

THE CAUSES OF THE ATTACK OF THE EVIL SPIRITS

Why is the Christian's mental life so beset by evil spirits? This can be answered in one sentence: believers afford the evil spirits (or the devil) the opportunity to attack. Let everyone clearly understand that it is possible for one's mind to be assaulted by the devil. This is confirmed by the experience of many saints. And the area primarily assailed by him is the thinking faculty, for it has a special affinity towards evil spirits. It either partially or totally has slipped out from under man's sovereignty and has come under their dictate. Accordingly, these powers can switch one's thoughts on or off according to *their* wishes, completely disregarding the victim's ideas. Although the head is still attached to the believer, his sovereignty over it has been supplanted by another. Regardless how extensively he may protest, little can be corrected. Wherever anyone offers opportunity to wicked spirits, he cannot follow his own will any more but must be obedient to another's. When he gives ground to them in his mind he immediately forfeits his sovereignty over it. This also bespeaks the fact that his mental faculty is now being occupied by evil spirits. Had it not been attacked by them his will would continue to control everything: he could think or stop thinking as he willed without difficulty.

Due to this affinity between the mind and evil spirits, the Christian very often gives way to them. The ground gained furnishes these powers with authority to operate unhampered in the believer's head. Let us be aware of this though: that man's mind belongs to *man*; without his permission the enemy would be powerless to use it. Unless man *voluntarily* delivers (knowingly or unknowingly) his mind to the evil spirits they have no right to encroach on man's freedom. This does not imply that these malevolent forces shall never tempt us in our thought (that is unavoidable in this life), but it does signify that upon exercising our will to oppose the tempting thought, it shall be stopped immediately. The defect in many Christians today is that though they often resist with their will, the thought continues. It ought not be this way. It is a sure indication that the evil spirits are at work.

The most crucial factor in relation to their wicked activity is to have *ground* given to them. Without proper footing they cannot operate. The amount of their activity depends on the amount of space yielded to them. It is in the organ of his thought that the Christian supplies territory to evil spirits and hence there that they operate. Generally speaking, the ground in the mind which may be ceded to the enemy is of six kinds. We shall look at each of these now at some length.

(1) As unrenewed mind. The flesh continually furnishes bases for the enemy's operations. If man's mind is not renewed after his spirit is once regenerated, he exposes a great deal of territory to the machinations of the evil spirit. While many saints do have their mentality changed at the time of repentance, nonetheless the eyes of their heart once blinded by Satan have not yet been enlightened entirely and may still be veiled in many areas. These darkened corners are the old operation centers of the evil spirits: though greatly hindered, they have not been eliminated and thus continue to furnish bases for the operations of the unseen hosts of wickedness.

The devil's armies are most careful to cover up their deeds. If a Christian should remain fleshly they will urge upon him notions which seem to agree with his temperament and measure, prompting him to believe these are naturally the result of his thinking. Aware that this unrenewed mind constitutes their best workshop, the enemy forces employ every artifice to keep the believer in ignorance or to thwart him from seeking the renewal of his mind. The yielding of such ground is quite common among Christians. Were this the only type of ground they relinquish they would not suffer too severely in their intellect and memory; but other kinds are involved.

(2) An improper mind. All sins furnish territory to the adversary. If a child of God cherishes sin in his heart he is lending his mind to satanic spirits for their use. Since all sins derive from the dark powers, he is helpless

to resist these powers behind whatever sins he allows to persist in his mind. As long as sinful thoughts remain in the heart, precisely that long do the evil spirits work. All unclean, proud, unkind and unrighteous ideas supply bases of activity to these spirits. Once God's child permits such a notion to stay he finds it harder to resist the next time it emerges, because the powers of darkness already have secured an area in his mind.

Besides the sinful ones there are many other improper thoughts which afford the enemy operational bases. Frequently Satan's hosts will introduce an idea into the believers' head. Should he accept it, then this notion will have acquired a footing in his mind. Each unproven theory, vain idea, unknown thought, word casually picked up by ear, or line inadvertently read—all provide ground to the foe as a future site for operations. The adversary may so fill a person with prejudices as to deceive him into opposing God's truth and embracing many heresies.

