

## **The Evolution of Thoughts**

*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. Proverbs 23:7 KJV*

Who knows where the intersection of the power of our own thoughts, and where the influence and power of Satan converge?

All of us have many thoughts which parade through our minds every day. Most are about the mundane things of life; what we are doing, plans we have made, etc. However, amidst all these daily thoughts, Satan attacks us with thoughts meant to bring discouragement, fear, and failure. At times he comes as a roaring lion trying to frighten us, while other times he is as stealthy as a cat sneaking up on its prey; or as a serpent sliding silently through the grass. Sometimes when we pray, thanks to the wonderful power of God, the load of dark discouragement almost immediately departs, lending evidence to an oppressive spirit; meant to rob us of joy or happiness. At other times, we may need some help with our thinking patterns to be able to think realistically. In either case, we must focus on the truth. When God is in our lives, we have His power on our side to combat the dark negativity that can invade one's mind. During these times, our mental health affects the ability to ward off those tormenting thoughts that come, whether from our own imagination or from the power of darkness.

Satan is not a creator like God; he can only recreate. He takes a thought in our mind, and twists and turns it into whatever he wants; like a spider building a web, seeking to catch his prey. It may come from something someone said, or a perception we have acquired. I have found this to be a pretty powerful tool that Satan uses in my life. He will take a comment someone has made, an encouragement someone left, or simply a memory from the past and begin to berate me in the mind. Most times I know the source that those inner arguments come from, but that does not make it easy to get rid of them. The evil one uses enough imagination, mixed with truth, to make the scenarios in our minds seem plausible.

Perhaps I am challenged with my thoughts because of a sensitive nature; maybe because of my history, who knows. Then again, possibly there is some unresolved trauma lurking in the recesses of my life. Whatever the trouble is, time in prayer and opening those thoughts seem to shed the light of truth. I would like to say that these thoughts always immediately leave and never come back, but that is not always the case. Sometimes it takes praying and talking about it more than once to be able to bring reality back into focus.

It is important that we do not believe all the thoughts that come to us about ourselves. By doing so, we give Satan a open door to bring all kinds of negative things to our minds. He inserts a thought and with it comes a little anxiety, and we begin to evaluate our inner self to prove those thoughts false. This begins the dangerous process of checking and rechecking our feelings. "Is that true? Yes, it must be. No, it's not. That's really the way I am. You are so \_\_\_\_, why did you ever do something like that? If they only knew, they would have nothing to do with you. No one likes you! They must think you really have a problem. You can never get it right. You blew it." While this

all-out battle of the mind is going on, little by little we begin to believe those lies are true. Now we know that although feelings are important, we live our lives for God by faith and trust. To counter the lies Satan injects into our minds, we must draw clear lines of truth. We must seek God for a deeper understanding of the Biblical truth of what constitutes sin, as well as how God feels about us.

I believe we often fail to recognize where these questioning thoughts in our minds are coming from. Some may be simply of the mind, but I had an experience where the Lord wanted me to judge the voice; the place that voice was coming from. Sometimes a challenging thought comes to our mind and we begin to think about it. For me it was about God's church. In my mind I began to go to the scripture to reinforce my conviction like I had many times before. However, on this particular day, the thought suddenly came to me, "What about the voice? Who is speaking to you?" Right there it clicked, it was the voice of the evil one, a questioning voice. That voice cannot be silenced by reasoning, or knowledge.

Some ways this voice is characterized, is by its form of question, intended to plant doubt. It also brings about a small amount of confusion and unsettledness, coupled with fear, anxiety, or shame. It can take away all hope, and light, sometimes almost palpable oppression. This of course is Satan's intention to try to alter our view of ourselves and God.

We can try to build up our strength by the scripture, which is good, but until we recognize the voice as the voice of the evil one, we will continue to struggle. We will continue to circle that thought and slowly we become drawn in to believing what that voice is telling us. A firm faith in God and prayer, are essential to ward off those plaguing thoughts. Satan's goal is to bombard us, wearing down our resolve and resistance until he captures us. Knowing the truth is extremely vital, and that may take some outside help to know what it is.

Maybe I am abnormal or have a little OCD. My thoughts tend to check and recheck my feelings. A thought will start rotating in the mind, and I continue to check and recheck to see if it is still there. This can become a vicious cycle and more and more convincing that I have the problem that keeps turning in my mind. In so doing, fear becomes a driving force, which in turn begins to convince me that those fears are reality. My experience is that when I open those thoughts up to my wife, or pray to God for deliverance, they lose their grip on my mind. Darkness must flee from the light of truth. The best way to combat those thinking patterns is by telling ourselves the truth by using scripture and building a relationship with God.

No one said changing negative thinking patterns is easy, and just because you have them, that you have a spiritual problem. I know many faithful Christians who have struggles with doubts and fears in areas of their lives. This does not necessarily mean they are weak, but rather that they are human, and humans have struggles. No doubt some of them, like me, need to strengthen their faith in God.

Not all the struggles we face with our thoughts are of spiritual origin. I want to make that clear. Some have imbalances, mental or emotional weaknesses, which cause them to struggle with their thinking and thoughts. God has a lot of compassion for those afflicted individuals.

Many of the negative thought patterns we think go back as far as our childhood. Most of them are untrue, yet we have thought them so long that a groove has been worn into our subconscious mind. This perception affects the view of ourselves and our lives. They are like muddy tire ruts that we struggle to get out of, and then we soon slip back in.

We must begin by telling ourselves the truth. This may take someone else's perspective to help us. I also believe that deep in our hearts we may know the truth, but it is covered by layers of untruth. To prove that try this practice. Imagine that your friend tells you about the struggle they are having which is just like yours. I dare say that you would immediately know how they should deal with it. Now, take that same advice you have given them and apply it to your own life. I know that is easier said than done and may not always work. However, deep down somewhere in the recesses of our mind, we often know the truth.

There may come a time when the Lord will ask you to trust your fears and anxious thoughts to Him and walk forward in faith. God is our real source for truth, and with His help we can overcome many of the plaguing thoughts that want to overwhelm us.

*Proverbs 4:23-27 KJV*

*23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

*24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.*

*25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.*

*26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.*

*27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.*

The Unlikely Writer

*Jeff Goertzen*

June 24, 2023