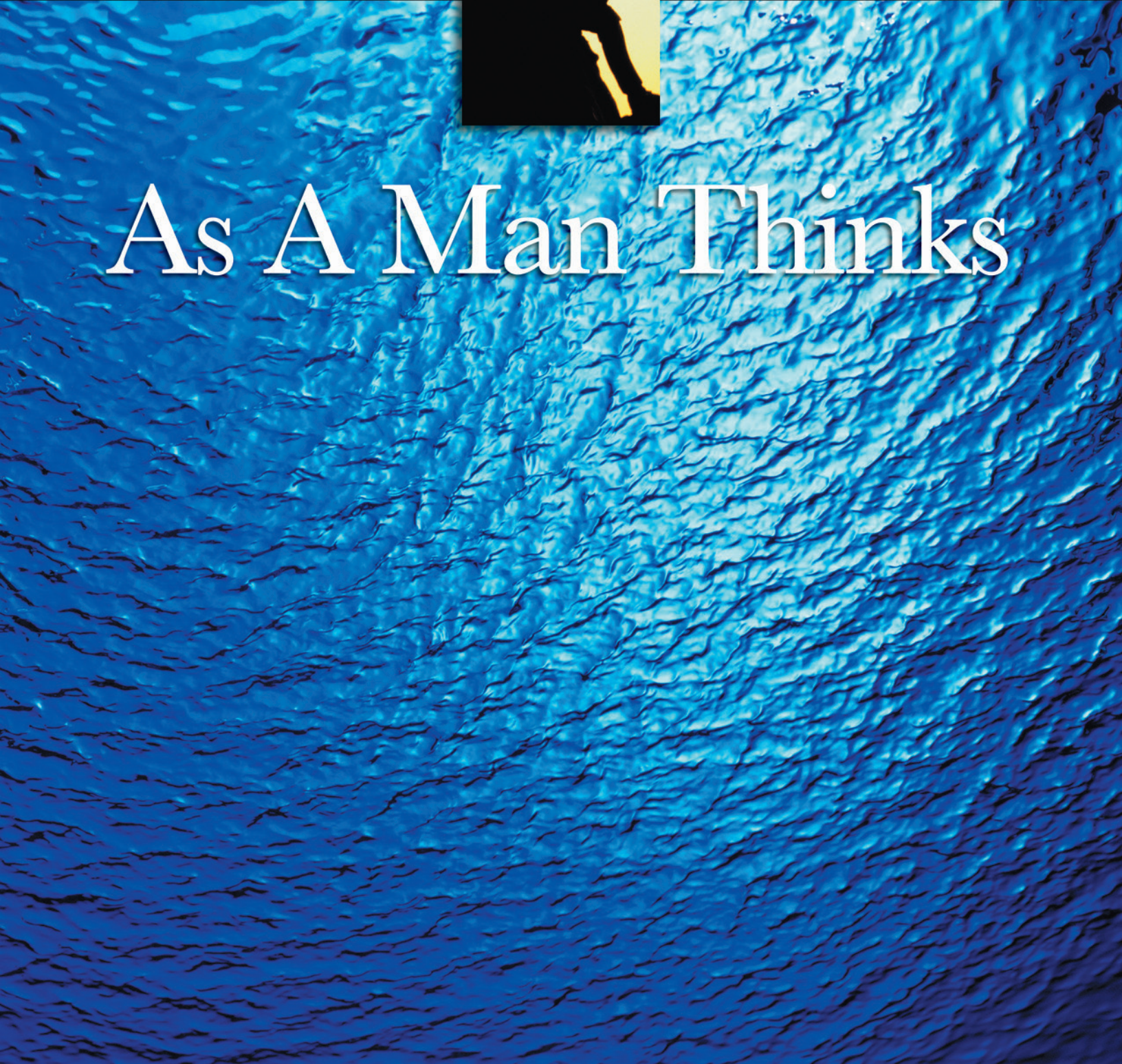


As A Man Thinks



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Just like you, Father God is using the many events and circumstances of life's journey to mold and shape me into the person He desires. Occasionally, I've cooperated completely. It's in those rare moments when something extraordinary takes place - Heaven touches earth, mountains are moved, a part of me is transformed.

Through His infinite patience and unfathomable love I am learning to become the man He created me to be. As I daily surrender my life to Him through His precious Holy Spirit, I see more clearly life eternal.

