

STRAIGHTWAY

"AND STRAIGHTWAY THEY FORSOOK THEIR NETS, AND FOLLOWED HIM" (MARK 1:18).
CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

The Power of the Thought Life

Dr. H. T. Spence

Two powers that have profound influence upon the human spirit are the mind and the thought life. Everything in life prompts thoughts, and these thoughts have a profound influence upon our spirit. Although we can change some circumstances to alter their outcome, there are many circumstances we do not have control of. Such circumstances we must commit to the winds of providence.

Nevertheless, there is one thing that we can have control over in *every* circumstance: our thoughts concerning each circumstance. In time, our thoughts become a part of our human spirit fashioning what we will become as we come out of a circumstance. From one perspective, we are the maker of who we are by virtue of the thoughts we both choose and cultivate. But we must take courage when *uninvited* thoughts are forced upon us; these thoughts are not our thoughts! We must resist and wage a war against them. If we do not resist them, they then become our thoughts unto which our will unites.

The Spirit versus the Flesh

At the outset of this biblical burden, a few observations must be made concerning the power of thought and its association with the physical, frail human body. In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ observed to His sleeping disciples that the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41b). This observation may be true in a variety of contexts of the Christian, even in the thought life.

The Christian heart and spirit desire right thoughts, and they experience such thoughts with regularity. Moods and the thoughts bringing and feeding those moods certainly can be triggered by a variety of situations and circumstances in life. The seasons of changes in life in both women and men can affect the moods and thoughts of their lives. At these seasons, a Christian must lay hold of these thoughts and not permit them to control his thinking and thus his living. We must pray for God to help us through these seasons of changes in life; never let them control you!

There can also be emotional and mental side effects resulting from changes or malfunctions of any of the body's seventy-eight organs. Sometimes moods and thoughts are affected by these bodily changes. For example, because the thyroid gland influences every other organ of the body, its malfunction can have profound effects upon thoughts and moods. Women are three times more likely than men to develop a dysfunctional thyroid. Both the more common hypothyroidism (under-active) and hyperthyroidism (over-active) can arise at any age, although their risks increase with age. It is also important to understand that "every single cell in the body has receptors for thyroid hormones, and without proper thyroid function many systems in your body suffer," even the mood swings and the thoughts of the mind. The more severe the thyroid disease, the more severe may be the

mood and thought changes. Such side effects can arise as moods of darkness and despair, or as articulated thoughts bombarding the mind. These physical diseases may need medical or natural remedies.

Through all this, the Christian woman must pray for God to help her deal with the imaginary thoughts that are not true or real. Otherwise, such thoughts can lead to dark moods (though not from her heart) that are the side effects of a malfunctioning organ. These vacillating emotions can reach the border of her soul and affect the mind. Yes, this can happen even to a Christian.

The Thought World of Our Soul

Amidst day-by-day living, the Christian must protect his mind and moods with thoughts that will truly benefit his soul as well. The mind is the master-weaver of both the inner garment of character and the outer garment of cultured living. How often in earlier years we let our thoughts in certain circumstances run wild, weaving only ignorance and pain. But there must come a time when we lay hold of the power of our thoughts and their influence over our spirit. We must begin to weave with enlightenment and a proper perspective of our thoughts.

The Lord often called men's attention to their thinking about various aspects of life and truth.

*And think not to say within yourselves,
We have Abraham to our father: for I
say unto you, that God is able of these*

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stones to raise up children unto Abraham (Matt. 3:9).

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking (Matt. 6:7).

What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? (Matt. 17:25).

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? (Matt. 21:28).

What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? (Matt. 22:42).

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh (Matt. 24:44).

At the garden when Peter took a sword to defend the Lord, it is stated,

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (Matt. 26:52).

What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death (Matt. 26:66).

Christ often asked the disciples and others: What do you think about this? "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." The expression "as a man thinketh" embraces the whole of a man's being; it also affects how he lives and responds to every aspect of life. A man's true character is the complete sum of his thoughts. As a plant springs from seed and could not come into being without the seed, so every act of a man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and the act could not have appeared without those thoughts. This principle includes spontaneous and unpremeditated acts as well as those which are deliberately executed. The acts of a man are the blossom of his thoughts; either joy or suffering are the fruits of these thoughts.

We are made or unmade by ourselves. In the armory of thought we forge the weapons by which we either destroy or build up ourselves. Even in our weakest or most abandoned state, our thoughts about life are most crucial. At such times how will we govern ourselves? When reflecting upon our condition, if we immediately search diligently for the Law upon which our life is established, we will then become a wise master builder.

Carefully note Matthew 7:24–27:

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will

likened him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and 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. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

This is most important: we will have to dwell in the house that our thinking has built. May these thoughts be consumed in continued doing and obeying the Word of God.

Oh, the stages of a tested life! It first begins with the rain from above; it continues with floods rising from beneath and winds from every corner. But a well-built house is kept from destruction. How sad to see professing Christians destroyed by circumstances and testings because of a thought life built upon the sands of humanism.

Similarly, one's mind may be likened to a garden that is either cultivated or allowed to run wild. Whether cultivated or neglected, any field will *bring forth* something. When no useful seeds are sown there, an abundance of useless weed seeds will abound therein. Just as a gardener cultivates his plot, keeping it free from weeds, and growing the flowers and fruits he desires, man must cultivate the garden of his mind, weeding out all the wrong, useless, and

impure thoughts, and cultivating toward perfection the flowers and fruits of right, useful, and pure thoughts.

We must come to understand the laws of thought that operate in the shaping of our character, circumstances, and destiny. Therefore, parents are crucial in guiding the developing thought life of their children. They are not merely to be training right actions and responses. Thought and character are one, and as character can only manifest and discover itself through environment and circumstance, the outer conditions of a person's life will always be harmoniously related to this inner state of the heart and mind.

