



How Satan Gains Access to Work in our Lives

Part 13: Implanted Thoughts

In this issue we will explore the way that Satan is able to gain access to our lives through implanted thoughts. While modern man generally thinks of his mind as being the origin of his thoughts, Scripture puts a much stronger emphasis on the heart, describing the heart as the seat of motives, integrity, and conscience (1 Chron. 28:9; 29:17; Heb. 10:22) and the origin of thoughts and actions (Mat. 15:18-20; Luke 2:35; Acts 5:4), reflecting our true inner person (Prov. 23:7; 1 Peter 3:4), character, and commitments.

Satan gained access to man's heart at the Fall when he took dominion over God's highest creation (Col. 1:13). While God had created man perfectly good (Gen. 1:31), Satan so corrupted man's heart (Jer. 17:9) that God regretted having made man, leading to His decision to destroy all but a chosen few in a worldwide Flood (Gen. 6:5-7). Even after this, God acknowledged that the inclination of man's heart is continuously evil (Gen. 8:21). This is the ongoing state of the unregenerate heart (Eph. 2:3; 4:17-18). Jesus described it as the source of all that defiles a man (Matt. 15:18-20).

Satan's access to this point of origin for man's thoughts and actions applies to both believers and non-believers, as is clearly evidenced by the impact he had on the thoughts, ideas, schemes, and actions of Judas, Peter, and Ananias (Matt 16:21-23; Luke 22:31-32; Mark 14:66-72; John 13:2; Acts 5:3). Some of his influence may be exerted through evil spirits, which can also be used for purveying false rumors (2 Kings 19:7; 2 Thes. 2:2) and instilling their own breed of wisdom that leads to further self-centered corruption (James 3:14-15).

Satan is also able to affect mental comprehension, which is seen most drastically when people have become completely taken over by demons, like the man of the Gadarenes (Mark 5:1-16). More subtly, Satan can also blind the minds of unbelievers and influence what they retain in their hearts when they hear the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:4; Mark 4:15). Doing effective evangelism thus often involves a spiritual battle to release Satan's hold on a person's mind and to dislodge the lies he has planted in it. Paul describes this battle in 2 Cor. 10:4-5, stating that it requires the use of powerful spiritual weapons provided by God, such as the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). The truth of God's Word delivered in the power of His Holy Spirit is the mighty agent that is able to bring every false conception concerning the Gospel into alignment with the truth of Christ.

The battle for the sanctity of one's heart and mind does not end with salvation, however. Because of Satan's often unchallenged influence on the mind before this point, every new believer must make a conscious effort to renew and sanctify his mind through the washing of the Word, allowing it to establish truth in his innermost being (Ps. 51:5-7; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22-24; 5:26). Learning to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to walk consistently in tune with Him is also vitally important. As His fruit is able to take root and grow in our hearts, it will crowd out the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-17, 22-23; Eph. 5:18-20). This will be a daily battle, however. The powerful influence of the flesh will be with us until we cross

over into eternity (Rom. 7:14-25). We will always be vulnerable to Satan's clever attempts to draw our minds away from a true devotion to Christ, as he did in the Garden of Eden with Eve (Gen. 3:1-6; 2 Cor. 11:3).

In order to protect our hearts and minds from Satan's efforts to pollute them, we must make a conscious effort to keep our minds filled with that which we know is from God. Leaving our minds in an idle, or passive, state would seem to give Satan a ready opportunity to fill them with his thoughts. This is why, I believe, God gives us specific directives to focus our minds on what is honorable, pure, and right and on the things that pertain to the kingdom of heaven rather than on earthly things (Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:2; 1 Peter 1:13). We should also be thinking about what will stimulate others to love and good works and the advancement of God's Kingdom (Heb. 10:24). As we learn to fill our empty moments with worship and prayer, the peace of God will fill and guard our hearts and minds from the enemy's intrusion (Rom. 8:6; Col. 3:15-16; Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Thes. 5:16-18; Jude 20-21).