My hope and prayer for you are that you too will discover God's purpose and become exactly what He has planned for you all along - His son or daughter.

May God grant that we become His disciples by His grace,

Doug Morrell

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Doug is a seasoned discipler and small group leader. Since graduating from Texas Tech University in 1984, he's worked in a dual capacity -- working within for-profit businesses around the country while also serving the church in various pastoral roles. Additionally, he and his wife Suzie are the founders/directors of CORE Discipleship, a ministry dedicated to making disciples who make disciples. Doug and Suzie have three children: Katheryn, Hannah, and Nathaniel.

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AS A MAN THINKS

By James Allen, Edited/Revised 2006 By CORE Discipleship

James Allen was born in Leicester, England on November 28, 1864. When he was fifteen, the family business failed and his father left for America to find work. His father was murdered before he could send for the family and subsequently; James left school and worked for several British manufacturers until 1902. His literary career lasted only nine years until his death in 1912. “As A Man Thinks” was his second book.

“As A Man Thinks” has been read by millions and is based on Proverbs 23:7: “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” Perhaps this is what the Apostle Paul considered as he penned Romans 12:1: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” As disciples we are called to “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world.” Our refusal to conform to this world’s values must be firmly planted in our minds - “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” We can only be transformed as the Holy Spirit renews, reeducates, and redirects our minds. Based on Allen’s previous work, I have purposed to bring Scriptural clarity to his writing while the integrity and flow as much as possible.

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FOREWORD BY JAMES ALLEN

This little volume (the result of meditation and experience) is not intended as an exhaustive treatise on the much written upon subject of the power of thought. It is suggestive rather than explanatory, its object being to stimulate men and women to the discovery and perception of the truth that - “They themselves are makers of themselves.”

By virtue of the thoughts that they choose and encourage - that mind is the master weaver, both of the inner garment of character and the outer garment of circumstance, and that, as they may have hitherto woven in ignorance and pain they may now weave in enlightenment and happiness.

James Allen

CHAPTER ONE

Thought and Character

The principle, “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he,” not only embraces the whole of a man’s being, but is so comprehensive as to reach out to every condition and circumstance of his life. A man is literally what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts.

As the plant springs from and could not be without the seed, so every act of a man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:6: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” Paul planted the seed of the gospel message in people’s hearts. Apollos’s role was to water - to help the believers grow stronger in the faith. God keeps on making Christians grow.

This applies equally to those acts called “spontaneous” and “unpremeditated” as to those that are deliberately executed.

“When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” (James 1:13-15).

It is easy to blame others and make excuses for evil thoughts and wrong actions. Excuses include (1) it’s the other person’s fault; (2) I couldn’t help it; (3) everybody’s doing it; (4) it was just a mistake; (5) nobody’s perfect; (6) the devil made me do it; (7) I was pressured into it; (8) I didn’t know it was wrong; (9) God is tempting me. A person who makes excuses is trying to shift the blame from himself or herself to something or someone else. A disciple, on the other hand, accepts responsibility for his or her wrongs, confesses them, and asks God for forgiveness.

Act is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruits; thus does a man garner in the sweet and bitter fruitage of his own husbandry.

Thought in the mind hath made us.

What we are by thought we wrought and built.

If a man’s mind hath evil thoughts, pain comes on him as comes the wheel the ox behind If one endures in purity of thought joy follows him as his own shadow - sure.

Man’s character is a growth by law, and not a creation of ingenuity, and cause and effect is as absolute and undeviating in the hidden realm of thought as in the world of visible and material things. A noble and Godlike character is not a thing of favor or chance, but is the natural result of continued effort in right thinking, the effect of long-cherished association with Godlike thoughts. An ignoble and bestial character, by the same process, is the result of the continued harboring of groveling thoughts.

God has not left us alone in our struggles to do His will. He wants to come alongside us and be within us through the power of His Holy Spirit to help. God helps us want to obey Him and then gives us the power to do what He wants. The secret to a changed life is to submit to God’s control and let Him work.

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and

trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12,13).

To be like Christ, we must train ourselves to think like Christ. To change our desires to be more like Christ's, we need the power of the indwelling Spirit (Philippians 1:19), the influence of faithful disciples, and obedience to God's Word (doers, not just hearers), and sacrificial service. Often it is in doing God's will that we gain the desire to do it (see Philippians 4:8,9). Do what He wants and trust Him to change your desires.