The Bible says, "Daniel purposed in his heart!" What was this? His thought life in God's Word set the course of what he would do no matter the circumstances. Every thought-seed sown or allowed to fall into the mind and to take root there produces its own fruit, blossoming eventually into an act and bearing its own fruit of opportunity and circumstance. Good thoughts bear good fruit; bad thoughts produce bad fruit. Often men are anxious to improve their circumstances but are unwilling to improve themselves, choosing to remain bound within by bad thoughts. But to what degree is this to be found in the life of God's people? The lives of Jacob and Joseph illustrate principles about the thought life.

Our Background and Its Influence upon Our Thinking

With a passive father and a most influential mother, Jacob had a difficult upbringing. His only sibling was his brother Esau. Esau was a man whose thought life was toward the world. Their father had thoughts toward the comforts of life; their mother had thoughts toward scheming, deception, and manipulation. Jacob grew up in a home filled with a variety of thoughts that produced a variety of people. Jacob had some thoughts on good things, but these were never cultivated. Though a grown, unmarried man at home, his thinking was still immature at the age of seventy-seven. If the providence of God had not worked to get him out of the home, he may never have left home; truly another story would have unfolded about him.

Note how Jacob finally left home. Knowing Esau desired to kill Jacob, Rebekah convinced Isaac to send Jacob away to gain a wife from *her* family. Isaac did not discern all that was in his wife's request. She convinced Isaac to send Jacob away to her brother Laban in Haran (Padan-aram). Amidst Rebekah's manipulation, God worked to get Jacob out of his weak home, away from his family proclivities controlling the lives of all who lived there. Though Jacob later saw his father again, God did not permit Jacob to see his mother again. Nevertheless, her well-established influence lingered long in his life and thinking.

After his five-hundred-mile journey, Jacob was thrown into another family that was more worldly, more scheming, and more conniving than the home from whence he came! His future father-in-law Laban religiously combined the memory of the true God with cultural pagan gods. He was a man given to worldly ways and to a spirit of domination and manipulation. Yes, Laban was a man who could mix his antithetical thoughts syncretistically; he truly was the product of his bad thinking. This dominating figure forced Jacob back to not only thoughts of home but also thoughts of the God Who was taught amidst the weaknesses of his parents. Soon, a greater seriousness began to take hold of his thought life.

In Genesis 31:1–16, Jacob departs Haran and his father-in-law after twenty years away from his father. Many thoughts prompted his decision to take his family and leave, never to return to Laban. On his journey back home, Laban caught up with Jacob. This encounter prompted more thoughts and more decisions in Jacob's mind. Finally in Genesis 32:6, 7, Jacob truly comes face to face with his past:

And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; And said,

If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

Oh, how difficult it is to change the way of past thinking! Jacob immediately responds according to his habitual thought life. Jacob needed a crisis to aid in such a change. This aid of change came at Peniel, where he wrestled with the angel. There the Angel of the Lord finally changed Jacob's old nature. This was the Angel Jacob declared redeemed him from all evil (Gen. 48:16). This blessed conflict was the work of sanctification (Rom. 6).

Later came more circumstances such as the failure of his own children who thought to vindicate the dishonoring of their sister Dinah. Their thoughts inspired actions to which Jacob responded,

Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land...and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house (Gen. 34:30).

Next in Genesis 35, the Lord came to Jacob and called him back to Bethel. This call prompted new thoughts in his mind concerning the worldly dress of his family and their need of deliverance from the gods they had embraced since the days that Rachel stole the gods of her father. These thoughts prompted his actions to bury and hide all these things under an oak.

Increasing circumstances coming to Jacob prompted more thoughts. These thoughts were mixing with one another and producing a spirit, a mood in this dear man. In Genesis 35 there was the death of Deborah (the nurse of his mother Rebekah, the last link to his mother); then his wife Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin. Beginning in Genesis 37, several other circumstances occurred such as the losing of Joseph, then twenty-two years later the losing of Simeon (in Egypt), and the possibility of losing Benjamin. All these circumstances now had a powerful influence on Jacob's thinking:

Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me (Gen. 42:36).

Note the ever-mounting circumstances and, oh, the thoughts, thoughts, and more thoughts that filled his mind and produced a spirit, a mood, a manner, and a character of weakness! Finally, the day came when we read in Genesis 45:25–28,

And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: And Israel said, It is enough;

Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

Oh, dear Christian, we tend to see the negative, dark side of life amidst increasing complex circumstances of life. Thus, Jacob formed thoughts against himself and contrary to the principle of God's providence. His thoughts became darker and darker. Yes, although delivered from the power of the sin principle, Jacob needed the ongoing working of sanctification in his thought life concerning the circumstances God's providence had brought!

How often we read things into words that were never intended, or we surmise incorrectly about providential events only to unnecessarily coddle hurt feelings. Perhaps there are darkening thoughts about our physical condition or moods of melancholy about events that happened years ago to us. Dear Christian, the Devil takes advantage of such an unsteady mind!

Things were finally well with Jacob when he went down to Egypt, seeing with his own eyes his beloved Joseph and his other two sons freed from prison. These circumstances created thoughts of good and not evil. His life ended with better thoughts, yea, victorious thoughts. But amidst this precious end, oh, the years Jacob missed having good thoughts, loving thoughts of the Lord, and trusting thoughts in providence. For so many years his heart was infected with inward, sorrowful, and dark thoughts! Many times, such

thoughts affected his words to his family, causing his sons much agony and secretive deceptions with him. How Jacob had been years ago with his father seems minor to the deeper deceptions his own sons manifested toward him!

