

Minding The Mind

by Dan S. Shipley

You wouldn't expect to learn much from garage--wall graffiti, but this bit of scribbling caught my attention recently while standing around awaiting car repairs: "If you continue to think the way you've always thought, you'll continue to be what you've always been." Good graffiti for a change. There is a strong correlation between what one is and what one thinks. The Bible says so. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. . . ." (Prov. 23:7).

That's why God says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). In this regard, keeping the heart is minding the mind. Physically, the heart is the central organ of the body. In its Biblical and figurative sense, it most commonly refers to the mind of man as the center of moral, spiritual and intellectual life. You might say that man is the living expression of what's in his heart. "All our actions take their hue from the complexion of the heart, as landscapes their variety from the light" (Bacon). Jesus reinforces this idea from the viewpoint of that which defiles a man. "But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings . . ." (Matt. 15:18). Clearly, the thought in the mind is the seed of the deed. As Jesus teaches, evil men think evil thoughts that produce evil words and deeds while good men think good thoughts that produce good words and deeds (Lk. 6:45).

But, in either case, it is man that determines his own thoughts, and, hence, his deeds. Thus, the need to "keep the heart." God does not require that which man cannot do. Rational man can control what he thinks. And when he does, he controls his activities and lifestyle. Every man "stores up" in his heart what he considers to have importance and priority. (Remember, it may be good or bad, important or trivial, hurtful or helpful, or whatever, but it is his "treasure") The man, then, who stores up hate and ill-will, should not be surprised to find it overflowing into ill-treatment and evil sPig because "out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. " Likewise, the man who stores up lust and sensuality will, sooner or later, find it overflowing into adultery, fornication or kindred sins. Conduct reveals thinking.

Given time and opportunity, that which fills our minds will fashion our feelings, attitudes, and concepts which, in turn, influence our behavior. And, in the wisdom of the garage-wall graffiti, if such wrong thinking continues in the unminded mind, so will the lifestyle---and so will the misery and consequences it produces.

How important, then, this business of minding the mind and being food heart-keepers. David evidently saw such a need when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10). Only God can give the sinner a clean heart and he does so through forgiveness. Man's part begins with faith. By that we mean the kind of faith that is counted for righteousness; active, obedient, and God-seeking faith. It was on the basis of such faith that God is said to have cleansed the hearts of the Gentiles (Acts 15:9). Such faith expresses itself in repentance (Acts 2:38), confession (Acts 8:37), and baptism (Mk. 16:16). Baptism is the

culminating act of obedience in which the sinner receives forgiveness and, thus, having been cleansed, becomes a new creature in Christ to begin his walk in newness of life (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:4).

For the Christian whose heart-house has become defiled with sin, like Simon, he must repent and pray God for forgiveness (Acts 8:22). Now, with clean hands, pure hearts (Jas. 4:8), and a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2), the child of God sets his mind on the things that are above and not on the things that are upon the earth (Col. 3:2). He brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Such is the mental discipline Peter refers to when he speaks of "girding up the loins of your mind" and being "sober" (1 Pet. 1:13). Since man's heart is the control center of his life, the man who lives for God must control the control center. That's why we must remember and heed the divine admonition, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."