(3) Misunderstanding God's truth. The Lord's people rarely are aware that every time they accept a lie from the evil spirits they are furnishing fresh ground to the enemy. Should God's followers misconstrue or misinterpret as being natural or caused by their own selves that which the evil spirits have perpetrated upon their bodies, environments or works, they are yielding up precious territory to them for extending their nefarious deeds. A lie embraced forms the ground for further activity by the satanic elements. In misunderstanding these phenomena to be the results of their own selves, they unconsciously allow these things to remain in their lives. Although this permission is gained through deceit it nevertheless provides sufficient footing for the evil spirits to operate.

On the other hand many Christians misunderstand God's truths. Being ignorant of the true meaning of co-death with Christ, consecration, the movement of the Holy Spirit, and so forth, they conceive in their hearts certain interpretations of these truths and consequently prejudice themselves. Seizing the opportunity, the evil spirits impart to the saints the same thing which they misunderstand and misconstrue of God's truths. They scheme according to the believer's misunderstanding. The latter judges these things to be of God, unaware that they are but a counterfeit from the evil spirits and founded on his misunderstanding.

(4) Accepting suggestions. Multiplied are the suggestions which Satan's hosts plant in the mind of the Christian, especially ideas concerning his circumstances and future. They enjoy prophesying to him, foretelling what will become of him and what will happen to him. Should he be unconscious of the source of such predictions and permit these to dwell in his mind, the evil spirits, at the appropriate time, will work on his environment to precipitate affairs to happen as prophesied. Perhaps the believer may already expect it to be so, not cognizant that everything has been arranged by the enemy powers. The latter merely put their idea into the form of prophecy, then plant it in his head to see if he will accept it or reject it. Should the will of the believer raise no objection, nay, even approve of the prophecy, the spirits of wickedness have obtained a footing for enacting what they have proposed. The fulfillment of the words of fortune tellers is based entirely on this principle.

Occasionally the adversary interjects prophetic utterances concerning the Christian's body, such as foretelling his weakness or sickness. If he absorbs this thought he will be genuinely sick and weak. He thinks he is actually ill. Those with scientific knowledge conclude it to be a psychological illness, but those with spiritual insight know better that it is solely because the person has received the suggestion of the evil spirit and has hence furnished ground for the latter to fabricate the situation. How many of the so-called natural and psychological illnesses are in reality the machinations of the evil spirits. When a Christian does not repel the thoughts which originate with evil spirits he affords them a base for working.

(5) A blank mind. God creates man with a mind to be used—“he who hears the word and understands it” (Matthew 13:23). God desires man to understand His Word with the intellect, from whence the emotion, will and spirit are reached. A lively head is therefore an obstacle to the work of malevolent spirits. One of their greatest aims is to lead a person’s mind into a blank state. Blankness means an emptiness inside, the establishment of a true vacuum. The enemy powers employ either deception or force to transform the Christian’s mental faculty into a blank entity. They realize that while his head is empty he cannot think. He has been stripped of all reasoning and sense and will accept without question every one of their teachings, regardless of its nature or consequence.

The Christian ought to exercise his mind, for its exercise constitutes such a disadvantage to evil spirits that they are compelled to exert their entire strength to render it blank. Only as his mind is functioning normally is the Christian fit to *discern* senseless supernatural revelations and various implanted suggestions and recognize their alien sources. A vacuous mind provides a foothold for the evil foe. All revelations and notions received by an empty head emanate from enemy sources. If a Christian should at any time not engage his organ of thought, he will discover how eager they are to help him think!

(6) A passive mind. Broadly speaking, an empty mind differs not too much from a passive one. Strictly speaking, the empty head means not using it whereas a passive one means awaiting some external force to activate it. The latter is a step beyond the former. Passivity is to refrain moving by oneself and instead to let outside elements move one. A passive brain does not think by itself but allows a foreign power to do the thinking for it. Passivity reduces man to a machine.

A passive state is most advantageous to the evil spirits for it offers them an opportunity to occupy the believer’s will and body too. Just as a darkened mind is easily deceived because it knows not what it is doing and where it is going, even so is a passive mind prone to attack since it has no sensitivity whatsoever. Should anyone allow his head to cease thinking, searching, and deciding and to no longer check his experience and action against the Bible, he is practically inviting Satan to invade his mind and deceive him.