Joseph and His Thought Life

The better end to Jacob's thought life is not always the case with those who have lived a long life. If this is so, it may be an indication that the earlier thoughts were not always proper and right in principles. It is one thing to have misfortunes, but another thing to be bitter with God in the secret thought life of a Christian.

Despite all the difficult and sorrowful circumstances that Joseph went through, his thought life seemed to have been one of trusting God and not permitting bitterness to enter his heart.

1. He was hated by his brethren.
2. He was sold by his brethren.
3. He became a slave in Egypt.
4. His character was slandered before Potiphar.
5. He was imprisoned through false accusations.
6. He was forgotten in jail by the butler.
7. He lived thirteen years on the dark side of providence.

Nevertheless, note Joseph's heart when his own children were born:

And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction (Gen. 41:51, 52).

Note his heart when he finally revealed himself to his brethren:

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.... And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God... (Gen. 45:5, 7, 8a).

Also note his final words when his brothers feared his turning against them after the father Jacob died:

And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them (Gen. 50:19–21).

Oh, the Thoughts of My Mind and Heart!

We must ever remember the words of the Lord in Jeremiah 29:11:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts

of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected [favorable] end.

God has thoughts in His mind about us, yet they are thoughts of peace and not of evil! When circumstances come our way, we must be careful how such circumstances prompt certain thoughts about God, His providence, and about the circumstance itself:

He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly (Prov. 14:29).

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones (Prov. 17:22).

He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit (Prov. 17:27).

The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear? (Prov. 18:14).

My thought life profoundly affects my spirit toward others; it affects how I approach my circumstances, how I think of God in those circumstances, and so much more in my life. Good thoughts and actions will never produce bad results; bad thoughts and actions will never produce good results. Nothing can come from corn but corn, nothing from weeds but weeds. As the heart, so is the life. My *within* is ceaselessly becoming my *without*. Nothing remains unrevealed. That which is hidden is but for a time; it ripens and springs forth at last. The fourfold order of the universe is seed,

tree, blossom, and then fruit. From the state of a man's heart proceed the conditions of his life; his thoughts blossom into deeds, and his deeds bear the fruit of character and destiny. Life is ever unfolding from within. Whatever the thoughts found within the heart, they at last reveal themselves in words, actions, and things accomplished. As the fountain from the hidden spring, so issues man's life from the secret recesses of his heart. All that he is and does is generated there.

God has made us the keeper of our heart (Prov. 4:23). He has also made us the watcher of our mind. We must be the sentinel for our life. Therefore, a man can be diligent (by God's precious grace) or negligent in these matters. By God's help we can carefully keep our heart more and more diligently; we can become the guardian against unrighteous thoughts. Or we can choose to live loosely and carelessly, neglecting to guard the mind and heart.

Conclusion

One reason God sent the Flood is expressed in Genesis 6:5:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The imagination is the product of a mind's collective formation of a multitude of thoughts. The mind within itself can both create illusion and perceive reality. One can potentially surround himself

with created illusions whereby the perception of truth is lost. On the other hand, he can by the Word of God destroy such illusions and establish Truth in his thought life.

The mind is a weaver of destiny: thought is the thread; good and evil deeds are the warp and woof. The web woven upon the loom of life and character becomes the garment of life. One's thought life clothes itself in garments of its own making.

Temptation does not arise from the outer object of circumstances; it arises in the lust of the mind for that object.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:14, 15).

Every moment of one's thought life must be guarded because it is the door of all temptation.

A man's life proceeds from his heart and mind: he has compounded that mind by his own thoughts and deeds. Every established thought condition is an acquired habit. A thought constantly repeated at last becomes a fixed habit of the mind, and from such habits proceed the life. For example, when commencing to learn a trade, a young man cannot deftly manage his tools; however, after long repetition and practice, he becomes skillful with perfect ease. Likewise, the mind through perseverance, prayer, and God's grace

can truly become stayed on the Lord. Through His amazing grace, Spirit and Word, God can help the mind and heart to even reform the thought habits of a believer.

This age has become more volatile and more aggressive in claiming the thought life of Christian youth. Dear youth, be careful about dwelling on thoughts that are subtle enemies to the heart and against the hope of good character. It is important what we think on in our teenage years because it will have a profound influence on what we will be when we enter the prime of life. We plead with our youth to control their thought life! Do not let thoughts run away into areas that will destroy your future. There must be intentional, careful guidance and guardianship upon your thoughts. You will become what you are given to in thought. The thought life must be harnessed and controlled, or it will drift aimlessly into areas that bring grief to the Lord. A drifting thought life is not healthy; it leads to apathetic thinking, which in turn will lead to an apathetic life.

How often those who come to Christ in later teenage or adult years have a great battle about the memory bank of their past thoughts. This is what the Devil will draw from to weaken their Christian lives. But there is hope in Christ and His work at Calvary. We can come to Christ's *mind* (Phil. 2:5), to His process of thinking. God can heal a broken mind; God can heal the mind to be one that is stayed upon the

Lord. Such a healing will take a consistent walk with Christ and the continual feeding upon His Word to provide thoughts to take the place of the old diet of thoughts.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound [healthy] mind (2 Tim. 1:7).

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 (Phil. 4:8).

May God help us on the battleground of our thought life where the Devil and God meet in a holy war for the soul! **S**

**Until I Die,
A Preacher Am I!
Dr. H. T. Spence**

Amidst the great falling away of our times, I believe the greatest need at this hour in history is godly, Holy Ghost anointed preachers who are willing to pick up the mantle of God's men of the past and declare uncompromisingly, "Thus saith the Lord!" to this present ungodly and wicked generation.

May the fire of the calling ever burn until the end of our days! For "until I die, a preacher am I."