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

The truth of Jesus' words immediately causes us to feel uncomfortable and discouraged for we know we have not yet surrendered areas of our lives to His Lordship. For instance, if you are comforted by the fact that Christ did not tell all His followers to sell all their possessions, then you are too attached to what you have. We say, “How can I be perfect?” Jesus tells us to be “perfect” (whole or complete in God's sight) in our entire being - body, soul and spirit.

We are to be perfect in character. In this life we cannot be flawless, but we can be blameless.

We are to be perfect in holiness. Like the Pharisees, we are to separate ourselves from the soul's sinful desires. But unlike the Pharisees, we are to be devoted to God's desires rather than our own, and first to allow His love and mercy into the darkened rooms of our own selfish souls, and secondly, to carry Mercy into the world.

We are to be perfect in maturity. Christ like character and holy living does not take place in a moment. We grow toward maturity and wholeness over time as we allow his life to enter into the areas of our souls that continually reject him. Just as we expect different behavior from a baby, a child, a teenager, and an adult, so God expects different behavior from us, depending on our stage of spiritual maturity.

We are to be perfect in love. We can only love others as completely as God loves us as we surrender our wills to his.

We can be perfect if our behavior is appropriate for our maturity level—perfect, yet with much room to grow. Our tendency to sin must never deter us from striving - actually, surrendering our soul's control to the control of the Holy Spirit - to be more like Christ. Christ calls all of his disciples to excel, to rise above mediocrity, and to mature in every area, becoming like him. Those who strive to become perfect will one day be perfect, even as Christ is perfect (1 John 3:2, 3).

“For what we are trying to do is to remain what we call “ourselves,” to keep personal happiness as our great aim in life, and yet at the same time be “good.” We are all trying to let our mind and heart [soul] go their own way—centered on money or pleasure or ambition—hoping, in spite of this, to behave honestly and chastely and humbly. And that is exactly what Christ warned us you could not do. As He said, a thistle cannot produce figs. If I am a field that contains nothing but grass-seed, I cannot produce wheat. Cutting the grass may keep it short; but I shall still produce grass and no wheat. If I want to produce wheat, the change must go deeper than the surface. I must be ploughed up and re-sown.” -C. S. Lewis

This is where the real problem of Christianity comes and the place where most people do not first look for it. It begins the first waking moment of each day. All the hopes, dreams, ambitions and business of the day come rushing in like a tidal wave. And our first assignment each day is to press

them down and to listen instead to that other small still voice, taking the other point of view, allowing that other larger, stronger, quieter life to saturate our soulish nature.

It begins with a realization, a seed thought of truth. It is measured in micro-moments initially, but those seconds grow. The life of Christ Jesus can begin to spread throughout your system as you allow His Holy Spirit to work in the beginning, the essence of His creative act. It is the difference between a thinly applied layer of veneer, which is laid on the surface, and a crimson-colored stain that permeates on the molecular level of our souls.

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2).

To “set your minds on things above” means to look at life from God’s perspective and to seek what he desires. This is the antidote to selfishness; we gain the proper perspective on earthly things when we take God’s view of them. The more we regard the world around us as God does, the more we will live in harmony with him. We must not become too attached to what is only temporary.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

Jesus Christ was humble, willing to give up his rights in order to obey God and serve people. Like Christ, we should have a servant’s attitude, serving out of love for God and for others, not out of guilt or fear. Remember, you can choose your attitude. You can approach life expecting to be served, or you can look for opportunities to serve others.

Often people excuse selfishness, pride, or evil by claiming their rights. They think, “I can cheat on this test; after all, I deserve to pass this class,” or “I can spend all this money on myself - I worked hard for it,” or “I can get an abortion; I have a right to control my own body.” But as disciples, we should have a different attitude, one that enables us to lay aside our rights in order to serve others. If we say we follow Christ, we must also say we want to live as He lived. We should develop His attitude of humility as we serve, even when we are not likely to get recognition for our efforts.

What are you focused on? You will probably say, “I’m not overly focused on anything,” but all of us are focused on something - something that occupies our minds, our attention, our concern. But God tells us that we are to be in Him - to live and move and have our being in Him because we are his offspring (Acts 17:28). So many of us want to know about God; it is a rare thing to see those who have gone beyond the veil, who have entered into the abiding awareness of his presence, consumed not with facts about him, but simply because he is God and Father. We are to be absolutely, utterly abandoned in thought, attitude, and action by the presence of God. Like a child, we are to be so engrossed in God that everything else melts away as a meaningless distraction - the only thing that matters is the present moment. We are to have the eyes of our lives so focused on God that everything passes through that lens first. He is first in all things.

