idea (having no bearing on his present circumstances or the work in which he is engaged) flashes across his brain, such inordinate and lightning quick thought is most likely the action of evil spirits. They are attempting to inject their thoughts into the believer's head and thus induce him to accept them as his own. It is unmistakable that the notion which the evil spirits introduce into man's mind is a matter he has not thought about at the moment and which does not follow the trend of his thinking. It is entirely "new"—something he never thought of himself. It has arisen abruptly and all by itself. When one gains this kind of thought it is well for him to inquire: Do I really think in *this* manner? Is it really *I* who am thinking? Do I want to think that way? Or is this something which simply becomes activated in my mind all by itself? The child of God should determine whether or not it is he himself who does the thinking. If he has not originated the idea but on the contrary opposes it, and yet it abides in his head, he then can assume that that idea issues from the enemy. Each thought which man chooses not to think and each one which opposes man's will come not from the man but from the outside.

Oftentimes also one's brain is abounding with sundry ideas which he is helpless to stop. His head is like a thought machine, operated by external force; it continues to think but is impotent to desist. The believer may shake his head repeatedly, yet he cannot shake off the thoughts in his mind. They come to him in waves, rolling unceasingly day and night. There is no way to terminate them. He is not aware that this is but the activity of the evil spirit. He ought to understand what a "thought" is. It is something which his *mind grasps at*. But in the case of these unmanageable thoughts it is not that his mind is grasping at something but rather that *something is grasping his mind*. In the natural course of events it is the mind which thinks about matters; now it is these matters which force the mind to think. Frequently a

person wishes to set aside a matter but some external power keeps reminding him of it, not permitting him to forget and forcing him to think on further. This is the perpetration of evil spirits.

To summarize, then, we should investigate every *abnormal* sign. Aside from a natural cause such as sickness, all other abnormal indicators have their source with evil spirits. God never interferes with the operation of man's natural ability; He never abruptly mixes in His thought with man's nor does He abruptly restrict or destroy the functioning of man's intellect. The lightning cessation of all thoughts as though the brain has become a vacuum, the flashing interjection of thought at complete variance with the trend then current in the mind, the hasty severance of memory as if a wire had snapped leaving the mind paralyzed: all these are the results of the operation of the enemy. Because the evil spirit has seized hold of the organ of thought, he is able either to force it to cease functioning or by loosening his grip to let it work again. We must recognize that natural causes can produce only natural symptoms. Flash thoughts or loss of memory are entirely beyond the ability or control of our will and are contrary to natural cause and effect: they must therefore be inspired by supernatural evil forces.

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul is found writing about "the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (2:2). It is very important to know that the powers of darkness work not only outside but inside the man as well. When men work they can at most do so with their words, gestures or bodily movements; the evil spirits, however, can work with all these but even more. They can act from the outside in the same way as man acts, but they can work additionally from the inside. This means that they can squeeze themselves into man's thought life and work therein. Man is not capable of doing this: he is unable to enter another man's brain, subtly making many suggestions and confusing this matter of the source of the thoughts; but the evil spirits can. They possess an ability in communication which man does not have. They work initially in man's mind and then reach to his emotion, for mind and emotion are closely knit: they operate first in the mind and from there they arrive at man's volition, because mind and will are intimately joined too.

The manner by which these enemy spirits operate is to plant covertly in man's head notions which they enjoy so as to accomplish their aim, or, conversely, they block thoughts which they do not relish so that man cannot think them through. The Bible distinctly indicates that the powers of darkness are able both to impart ideas to man and to steal them from him. "The devil had already *put* it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him" (John 13:2). This shows that Satan can put his thought into man's mind. "Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts" (Luke 8:12). This attests that Satan removes whatever word man ought to remember and causes him to forget everything. These two verses reveal the two-fold operation of the evil spirits upon the mind of man, either to add something to, or subtract something from, his mind.

The Causes of the Attack of the Evil Spirits

Why is the Christian's mental life so beset by evil spirits? This can be answered in one sentence: believers afford the evil spirits (or the devil) the opportunity to attack. Let everyone clearly understand that it is possible for one's mind to be assaulted by the devil. This is confirmed by the experience of many saints. And the area primarily assailed by him is the thinking faculty, for it has a special affinity towards

evil spirits. It either partially or totally has slipped out from under man's sovereignty and has come under their dictate.

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