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The Cultivating of the Mind

Dr. H. T. Spence

One of sin's greatest side effects from our past is its influence upon the mind. Sin certainly affects the body. Sometimes permanent damage like sclerosis of the liver from heavy alcohol consumption occurs. Heavy use of drugs can bring permanent damage to the brain. Many immoral sins can transmit diseases that leave permanent side effects upon the body. However, all sins bring some damage to the mind and the thought life of an individual. Perhaps this damage is what haunts us the most.

Note the words of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians:

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course [aion, age] of this world [kosmos, world system], according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh [energizeth] in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation [manner of living, lifestyle] in times past in the lusts [epithumios, the intense burnings] of our flesh, fulfilling the desires [thelaemata, the things fleshly willed] of the flesh and of the mind [dianoion, the repetitive thoughts that had an evil significance in our thinking]; and were by nature the children of wrath [God's wrath upon us], even as others (2:2, 3).

How do sins and our past lifestyles affect our mind? Although some

thoughts are fleeting never to return, other thoughts may recur regularly. Regularly recurring thoughts can spread in our mind with great familiarity and breed imaginations. These imaginations can become so ingrained that they become a part of our daily living.

The Power of Repetitive Thinking

Patterns in one's process of thinking can eventually spawn other thought proclivities. A child may cultivate a tendency to fear things, perhaps due to either an event in his life or the influence of parents or grandparents given to fear. These fears can easily begin to control the mind. After a while, such thoughts develop a process of habitual thinking and response that becomes very natural to the individual. Eventually, it becomes very difficult to be delivered from a habitual rut of thinking. The ruts of one's repetitive thinking can become the habitual destiny of his perception of life's experiences without any prompting.

When the sin principle begins to manifest itself in a child's life, it is accompanied with thoughts. Sin can be discovered in the natural concourse of life, such as through the eye gate or the ear gate. Such a first-time discovery was never the intentional pursuit of that child. It seems that God has great mercy upon a child discovering a sin. Thank God, sin comes on us gradually

rather than aggressively and overwhelmingly.

However, a sin could also be introduced to a child through other influences. How often sins have been introduced to a child through other children (who were themselves introduced to the sin by others). Immoral sins of the flesh will bring about explosions of thought that produce excitement; these excited thoughts return to invite the mind and body to enter that sin again. Such sins become increasingly addictive, consuming more and more time as their drawing power proliferates in the mind and heart. In the natural, it becomes next to impossible to be delivered from the constant return and haunting of such thoughts. Memory becomes more empowered as the frequency of such sins increases. The thought life now feeds the drawing power to the sin. Evil habits of the body result from bad habits of thinking.

One may wonder if continued sinning feeds continued bad thinking or continued flirtatious thoughts feed continued sinning. Eventually, both the cause of the sin and the manifestation of the sin can be declared to be feeding one another. Such a person is truly a slave in bondage to warped thoughts, incapable of escaping their day and night captivity. The apostle Peter speaks of such a mental obsession in 2 Peter 2:14:

Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have

exercised with covetous practices; cursed children.

Such constant thoughts bring a person to a mind bankrupt of any good, where every thought is overwhelmingly drawn to the obsession of the sin. We must remember that every sight and sound in life prompts thoughts. Even smells at times may prompt thoughts leading back to powerful memories or certain sins of the past.

The death of Christ included His bearing of our sins in His own body. His flesh was crucified on the cross, becoming our Old Man. This act of Christ in our behalf provides forgiveness from every sin we have committed and every thought of sin against God. But we must also ask what is the provision within Christ's great atonement to break the side effect of those sins, especially the side effect of thought hindering our Christian life?

In Proverbs 5, the sage of Jerusalem warned of the dangers the "strange woman" could pose to the young man "void of understanding." He also declared how such "embracing" (v. 20, both in the act of the flesh and in the thought life) could ruin a young man in many areas of his life. Solomon concludes this chapter with these words:

His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Sins in unchecked thought lead to sins of action that can bring lasting bad fruit to the life.

The Power of Christ for the Mind

In Hebrews 8:10, the apostle Paul reveals how the “new” covenant is of greater worth and power:

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

Although the Epistle to the Hebrews does reveal what Israel will come to know when they turn to the Lord with all their hearts, this new covenant is to be known of us *now*, because we have come to accept this new covenant and have placed our trust in Him! Therefore, the Lord desires at the new birth to begin placing “My laws” into our minds and writing them in our hearts! Also note later in Hebrews 10:16:

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.

In both passages we read of “putting” and “writing” His laws into both the heart and the mind.

Dear reader, let us carefully note these words. The Lord promises “I will put...,” or He will continue to give into their minds. He promises to continue to write them in their hearts. And He

assures them He will be their God. The original Greek wording simply embellishes the fact that God Himself will provide the continuation of *giving* and *writing* the deeper we go with and in Him. There is also the powerful revelation given in Romans 12:1, 2:

I 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. And 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.

Paul declares the Lord’s *constant* transforming of the life through the mind, the thought life! It is through this constant, moment-by-moment renewing of the mind that we can prove or test the will of God of which Paul gives a threefold description of its effect: it is *good* or beautiful in its purpose; it is *acceptable* in its living before God; and it is *perfect* or being seen in stable maturity of living and thinking. This singular will of God is good, acceptable, and perfect. This passage (Rom. 12:1, 2) truly reveals that the mind is the essential key to holy character in the Christian life and to the precious, unique touches of grace and loveliness constantly contributing to the life.

The Essentials of Holy Character and the Exquisite Touches of Grace

Although our thought life is an important part of the essentials of holy character, God's inward law in the heart and mind seeks to mature us beyond just the essentials. Also needed are the *exquisite touches of grace* within our minds and hearts. Perhaps Paul's writing to the Philippians reveals these "exquisites" of His grace:

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 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. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you (4:6-9).

