

TRANSFORMING THE MIND

While we as Apostolics quickly, as is proper, respond to physical health issues with prayer, both for ourselves and for others, we, however, see a much slower response of prayer for our minds. Sometimes the greater need of our lives lies with a divine touch for our thoughts and understanding... "God touch my mind" is sadly, a seldom made prayer.

One of the bestselling books of the past, first published in 1952, was *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale. Peale, drawing his inspiration from Emerson and William James, is considered by many to be the founder of today's human-potential movement. While Peale's work does draw on *some* spiritual principles it remains almost entirely a work concerning the natural ability of man rather than a work of the Spirit.

Regardless of what Dr. Peale might have suggested about human mental potential he, like many others, really fails to take into consideration the words of Jeremiah who stated, "*O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps.*"

Man, left to his own devices and thoughts, will always venture *away* from God not *toward* Him. This fact concerning man on his own and his direction is seen clearly in the first few chapters of Genesis where man drifts over the falls of self-guidance and into God's judgment. This spectacle of man's corruption is not addressed halfway through the Bible nor one-quarter way through but in less than six chapters man is shown in total ruin as God says of him, that every imagination and thoughts of his heart was evil continually.

It is therefore evident that man without some spiritual influence ultimately goes away from God, like sheep which all go astray without a shepherd. The carnal mental-power of man may receive acclaim from men but we must understand that both God's ways and thoughts are far higher than man's.

Man, in order to correctly order his life before God, must have an influence beyond himself that can affect his thoughts and that process must be spiritually administered to be effective. Man, to be converted, must choose the Spirit's beckoning and be obedient. This conversion begins with obedience to Acts 2:38. This brings about, of course, the baptism of the Holy Ghost which then becomes a powerful agent of transforming the heart and mind of the one converted.

The mind of man, like a North seeking compass needle, with even its most potent display of mental agility always and ultimately goes away from God—that is why it is called an "untoward" movement. The only way a North seeking compass needle can be prevented from pointing toward magnetic North is to have another attractive influence placed near it that will be strong enough to overcome the magnetic power of the earth. Likewise, man without the Spirit of God cannot change his thoughts successfully enough by his own power to please God. Man must have a divine influence in his heart and mind in order to think spiritually.

There are many actions of men that can be catalogued into different areas of sinfulness, but we must not forget that most every action is generated inwardly before manifested outwardly. The sin of pride, for instance, is most assuredly a sin of the mind—it is more an inwardly power than an outward one. Also, the sins of lust, covetousness, greed and yes, even adultery are sins of the thought processes of man before they are betrayed by his outward actions.

According to some psychologists there are two mental functions that determine our ultimate actions derived from our thought processes. The first function is *concentration* and the second is *substitution*. What we concentrate on or focus our attention on greatly enhances what affects us. The more we concentrate on a subject the more we are influenced by that same subject. This, therefore, can be a good or a bad thing depending on the subject matter. This is why feelings such as bitterness intensify in our thoughts the longer we concentrate on the matter. This is also true regarding lust and a host of other negative thought processes. Substitution, on the other hand, when applied can deviate the wrong thoughts to more profitable ones if those thoughts can be replaced through substitution with better thoughts. However, man is very limited, in and of himself, to make great leaps in substitution of thoughts. Real substitution that is truly effective is a spiritual action and must originate beyond man and his abilities.

It is not the externals that lead us to into sin. Adam and Eve were not surrounded with sinful externals—the fall of man was accomplished through satanic assault on the mind of Eve. Gen. 3:13 *“And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”* And in the New Testament we are warned, in 2 Cor. 11:3 *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* “Beguiled,” according to Strong’s means “to delude mentally.” Therefore, after her conversation with the serpent “she saw” the forbidden fruit in a new way—why? Because her thought process had changed!

What, therefore, is our hope of being able to not become, as Eve did, the captives of our own erroneous thoughts? Since man is extremely limited in his ability to change his carnal thoughts to spiritual thoughts, how then does he overcome this predicament? Our hope lies not with our own powers but in the power of the Spirit. One law must overcome another law to enable man to turn from the carnal mind to the spiritual mind. Like the corrective lenses of eyeglasses—the lenses overcome the poor eyesight of an individual by overcoming the law of nearsightedness through the law of corrective lenses. Thus, man must overcome the law of the carnal mind by the corrective influence of the Spirit of God.

The Scriptures admonish us, Rom. 12:2 *“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.”* There is no way possible to “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” without a transformation that comes with a “renewing” of our mind.

Paul illustrated this contest in Romans 7:21-25, *“I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which*

is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

Then in Second Corinthians ten Paul states, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."*

Paul shows us that we will either be captives or captors. Captives of our own carnal and self-defeating thoughts or captors that bring those thoughts into captivity through the power of the weapons of our warfare that are mighty through God. Truly whosoever the Son sets free is free indeed!

Repentance, first and foremost, is a change of mind. The conviction that comes with the experience of repentance is caused by a "convincing" of the mind—a process of thought that convinces us that we have sinned and need divine help. Like the Demonic of Gadara, Jesus Christ always leaves those that come to Him in repentance—clothed and in their right mind!

The blind man was touched by Jesus and he received his sight, however, it was a sight that was imperfect— "I see men as trees walking," he replied to Jesus' question concerning how he saw. He realized that even though he could see he could not see correctly—therefore Jesus touched him again and he saw all men perfectly. This story, I think, was meant to illustrate to us how that the only way we can overcome our blurred and impaired thoughts is to have "another touch" of Jesus to "transform" and renew our minds through the power of God, else we are helpless to overcome of and by ourselves. This is why the Holy Ghost experience is a necessity and not an option in the life of an overcoming believer.

Eph. 1:17-23, *"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."*

Is it therefore any wonder that we find ourselves frequently, amid life's problems, trials and events, praying, "God please touch my mind!"? Php. 4:7-8 *"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."*

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