In their desire to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit many of the Lord’s people feel they do not need to measure, investigate, and judge by the light of the Bible all thoughts which seemingly come from God. They think being led by the Spirit is being dead to themselves and obeying every notion and impulse of their brain. They follow especially those ideas which arise after prayer; hence they arrange for their mind to be passive during and after prayer. They halt their own thoughts and their other mental activities so as to be ready to receive the “thoughts of God.” And the result is that they become hard and obstinate, having no reason and carrying out many harsh, pertinacious and irrational things. They do not know: (1) that prayer will not transform our thoughts into godly ones; (2) that to wait for divine thoughts during and after prayer is to invite counterfeits from the evil spirits; and (3) that God’s leading is in the intuition of the spirit and not in the mind of the soul. Not a few saints—ignorant of God’s will that He does not wish man to be passive but rather to cooperate actively with Him—spend time training themselves to not think in order to possess God’s thoughts. How can they not understand that if they themselves are not using their brain neither will God use it nor put His thoughts into it. The principle of God is for men to control the whole person with their will and to work together with Him. Only the devil would exploit the opportunity of a passive mind and seize its control away from men. God has never wanted men to receive His revelation like a robot; it is the enemy spirits alone who wish it that way. All passivity profits them, for they gladly take advantage of the folly and passivity of God’s people to operate in their mind.

Passivity

Any ground ever given to evil spirits invites them to work. Of these grounds the most serious is passivity. Passivity reflects the attitude of the will which in turn represents the total being. Passivity provides the liberty for wicked elements to function, though they habitually do so under cover, trying to deceive the saints. The cause of passivity is the ignorance of the Christian. He misconceives the role of the intellect in spiritual life; He thinks too highly of it but at the same time too lowly of it. Hence he permits his reasoning powers to settle into inertia and welcomes any thought which issues from that inert state. How very necessary, therefore, to clearly apprehend the way God leads.

The passivity of the mind is due to a misconception of the meaning of consecration and obedience to the Holy Spirit. Many take for granted that the thoughts in their head hinder their spiritual walk. They do not perceive that it is a brain which ceases to function or which functions chaotically that hinders spiritual life, whereas one which functions properly is not only profitable but also essential. Such a mind as this can alone cooperate with God. As has been emphasized previously, the normal path of guidance is in the spirit's intuition and not in the mind. An appreciation of this principle is exceedingly necessary and should never be forgotten. The believer must follow the revelation in his intuition, not the thought in his head. He who heeds the mind is walking after the flesh and is accordingly led astray. Nevertheless, we have not said that the mind is utterly useless, that it does not even exercise a secondary role. True, we make a grave mistake if we elevate the mind as *the* organ for direct fellowship with God and for receiving revelation from Him; yet it *does* have a role assigned to it. That role is to *assist* intuition. Yes, it is by intuition that we come to know God's will, but we additionally need the mind to inspect our inner sense to determine whether it is from our intuition or is a counterfeit of our emotions, whether or not it is of God and harmonizes with the Word. We know by intuition; we prove by the mind. How easy it is for us to err! Without the assistance of the mind we shall find it hard to decide what is authentically of God.

In the normal process of guidance the mind is needed as well. While the guidance of intuition is frequently quite opposite to reasoning, we still must use the head, though not to argue with intuition but to examine whether this thing is really from God. Intuition apprehends the will of God very quickly; however, we require time for the brain to probe and prove whether what we apprehend is truly from our intuition and the Holy Spirit. If it is from God our intuition shall emit an even more accurate sense while under probing, thus effecting in us a stronger faith than before that this thing is in truth from God. The exercise of the intellect in this way—only in the way of *examination*—is both beneficial and proper. But should this sensing be of our fleshly thought and feeling, then in the process of examination our conscience will raise its voice of opposition. Consequently, the probing with our mind to *understand* whether a matter is from God or not will not interfere but will instead give opportunity to intuition to prove itself. If it is of intuition what has it to fear from the probing of the mind? On the other hand, whatever is afraid of being probed is probably out from one's self. The head should never guide or lead, but it unquestionably is needed to probe the authenticity of guidance.