To the essentials of a constantly renewed mind, the Lord seeks to add such exquisite touches of His divine grace in our minds and hearts. This passage deals with the mind, the thought life, the inner man, and its contemplations.

Once again, Paul reveals that the thought life becomes an integral part of the character and maturity of the Christian's walk with God. As a pastor of young people, I have often encouraged them that this is the time in their lives to be conscious of cultivating a good thought life. We must not dwell in thought on things that are impure and unwholesome for the life. Even when temptations come, we must not dwell on the temptation itself. The Devil cannot read our minds, but he can project thoughts into our minds. And when he does project such evil thoughts, we must immediately dismiss them from our thinking. To give them audience only weakens us to immediately receive more thoughts from him. A thought presented to me does not become *my* thought until my will unites with that thought. Such a thought could have commenced from the Devil; but once my will unites with it in my thinking, rather than battling against it, it then becomes my thought. I have willfully made it to be part of my thinking.

We have often reminded our audience that *character* is a life dominated by certain principles; *Christian character* is a life dominated by Christian principles. But then there is the word *culture*. Culture is the outworking of character within. What we are in thought and heart will come out in the way or manner that we live. The word *culture* literally means the "fineness of feelings, thoughts, tastes, and manners." It regards the preparation

of these things within the life. To cultivate our thought life and our manner of living is very important to the Christian. We certainly understand this important truth in the growing of plants. After preparing the soil and planting the seed, there is the process of cultivating the growth of that plant. How much more important is this truth in improving and developing the education of our minds. To all these things we must invest time, thought, and effort to bring about a desired end. We must cultivate ourselves in a variety of areas to promote growth and development. Even honorable friendships must be cultivated with others.

If these cultivations are admirable in a prepared natural life, then they are equally important for the Christian life. We do not enter the Christian life naturally good. Our previous life before Christ found us was deeply damaged by our sins and ways. Now forgiven by God's amazing grace, we must begin *cultivating* a life for God, beginning with the way we think, the way we dress, the way we live, and the way we speak to one another. However, it all must begin with a definite change of heart through Christ coming into the life. A change of mind is a first principle in the transition from the old life to the new life in Christ.

This change or refining of the mind begins with what the Bible calls *metanoia* ("change of mind"), the change of perception about God, Christ,

ourselves, sin, and the daily living of life. This *metanoia* that describes a change of our perceptive mind is translated *repentance* in the Bible. Repentance is the change of mind needed to come to Christ. We must repent of our former ways and thinking about everything. We must be changed unto a new longing for holy character and for the grace of God to enter even into the secondary areas of life for Christ's glory.

Yes, a change in the way we think of life and living is necessary. This change will manifest itself in areas such as our appearance, the grooming of the body, and our responses in life. But of all the changes that come in being born again, the mind is one of the most important, integral influences to what we are becoming in Christ. Perhaps we must see this in two important areas: what are the essentials, and what are the embellishments of grace for the cultivation of my thought life?

Philippians 4:7 says, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Do we read these words carefully? There is the keeping of the heart and mind through Christ Jesus, for Paul earlier (2:5a) states, "Let this mind be in you" or "Let this process of thinking be in you." Then in Philippians 4:8 he can state, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true...."

Before we view the list given by Paul, we must observe at the end of the verse

two classifications of these qualities: First, there is *virtue*: "If there be any virtue." Virtue denotes the fundamental and essential excellencies contributing to holy character. Second, there is *praise*: "If there be any praise." Praise expresses those qualities, which while essential, give exquisite refinement to the life. The Christian must see both *virtue* and *praise* for the mind and heart.

At the beginning of verse eight is the first group of qualities: *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, and whatsoever things are just* (right). Without these three qualities there is no morality and no true religion of heart and life. These are the cardinal virtues of life. They are the warp and woof on which the other qualities are embroidered as godly adornings.

The second group of qualities then follows: *whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and whatsoever things are of good report* (admirable). Whatever will add virtue to the foundation of your life and whatever will bring praise are the needed embellishments of the Christian life. These embellishments are the tokens of grace's continued work in the life. The Christian life is the product of grace in my thought life! But what are these characteristics that are so needed for the refining of my Christian life?

The true, honest, and just things cover our doctrinal thinking, our right relationship to others, and our relationship before God in justification.

These are essential qualities. But how do they affect the mind? These are the moral qualities that affect the way I live and the direction of my inner will. These are the essentials of character, for my life must be founded upon right principles. True, honest, and just thinking about all things in my life before God and others is necessary. Without such thinking there is no true religion and morality of life.

But to these essential qualities must be added additional graces of Christian character. Psalm 110:3 speaks of the beauties of holiness; one may be a Christian without these abounding beauties. These graces are the refinement of holy character, the lesser touches by which Christian maturity is shaped, as marble is polished by a

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thousand little touches. The difference between an ordinary copy and a work of genius lies in minute details which the uncultivated eye might never be able to detect.

Note Christ's words to the Pharisees in Luke 11:42:

But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

What are some of these things "ye ought to have done"? A quality absent in these Pharisees was true dignity or self-respect. There is a difference between conceit and self-respect. First Timothy 4:12 states, "Let no man despise thy youth." How do you think about yourself? The Lord always lived before others with true dignity and allowed no person to become too familiar with Him. The disciple that leaned upon Jesus' breast looked up to Him with sacred awe. Even Paul was a fine example of true manliness: when unjustly imprisoned, rather than sneaking out to run away, he chose to manfully answer (Acts 16:37). The soul in which the Holy Spirit dwells will always carry itself with dignity and sacred loftiness. This is the safeguard of woman and the glory of man.

