

THE WAR FOR OUR MINDS

There is a war all around us. It is a war for the control of our minds.

To control us, the enemy does not have to get us to *do* something bad - although that works. All he needs is to get us to *not do* what is good and pleasing to God. We do not have to be actively doing evil; just being passive (*not* doing what is good) will accomplish the same thing!

The only way we can fight to retain (or regain) control of our minds is through meditating on (contemplating the message of) God's Word, and allowing *it* to take control. Of course, communication with God (prayer) and trust in him have a part in the battle, but they occur within the context of the Word and its effect on our lives. These things are interrelated - after all, before a person is willing to focus his attention on the Word, he will need to *trust* its Author. And having done that, it will only be natural for him to want to *talk* to the author - to respond back in prayer (which includes praise, adoration, worship, and the like - it is not merely asking for things).

To win the battle, we need to fight to *change* our basic perspectives on all of life. It will take much effort. More than that, it will take the power of God working in our lives; for the enemy has his viewpoints well entrenched into our thinking patterns. Don't forget that he was planning his battle against us before we were even born! He is quite serious about wanting to destroy us - and if it weren't for the power of God, we would have no hope at all!

Psalm 1 describes the characteristics of the one who is blessed. He delights in and meditates on God's Word. What God says is important to him, and he may find himself thinking about it at any time of the day (even during his "free time"), because it is *God's Word*. God (and therefore his Word) has become his "first love"!

The degree to which these things characterize your actions and desires will be proportional to the degree of seriousness you have toward this whole issue.

If you are not serious about fighting to change the way you think, perhaps you should ask yourself if you really believe what the Bible says. After all, it describes this as a very serious issue. If you consider it burdensome to think about the Word of God, perhaps you should ask whether or not your mind has *really* been changed. After all, it is the *unchanged* mind that views God's Word as a "burden" and a "waste of time."

How does a person reinforce a changed way of thinking? By the things he chooses to do. A person reinforces it by what he chooses to see and read and watch, by what he chooses to hear or to talk about, by the type of activities he chooses to be involved in. How do you use your time - especially your "free time"? How do you use your *work* time? What type of leisure activities or hobbies do you pursue? All these things influence your mind.

A changed way of thinking does NOT come by once-a-week listening to someone talk about it. It comes by *constant reinforcement*. In what ways do you reinforce it in your mind? (Or do you?) How

do you reinforce it in others (especially if you have children)? You do not get a changed way of thinking by merely memorizing lots of facts about the Bible. Meditation is not merely fact accumulation, or the result of some Bible "survey" course. You need to not only *know* the Word, but *live* it. (The book of James tells us about this.) You need to *think* about what it says, and let it do its work of changing the way you think and act.

There is no place in the kingdom of God for someone who has the heart of a "sluggard" - a lazy person. If you aren't willing to start becoming "Christ-like" *now*, at what point do you plan to start? In hell? "Tomorrow" never comes. That's why Scripture says: "*Today* you must listen to his voice. Don't harden your hearts against him." (Hebrews 4:7b and elsewhere) There is *no such thing* as "lazy Christianity."

When we strive to reinforce the truth in our mind and heart (Psalm 119:30), that does *not* mean that every day we must find some radically "new" truth to learn about. At times it may be nothing more than repeating truth that we are already familiar with. We *need* repetition, to make sure that the truth is firmly established in our minds (2 Peter 1:12-15). At other times, reinforcing the truth will mean taking familiar concepts, relating them to other concepts (sometimes discovering new dimensions to them), and learning how to apply them more consistently to the many circumstances of life.

Repetition is a very effective tool for reinforcing the way one thinks. The enemy uses it all the time. You need to use it, too... but use it to reinforce the *opposite* of what the enemy is using it for.

Our goal in all this is to become "one" with the message of the Bible, to develop a mind that is completely "immersed" in it and transformed by it. Our goal is *not* to be caught up in the latest "theological fads," or to go after the world's distorted viewpoint, or to be preoccupied with "feeling good" or "having a nice day." In fact, the world's concept of "feeling good" is rarely an option for the Christian. If (or when) he is not experiencing *his own* personal "pain" - perhaps because of persecution, or because of sorrow for sin in his own life - he will be experiencing "pain" for *others* and their problems.

"Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along."
(2 Corinthians 11:28)

The psalmist talks about meditating on, and delighting in, God's Word "day and night" (Psalm 1:2). God's Word (and God's will) is to have an influence on everything we do. What is your reaction to this idea? Do you describe it as getting "too fanatical" or "too extreme"? Do you claim, "We need balance" (in the sense of placing less emphasis on the *Word* and more on the *world*)? Well, *what does the Bible say?*