

ACCUSED BY OUR THOUGHTS

“(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.” (Rom. 2:14-16)

Paul makes clear that even though our thoughts sometimes defend our actions, they can also accuse us. Remember! **“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23)** One reason all have sinned is that our thoughts accuse us! Note that both Gentiles and Jews are sinners. The Gentiles who did not have the law were sinners, and the Jews who did have the law were also sinners. The fact that Gentiles were a law unto themselves did not keep them from sinning for **“All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.” (Rom. 2:12)** The Gentiles, who did not receive the Law of Moses, made up their own laws and became a law unto themselves. Sadly, we sinners do not even live up to our own standards. We invariably set goals that we do not keep!

You know this is true. Many make New Year’s resolutions at the beginning of the year, but often fail to achieve their own goals in only a few days. YES! WE DO NOT EVEN LIVE UP TO OUR OWN STANDARDS! YES! ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALLEN SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD!

The way we think is the way we are (Proverbs 23:7). Judas Iscariot did not sin by accident and neither do we!

GOD KNOWS OUR THOUGHTS

Remember! God knows what we are thinking! He judges the secrets of men’s hearts through Jesus Christ. David struggled with his own thoughts and wrote: **“You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.” (Ps. 139:1-2)** David had to admit that there was no where in heaven or on earth that he could escape from the all seeing eyes of God (Ps. 139:3-12). Since God knew David’s thoughts, when he lusted after Bathsheba David had already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:28). Yes! Our thoughts can condemn us!

God’s people in the days of Isaiah were condemned by what they thought: **“These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” (Is. 29:13)** Yes! They went through the outward motions of honoring God, but their hearts were far from Him. Often when they came to worship their thoughts were completely Satanic! Please consider: **“But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man, and whoever offers a lamb, like one who breaks a dog’s neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig’s blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol.” (Is. 66:3)** A human observer might be fooled by their acts of worship, but their hypocrisy did not fool God! God discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart and **“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight.**

Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Heb. 4:13)

God knows what you are thinking when you come to worship, that’s why **“If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift.” (Matt. 5:23-24)** Yes! God knows our thoughts and **“Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.” (1 John 3:15)**

Since Jesus is God manifest in the flesh he also knows what we are thinking. Jesus **“did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in man.” (Jn. 2:25)**. When Jesus forgave the sins of a paralyzed man who was lowered into his presence **“The Pharisees and teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, ‘Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . He said to the paralyzed man, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’” (Luke 5:21-24)**

God not only knows what we are thinking but carefully monitors our faith so that we will never be tempted beyond what we are able to bear: **“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” (1 Cor. 10:12-13)**

WHERE DO OUR THOUGHTS COME FROM?

Our thoughts arise from inside of us. We choose what we think about! Paul. Wrote: **“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” (Col. 3:2)** Christians can set our minds on things above if we choose to do so! We can, however, lose our ability to direct our thoughts. Just before Judas betrayed Jesus **“Satan entered into him” (John 13:27)** If we allow Satan to enter into us he will control our thoughts and cause us to sin. The Pharisees, for example, allowed Satan to enter into their hearts and control their minds. Satan has been a liar and a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). So when Satan entered their hearts the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebub the prince of demons (Matt. 12:22-23).

The Scriptures state clearly **“Jesus knew their thoughts” (Matt. 12:25)** In defending his actions Jesus warned of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and said: **“And I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven” (Matt. 12:31)** Apparently Satan so controlled these evil men that they were incapable of saying good words. So Jesus compared them to a bad tree that cannot produce good fruit. He said: **“Make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or make the tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.” (Matt. 12:33)**. The Pharisees were so controlled by Satan that they were not capable of having good thoughts any more than a bad tree is capable of producing good fruit! In fact, **“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” (2 Cor. 4:4)**

We will deal with this serious problem later in greater detail.

When these same Pharisees and teachers of the law criticized Jesus and his disciples for breaking the tradition of the elders and eating with unwashed hands. Jesus responded: **“You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.” (Matt. 15:7-9)** Jesus then explained that evil thoughts originate in our heart! **“Are you still so dull?” Jesus asked them. “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.” (Matt. 15:16-20).**

Mark records the same event with these words: **“What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” (Mark 7:20-23)**

Jeremiah states emphatically: **“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9)** A deceitful heart, like a bad tree, can only produce something deceitful and bad!

When we invite Jesus into our heart, however, He gives us a change of mind! It is essential that we receive Christ before the devil completely controls our mind. That’s why we need to **“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:6-11)**

GOOD NEWS!

When we receive Jesus He transforms our lives by the renewing of our mind! **“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Rom. 12:2)** In fact, the Bible word for “repentance” is “metanoeo” which literally means to “change your mind”. You may think that you are too sinful to be saved but you are wrong! Please do not give up for with the help of God everything is possible!

Paul was the chief of sinners and yet he could still be saved (1 Timothy 1:15-16).