Modesty of apparel is certainly an important aspect of this truth, for we live in a time when casual living has basically become the sloppy, disheveled, and the unkempt look. Modesty also

includes the truth of not thinking highly of yourself; modesty is never bold or forward. When talent and genius begin to show off, the person sinks below contempt. When spiritual gifts and holy services are used to glorify the possessor or the worker, then they become objects of derision and lose their merit. The seraphim in Isaiah 6 covered not only their faces but also their feet with their wings, hiding both their beauty and service.

Additionally, personal habits have much to do with the loveliness of our character. It may not be true that "cleanliness is next to godliness" (some are obsessed with being clean physically, but not spiritually), but it stands near it. Chewing tobacco, smoking, snuffing, and other unclean habits, may not be the basest of crimes, but they are not among the things that are lovely, venerable, or of good report. We must be ready to lay aside not only defilements but also defects that have become part of our character.

Good manners, refinement, and courtesy are among the things that are lovely and attractive in our Christian example. Although there is an affectation of refinement that is nothing but gloss and counterfeit, the true follower of Jesus will always be gentle and gentlemanly, considerate of others and careful to avoid offense. First John 3:1 reveals how this is to come forth to others:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should

be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

The propriety of good sense, the fitness of things, and always acting with good taste are among the most charming features of a well-balanced character. Second Timothy 1:7 speaks of the spirit of a sound mind. First Corinthians 13:5 declares, "Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

Added to these refinements of character are fitting speech and a well governed tongue, either in spoken or written words. Proverbs 29:11 sadly reveals, "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards." Silence is golden, and a quiet dignity is becoming if without compromise.

Another need of the Christian is cheerfulness of disposition; this also is a revelation of the Christian's thought life. When you meet some Christians, it is like shaking hands with a corpse. With other Christians, their presence inspires you. Even the countenance of a Christian can speak for God. What a statement given in Judges 8:18, when Gideon asked Zebah and Zalmunna, the enemy of Israel:

What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.

Oh, that we would have the countenance of a child of the King!

Cordiality and heartiness are other exquisite refinements for the Christian life that come from proper thinking. Such individuals become an inspiration to others. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10).

Conclusion

Oh, how this list could continue as we read and gather from the exhortations of God's Word! The Word of God includes sensitivity to others, wisdom in dealing with souls, loyalty to truth, self-sacrifice, devotedness to God, and zeal for the things of God. All these precious embellishments to Christian living must be part of the way we *naturally* think, avoiding all sense of pretense or artificiality. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

And do we think about ourselves in the presence of God? Do some of us respond as in Psalm 90:7, "For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled." Or do we respond as in Psalm 96:9, "O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth?" How do we think about God and His relationship to us?

Matthew 22 gives the Parable of the Marriage Feast. The great need here is a "wedding garment" (22:11). But the child of God longing for greater and deeper living is not simply wanting to wear the proper wedding garment. His

heart is longing to be a part of the Bride of Christ. This hope places us beyond a wedding *garment* to that which is the wedding *dress* of the Bride of Christ.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Rev. 19:7, 8).

This is what we should be desiring in our Christian life. To be present in heaven one day will be a glorious provision of grace! But to have an “abundant entrance” is what we should be desiring (2 Pet. 1:10, 11)! It is no longer choosing between “good and evil” but between “good and best.” The thought life of a Christian truly is that reality that encompasses the whole of his existence. This is what will reveal the greater, nobler character of Christ in the life—the mind of Christ! **§**

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The Thought Life of a Child Coming to Age before God

Dr. H. T. Spence

The dark powers of the End Time are vying for our children, seeking to manipulate their young and tender concept of what they are and who they are, especially regarding their gender. Today's leadership in every facet of our depraved world is maliciously seeking to warp society even in the very fundamentals of human existence to their own demonic insanity. It must be declared that God is the sovereign selector of gender, and He never makes a mistake! When man projects himself into the realm of deity, pretending to have equal powers as God, he desires to alter everything God has made, including its true purpose and the overwhelming side effects that will fall upon generations to come. Oh, for the former days of simplicity of living, the days when safety surrounded the play of the child throughout his neighborhood! The days when a child was born, grew up, played in the light of his God-given gender as a boy or as a girl, and there were no attacks on what he or she was. The child then entered the world as a young man or a young lady.

Today, however, childhood is far removed from all of God's appointed precious enjoyment of natural life. True childhood is being destroyed by political systems that are intentionally thwarting the naturalness of life given

by God! Today, our political leaders are literally inverting everything to create an insane, abnormal world. Simple human existence has lost its way and is caught in self-destructive powers. This demonic insanity comes under the guise of political correctness, the woke movement, critical race theory, the inverted corruptions of sodomy, same-gender marriages, the evil ideology of transgenderism (changing of boys into girls and girls into boys, convincing them they are old enough to make their own decisions in life), as well as other overt perversions of morals and ethics taught in the public schools. The entire melting pot of this "helter-skelter" lunacy across the earth is truly endeavoring to destroy all former paradigms of human existence and to destroy what God has naturally endowed humanity with from creation. It truly is a lunatic generation, and the powers of the wealthy are radically paying for the changes now forced on the innocent season of childhood. It is one thing for adults to choose their distorted perversions and lifestyles, but it is another thing to press the infatuation of such dark destruction upon children, manipulating their innocent minds and thoughts into spheres of ruination. We declare once again that our only hope for survival for this entire planet and the

culmination of history in some form of sanity is for Jesus Christ to come back to earth and destroy the Day of Man's rule, and set up His own perfect, righteous government where His principles and law rule and reign pervasively in every aspect of humanity!

Truly, we are in the culmination of Psalm 2:

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder [the bands of principle and right living according to God and His people], and cast away their cords from us [a totally secularistic, atheistic global humanity].