Are you so focused on God that nothing else gets into your life - no anxiety, worry, and strife? Perhaps this is why our Lord taught us so much about the sin of worry. If God truly is God of our lives, do we dare be so unbelieving? If God is our focus, then He is our refuge and strong tower against all the fiery darts of the enemy.

We should have as little desire for this world as a dead person would have. Our home is where Christ lives (John 14:2, 3). Are you just passing through as a foreigner in a distant country or have you hunkered down for the long haul? This truth gives us a different perspective on our lives here on earth. If we are “setting our minds on things above” we are looking at life from God’s perspective - we are seeking what He desires. This is the only remedy for our selfishness; we only gain the

proper focus on life when we are focused on God. The more we focus on the world around us, the more anxious we become. The more our focus is on Him, the more in harmony and at peace we become.

Man is made or unmade by himself; in the armory of thought he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself. He also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy and strength and peace.

“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

By the right choice and true application of thought, man ascends to the Divine Perfection; by the abuse and wrong application of thought, he descends below the level of the beast. Between these two extremes are all the grades of character, and man is their maker and master.

Of all the beautiful truths pertaining to the soul that have been restored and brought to light in this age, none is more gladdening or fruitful of divine promise and confidence than this - that man is the master of thought, the molder of character, and maker and shaper of condition, environment, and destiny.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26-28; see also 2:16,17).

When God delegated some of His authority to the human race, He expected us to take responsibility for the environment and the other creatures that share our planet. We must not be careless and wasteful as we fulfill this charge. Our ability to sustain our role as delegated ruler of Earth will rest in our continued obedience to God’s rule as King of all.

As a being of power, intelligence, and love, and the lord of his own thoughts, man holds the key to every situation, and contains within himself that transforming and regenerative agency by which he may make himself what he chooses.

Though God is certainly Sovereign King of the universe, He has given man the opportunity or choice to exercise will - man becomes the master, even in his weakest and most abandoned state; but in his weakness and degradation he is the foolish master who misgoverns his “household.” When he begins to reflect upon his condition, and to search diligently for the Law upon which his being is established, he then becomes the wise master, directing his energies with intelligence, and fashioning his thoughts to fruitful issues. Such is the conscious master, and man can only thus become by discovering within himself the laws of thought - a discovery that is totally a matter of application, self-analysis, and experience.

“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the

commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin” (Romans 7:7-25).

We must understand that where there is no law, there is no sin, because people cannot know that their actions are sinful unless a law forbids those actions. God’s law makes people realize that they are sinners doomed to die; yet the law offers no help. Sin is real, and it is dangerous. The law is essential, and we are grateful for it - but it doesn’t do anything to help us be victorious.

We must also understand that sin deceives us by misusing the law. The law is holy, expressing God’s nature and will for all people. In the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), the serpent deceived Eve by taking her focus off the freedom she had and putting it on the one restriction God had made. Ever since then, we have all been rebels. Sin looks good to us precisely because God has said it is wrong. Instead of paying attention to His warnings, we use them as a “to do” list. When we are tempted to rebel, we need to look at the law from a wider perspective - in the light of God’s grace and mercy. If we focus on His great love for us, we will understand that He only restricts us from actions and attitudes that ultimately will harm us – Father knows what is best for His children.

The Apostle Paul gave us three principles as we learn to deal with our old sinful desires. First, knowledge is not the answer (Romans 7:9). Paul felt fine as long as he did not understand what the law demanded. When he learned the truth, he knew he was doomed. Secondly, self-determination (struggling in your own strength) doesn’t succeed (Romans 7:15). Paul found himself sinning in ways that weren’t even attractive to him. Lastly, becoming a Christian does not stamp out all sin and temptation from a person’s life (Romans 7:22-25).

We must realize that being born again takes a moment of faith, but becoming Christ-like is a life-long process. We all must depend totally on the work of Christ for our salvation. We cannot earn it by our good behavior.