The angel Gabriel reminded the virgin Mary: **“Nothing is impossible with God.” (Lk. 1:37)**

When Jesus was asked: **“Who then can be saved? Jesus replied, ‘What is impossible with men, is possible with God.’” (Lk. 18:26-27)**

Ezekiel predicted: **“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ezekiel 36:26-27)**

Paul explained: **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17)**

Our death to the old man and our new life in Christ is beautifully symbolized by baptism: **“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.” (Rom. 6:1-14)**

Our omnipotent God, who made the universe from nothing, will not have a problem making you into a new creation if you will only give him a chance!

RIGHT NOW YOU CAN CHOOSE

The Scriptures teach that **“Today is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2)**. Right now you have a choice! Right now you can choose to put to death the deeds of the body and receive new life from Christ: **“Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. (Rom. 8:12-13)**

Right now you can **“Set your minds on thins above and not on earthly things.” (Col. 3:2)**

Right now - **“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8)**

If you let Satan into your heart, however, you can lose the ability to make choices!

Right now you can **“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.”** (Col. 3:5-6)

The greatest journey begins with a single step. You need to take that step toward God now! Moses said to Israel: **“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”** (Deut. 30:19-20) Sadly, they did not choose life!

Joshua said: **“Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”** (Joshua 24:14-15)

Instead of “choosing” to serve the Lord, however, the Israelites chose to do their own will and as a result the Lord said to them: **“Every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.”** (Numbers 14:29-30) **“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.”** (Heb. 10:26-27)

The writer of Hebrews warned: **“So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”** See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called **“Today,”** so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. As has just been said: **“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion. Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.”** (Hebrews 3:7-19)

PLEASE DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEART! PLEASE DO NOT LET SATAN INTO YOUR HEART!

IMPOSSIBLE TO REPENT

If Satan controls your thoughts it is impossible for you to repent! Please consider: **“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.”** (Hebrews 6:4-8)

The book of Revelation reveals that men can be seared with intense heat and still curse God can refuse to repent (Revelation 16:9). Men can gnaw their tongues in agony and still curse God and refuse to repent (Revelation 16:10-11). Please consider that if Satan dominates our heart we will blaspheme the Holy Spirit and refuse to repent (Matt. 12:31-37; Mark 3:28-30). If Satan dominates our heart it can lead us to commit the sin that leads to death about which we are not to pray (1 John 5:16-17). Don't let Satan into your heart!

Please remember that God doesn't change: **“I the Lord do not change”** (Mal. 3:6). **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”** (Heb. 13:8). When someone truly repents God will forgive them.

- Jesus promises that **“Whosoever believes in him shall not perish.”** (John 3:16)
- Jesus said: **“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”** (Matt. 11:28)
- Peter said: **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** (Acts 2:21)
- Paul said: **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** (Rom. 10:13)
- **“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.”** (Rev. 22:17)
- If Judas had repented Christ would have forgiven him. Peter denied Christ three times but repented and was forgiven. Judas, however, allowed Satan to control his thoughts and went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-5).

WHILE GOD DOES NOT CHANGE, WE DO!

Consider the story of Nero, the emperor of Rome. *“Gifted in poetry and in music, genial, humane, the beginning of his reign awakened high expectations. Augustus had esteemed it a personal affliction to be obligated to punish, and he had inflicted the death penalty only in extreme cases. The youthful Nero, some time after his assumption of the purple, rejoiced that in his entire empire not a drop of blood had been shed. When it appeared necessary for him to sign death warrants he lamented that he could write. Under the tuition of such philosophers and statesmen as Seneca and Burrhus it was expected that the ingenuous youth would become a paragon of wisdom and justice. Seneca thought him “incapable of learning cruelty” and expected that the emperor's gentleness of disposition would permeate the entire empire and so transform the world as to restore the innocent, golden age of mankind.”* (Newman's Church History (Volume 1, p. 112)

With the help of God Nero could have commanded the summit of history's mighty men. Instead he is remembered as one of the most degraded monsters who ever lived. Nero changed! He allowed Satan into his heart and became a sadistic fiend. He ordered the murder of his brother, his mother, and his first wife. His second wife died from his abuse. Nero also executed the apostles Peter and Paul and killed thousands of Christians. He imagined himself to be a great poet and musician and stooped to performing in public like an incompetent buffoon. Unbridled indulgence of every kind became characteristic of his sinful life. During the night of July 18, 64 AD a fire broke out in Rome that burned 70% of the city. It burned for 6 days and 7 nights. Nero blamed the Christians for the fire and the historian Tacitus describes their persecution with these words: *"First were arraigned those who confessed then on their information a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of arson as for their hatred of the human race. Their deaths were made more cruel by the mockery that accompanied them. Some were covered with the sins of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs; others perished on the cross or in the flames and others were burnt after sunset as torches to light up the darkness. Nero himself granted his gardens for the show, and gave an exhibition in the circus, and dressed as a charioteer, mixed with the people or drove his chariot himself. Thus guilty and deserving the punishment as they were, they were yet pitied, as if they seem to be put to death, not for the benefit of the state, but to gratify the cruelty of an individual."*

Even though Nero allowed Satan to enter into his heart and control his life, we are persuaded better things of you! **"Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned. Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation. God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."** (Hebrews 6:7-12)

SET YOUR MINDS ON THINGS ABOVE
INVITE JESUS CHRIST INTO YOUR HEART
AND DO NOT LET YOUR THOUGHTS ACCUSE YOU!