Man will absolutely destroy himself if God does not send His Son to save man from his own self-destructive powers. It is not simply the nuclear bomb that we fear will destroy humanity; we fear man's warped thinking about the purpose of his existence, about his future, and the desire to *recreate* what he in his depraved, diabolical darkness longs to be *without God!* One way the global leaders will control the next generation is by transforming that generation's childhood into what is the opposite and most unnatural—away from what God Himself has created childhood to be.

It is an hour, dear reader, when we must help our children through this godless end-time season of thought pollution, and its pedophilia, human trafficking, and intentional destruction of childhood and youth. We cry, even now, "Oh God, deliver us from warped, evil men and women in this immoral hour that has come upon us all, but especially upon our children!" It is more imperative than ever to "train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). This infallible principle declared from God's Word calls upon us to give intimate and detailed instruction "in the way," in the very beginning of the child's way, that "he should go," not to leave life up to the child but teaching the child in the way he should go.

God intended at the beginning of the child's life for the parent to choose for the child.

My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck (Prov. 1:8, 9).

Our children must even be taught how to "think," rather than leaving it up to their own depraved, deceptive heart or the hearts of bad companions and the secularists of the world. The instruction of a godly father and the law of a godly mother are to become the "ornament of grace unto thy head." But there must also be the careful training of the "will," the "chains about

thy neck." The will of a child must be broken before the child even knows he has a will. These truths are equally needed to be taught along with the training in manners of etiquette and conversation with others.

The Straits of Life

Oh, the straits that our children must pass through in life! In our English language a *strait* is a narrow channel or passage that connects two bodies of water. One of the most prominent straits is the Strait of Gibraltar that connects the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. There are straits in life that become transitional seasons all must pass through. There is a mental and moral strait between childhood and young manhood or young womanhood. How does one enter manhood without being destroyed when leaving childhood? A critical key of making it through this strait is for God to be in the life of the young person: in the thought life, in the very process of thinking of the mind, and in his living of life. Perhaps there are two contributing factors to this aspect of the strait: (1) The child's background and home life, and (2) what the child privately gives his thoughts to over his preteen and teen years.

A Call from God to Our Youth

We read in Luke 2:40–42 of our dear Lord when he was in this strait as a child:

And the child [paidia, the little child] grew [continued to do so,

physically], and waxed strong in spirit [conscience, knowledge of right and wrong], filled with wisdom [in making decisions in life]: and the grace of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

We carefully read the various stages of Christ's young life in this passage, including when, at the age of twelve, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the first time in accountability to the Law. We then read in Luke 2:49, "And he said unto them [his parents], How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" It is evident in this passage that the young boy Jesus was coming into this consciousness. Then in 2:51 we read, "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." Although about His Father's business, He also was obligated to His parents and others in authority. The child must come to accountability to the parents and to those in authority as that is the prelude of his accountability before God. If the child fails in the first accountability, there will be failure in the second.

In the Jewish thinking this concept is found in the term *mitzveh*. It is a Yiddish term that comes from the original Hebrew *mitzvah*. This word means "to do something for someone else." It also has a deeper meaning of

a sacred obligation that is believed to be essential to Jewish living. Thus, we have the understanding of a *Bar Mitsvah*, referring to a boy at the age of 13, and a *Bat Mitsvah* for a girl at the age of 12. These events are when a child becomes accountable to the law of God. It is a very important time in the child's life, both naturally and religiously. When the Jewish child comes to this age, there is a formal presentation in the temple and later in synagogues. The child is then accountable to God and has come to the "age of accountability" or obligation to God.

It is interesting to note that this season of accountability arises in the season of a young child's life when hormonal changes are taking place in the physical body. Within the girl it is around 11 to 12 years old, and within the young boy around 13 to 14 years old. At this season the changes of the body tend to cause thoughts to race into directions that are very delicate; if not carefully guarded, the child may be given to thoughts leading into immorality as the body begins to explode into feelings and desires of womanhood and manhood. This "strait" will need guidance, and God has appointed that this is when the *mitzvah* is inaugurated into the child's life. Thoughts of God and duties before God are to help check the thought life and the body surging into a sea of maturing abilities of procreation. There must be a guidance, a protection to help the transition from childhood into early manhood. Some young people

fail in that strait and commit sins that affect them down the road of life. Their thought life becomes twisted and distorted in areas that will hurt them. Oh, that God could become a part of the child's life, to accompany him through this strait to enter early manhood well, rather than perverted in thought and desire. We live in a society that is bringing "sexuality" earlier into the thinking of youth, forcing them prematurely into what should be a later season. Blatant, risqué education of immorality is now being heavily brought into kindergarten and early elementary school grades. Such concentrated education will not only warp the minds of the children but also permanently scar them in their prime of life. The wicked care not the damage done to our children.

The Age of Accountability

The age of accountability is presented in the Old Testament context of when the child comes to an accountability before God. Prior to that season his soul is not accountable. This is to be seen in the "shadow" and "type" of the *Bar Mitsvah*. "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good . . ." (Isa. 7:16a). Before this time, a child is under the blood of Christ and thus saved by grace alone. The age in which the child passes that threshold of accountability may vary according to the maturity of his thinking. But once that child crosses the line or enters into that narrow strait leading out from the harbor of

childhood into the larger ocean of early manhood or womanhood, he or she now becomes accountable before God for sins.