We must never underestimate the power of sin. We must never attempt to fight it in our own strength. Satan is a deceiver, liar, murderer, and crafty tempter, and we have an amazing ability to make excuses. Instead of trying to overcome sin with human willpower, we must take hold of the

tremendous power of Christ that is available to us. This is God's provision for victory over sin - He sends the Holy Spirit to live in us and give us power. And when we fall, he lovingly reaches out to help us up.

It is once we receive the Gift of Life - Lord Jesus - His Holy Spirit and begin obeying His Word that we begin to become all that God desires no longer conformed to this world's thinking and standards, but transformed by the renewing of our minds: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2). Our refusal to conform to this world's values must go deeper than the level of behavior and customs - it must be firmly planted in our minds - "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Only when the Holy Spirit renews, reeducates, and redirects our minds are we truly transformed (Romans 8:5).

Only by much searching and mining are gold and diamonds obtained, and man can find every truth connected with his being if he will dig deep into the mine of his soul. Lamentations 3:25: "The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him." And that he is the maker of his character, the molder of his life, and the builder of his destiny, he may unerringly prove: if he will watch, control, and alter his thoughts, tracing their effects upon himself, upon others, and upon his life and circumstances; if he will link cause and effect by patient practice and investigation, utilizing his every experience, even to the most trivial, as a means of obtaining that knowledge of himself. In this direction, as in no other, is the law absolute that "For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Luke 11:10). For it is only by patience, practice, and ceaseless importunity can a man receive the Prince of Life. Jesus knocks on the door of our hearts every time we sense we should turn to Him. Jesus wants to have fellowship with us, and he wants us to open up to Him. He is patient and persistent in trying to get through to us - not breaking and entering, but knocking. He allows us to decide whether or not to open our lives to Him: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

CHAPTER TWO

Effect of Thought on Circumstances

A man's mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected, it must, and will, bring forth. If no useful seeds are put into it, then an abundance of useless weed seeds will fall therein, and will continue to produce their kind: "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'" (Matthew 13:27).

"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown" (Matthew 13:18-23).

Just as a gardener cultivates his plot, keeping it free from weeds, and growing the flowers and fruits which he requires, so may a man tend the garden of his mind, weeding out all the wrong, useless, and impure thoughts, and cultivating toward perfection the flowers and fruits of right, useful, and pure thoughts. By pursuing this process, a man sooner or later discovers that he is the master gardener of his soul, the director of his life. He also reveals, within himself, the laws of thought, and understands with ever-increasing accuracy, how the thought forces and mind elements operate in the shaping of his character, circumstances, and destiny.

Thought and character are one, and as character can only manifest and discover itself through environment and circumstance, the outer conditions of a person's life will always be found to be harmoniously related to his inner state. This does not mean that a man's circumstances at any given time are an indication of his entire character, but that those circumstances are so intimately connected with some vital thought element within himself that, for the time being, they are indispensable to his development.

Kevin Conner writes, "It is necessary that Christians be taught sound Bible doctrine and that all doctrine be tested by the full context of the infallible Word of God. Doctrine received, believed and practiced determines a person's character, behavior and destiny."

Every man is where he is by the law of his being. The thoughts that he has built into his character have brought him there, and in the arrangement of his life there is no element of chance, but all is the result of a law that cannot err. This is just as true of those who feel "out of harmony" with their surroundings as of those who are contented with them.

As the progressive and spiritually maturing being, man is where he is that he may learn that he may grow; and as he learns the spiritual lesson that any circumstance contains for him, it passes away and gives place to other circumstances.

Man is buffeted by circumstances so long as he believes himself to be the creature of outside conditions. But when he realizes that he may command the hidden soil and seeds of his being out of which circumstances grow, he then becomes the rightful master of himself – he discovers what it means to be Holy Spirit controlled and as a result, self controlled (Galatians 5:22,23). He is someone who fully knows that he cannot conjure up these virtues by will, but realizes that the Holy Spirit can produce them. When a man allows the Spirit to fully control his life, He produces all of these graces.

Our circumstances grow out of thought. Where you are is based on the last 100 decisions – choices – you have made. Every man knows who has for any length of time practiced self-control and self-purification; for he will have noticed that the alteration in his circumstances has been in exact ratio with his altered mental condition. So true is this that when a man earnestly applies himself to remedy the defects in his character, and makes swift and marked progress, he passes rapidly through a succession of spiritual change.

The soul attracts that which it secretly harbors; that which it loves, and also that which it fears. It reaches the height of its cherished aspirations. It falls to the level of its unchastened desires - and circumstances are the means by which the soul receives its own.