Oh, the narrow strait for a boy and a girl when feelings and thoughts arise within and are encouraged from sights and sounds without. When does this begin to happen within a child? In Genesis 6:5 we read, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The Hebrew word *yetzer* is used for the word *imagination*, meaning "to form or desire something in the mind." This includes not only imagination but also purposes and desires. We must remember that thoughts become the building blocks of the imagination. This verse is telling us that in the days of Noah the whole imagination of man was perverted. We then read in Genesis 8:21, "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." This begins in the child around the age of 4 to 6 years old. Children are different from one another in this season of life, depending on their maturity of thought. I have met children who were as young as 3 or 3½ years old when they had crossed that line of accountability. It seems to come a little earlier for girls than boys.

These stages of youth are seen in the Hebrew language in Ecclesiastes 11:9, 10:

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth [adolescence]; and let thy heart cheer

thee in the days of thy youth [teenage years], and walk in the ways of thine heart [the place of the conscience and volition of the will], and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow [lusts that lead to and end in sorrow] from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood [adolescence] and youth [teenage years] are vanity [or, there is no permanence of youth].

These verses reveal the various stages of youth, the deepening of thought and intensity of the imagination, or putting things together. The deeper the age of growth, the greater the intensity of the thoughts.

This is why the narrow strait leading out of the harbor of childhood into the larger ocean of early manhood is where the critical key of life is to be found. This is where the child's thoughts become instilled and later will build his manhood or her womanhood. Yes, the narrow strait is very crucial; it will set the tenor and tone for the years ahead. This is where the two worlds converge on one another and finally collide. This is where the outward world of what the child sees and hears, and the inward consciousness which God has placed in conscience and soul come together. Yes, these powers come together. The child comes to a God-consciousness and a distinction between right and wrong. When this transition is made, he now becomes

accountable before God, and the older the child gets, the greater the accountability.

The Things of a Child's Past

We must pray that God will deal with our children about their past, that they will come to a consciousness of their accountability before God of their actions and words of the past. They must come to understand the need of forgiveness from actions that came because of the thoughts of their imagination that led to those actions. Within Luke 2 we see three stages of Christ's youth:

1. "And the child grew..." This Greek word for child is *paidia*, which portrays the understanding of a little servant boy. To the Greek thinking, a child is a servant under someone.
2. Then in verse 43, "The child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem..." The word for child is *pais*, an older servant boy; we know this to be when He was 12 years old.
3. In verse 48, "And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son..." This is the Greek word *teknon*, meaning a child who is under the authority of another, such as under a parent.

Oh, that Christ would be found within the heart of the child so that the Christ could live *in* him and through him in each of the stages of life. It is not so much imitating Christ, but the fact that He must be *in* the child, living His life through the child. Yes, even with the life of a child, Christ must become his

life and his power of living; but Christ will not do so unless the child yields to Him for his life.

Who inspires us to live? Is it the world? Is it someone whose life is spiritually dead, who believes he can beat the game of sin? I remember a boy in the public high school who came from a broken home: his father was a drunkard; his mother, a woman of ill-repute. This boy would smoke in the bathroom. He would hold his cigarette a certain way and would spit in a certain way, and a group of boys imitated him in his smoking and spitting. But his life was dead; he talked about dead things; his countenance was bland. At that time, I was not a Christian, but even then I knew this boy was in deep trouble. Oh, young man, or young girl, who are you imitating? Why do you imitate them? Some may appear spiritual, but they are mean and hateful to others; they are inconsiderate of others, and so unlovely in their ways and talk with others. The power of self-centeredness produces an ugly person. But such a power is the product of a process of bad thinking. Therefore it is important for Christ to be *in* the life of a child and *in* the life of the teenager. It must be more than a profession; it must be that Christ is living *in* the child, and the child is *in* Christ. If this be true, the Lord will be in the child's thinking and thoughts.

We want the Saviour to help the child through this vital strait of life. Many children do not make it through this

season well; they have the wrong pilot, or they think they are wise enough to make it through on their own without guidance and counsel. Sadly, they will not listen to good guidance.

Conclusion

We must remember that thoughts reap actions, and actions reap habits, and habits reap character. Character is what will reap our destiny! If the child fails in thoughts or actions, repentance is the key to recovery. If thoughts and actions have entered the heart and mind, how does a child recover from the failure? Sometimes it is a moral failure either with himself or with others. Sometimes the failure is in a growing spirit and attitude that the child continues to persist in and refuses to give up. Such a growing mood and spirit will finally drive him into a deep, manifested mood that affects not only the child but also all those who are around the child, including the very spirit of the home. Sometimes it may be fear that causes the child to quit life or even to rebel. Fear is a very powerful thing; only love for Christ perfected

can overcome this, even in a child. Sometimes the failure is pride that refuses to get things right when God deals with the child: pride of place and pride of face. Sometimes, as the child grows older, the failure might be the fear of what he knows he must do for God and that he does not want to do; perhaps in his thinking it will be too costly. (This was one thing I was afraid of in becoming a true Christian: what I would have to give up or what I would have to do.)

Whatever the case may be, the parent or teacher or pastor must aid that child or teenager in getting right with God. The heart and mind must be given to God to come to right thinking about Him and about His Son and His work on the cross for that child. Whatever the failure, whatever the sin, let us encourage the child to recover from it. It would be better to make the mistakes, failures, and even sins early before coming into the prime of life; there is still hope of recovery of that child. Later in life, in committing sins and in failures, there is certainly hope in forgiveness, but the side effects then

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may be permanent. We must give hope to the child as to the provisions of Christ for him.

Let us encourage our children in good and right thoughts, especially thoughts about God. "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter" (Eccles. 10:20). Cultivate a deep respect for God in the child. Note Psalm 10:4, "The

wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts."

We must remember one of the reasons God sent His Son: "that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:35). Childhood and youth are the seasons for revealing the heart and the thoughts of a person's life. May the Lord help our children navigate through the early strait of life from childhood, as a boy into manhood and as a girl into womanhood. **S**

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