Every thought-seed sown or allowed to fall into the mind, and to take root there, produces its own, blossoming sooner or later into act, and bearing its own fruitage of opportunity and circumstance. Good thoughts bear good fruit, bad thoughts bad fruit.

“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:33-37).

What we say reveals what is in our hearts. What is in our heart is what we see. Heart problems cannot be resolved by cleaning up your speech. You must allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with new attitudes and motives; then your speech will be cleansed at its source.

The outer world of circumstance shapes itself to the inner world of thought, and both pleasant and unpleasant external conditions are factors that make for the ultimate good of the individual. As the reaper of his own harvest, man learns both by suffering and bliss.

“The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:8).

A man does not come to the almshouse or the jail by the tyranny of fate of circumstance, but by the pathway of groveling thoughts and base desires. Nor does a pure-minded man fall suddenly into crime by stress of any mere external force; the criminal thought had long been secretly fostered in the heart, and the hour of opportunity revealed its gathered power.

Circumstance does not make the man; it reveals him. No such conditions can exist as descending into vice and its attendant sufferings apart from vicious inclinations, or ascending into virtue and its pure happiness without the continued cultivation of virtuous aspirations. And man, therefore, as the lord and master of thought, is the maker of himself, the shaper and author of environment. Even at birth the soul comes to its own, and through every step of its earthly pilgrimage it attracts those combinations of conditions which reveal itself, which are the reflections of its own purity and impurity, its strength and weakness.

Men do not attract that which they want, but that which they are. Their whims, fancies, and ambitions are thwarted at every step, but their inmost thoughts and desires are fed with their own food, be it foul or clean. The “divinity that shapes our ends” is in ourselves; it is our very self. Man is manacled only by himself. Thought and action are the jailers of fate - they imprison, being base. They are also the angels of freedom - they liberate, being noble. Not what he wishes and prays for does a man get, but what he justly earns. His wishes and prayers are only gratified and answered when they harmonize with God’s will: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26,27).

In the light of this truth, what, then, is the meaning of “fighting against circumstances”? It means that a man is continually revolting against an effect without, while all the time he is nourishing and preserving its cause in his heart. That cause may take the form of a conscious vice or an unconscious weakness; but whatever it is, it stubbornly retards the efforts of its possessor, and thus calls aloud for remedy.

Men are anxious to improve their circumstances, but are unwilling to improve themselves. They

therefore remain bound. The man who does not shrink from self-crucifixion can never fail to accomplish the object upon which his heart is set. This is as true of earthly as of heavenly things. Even the man whose sole object is to acquire wealth must be prepared to make great personal sacrifices before he can accomplish his object; and how much more so he who would realize a strong and well-poised life?

Here is a man who is wretchedly poor. He is extremely anxious that his surroundings and home comforts should be improved. Yet all the time he shirks his work, and considers he is justified in trying to deceive his employer on the ground of the insufficiency of his wages. Such a man does not understand the simplest rudiments of those principles that are the basis of true prosperity. He is not only totally unfitted to rise out of his wretchedness, but is actually attracting to himself a still deeper wretchedness by dwelling in, and acting out, indolent, deceptive, and unmanly thoughts.

Here is a rich man who is the victim of a painful and persistent disease as the result of gluttony. He is willing to give large sums of money to get rid of it, but he will not sacrifice his gluttonous desires. He wants to gratify his taste for rich and unnatural foods and have his health as well. Such a man is totally unfit to have health, because he has not yet learned the first principles of a healthy life.

Here is an employer of labor who adopts crooked measures to avoid paying the regulation wage, and, in the hope of making larger profits, reduces the wages of his workpeople. Such a man is altogether unfitted for prosperity. And when he finds himself bankrupt, both as regards reputation and riches, he blames circumstances, not knowing that he is the sole author of his condition.

I have introduced these three cases merely as illustrative of the truth that man is the cause (though nearly always unconsciously) of his circumstances. That, while aiming at the good end, he is continually frustrating its accomplishment by encouraging thoughts and desires which cannot possibly harmonize with that end. Such cases could be multiplied and varied almost indefinitely, but this is not necessary. The reader can, if he so resolves, trace the action of the laws of thought in his own mind and life, and until this is done, mere external facts cannot serve as a ground of reasoning.

Circumstances, however, are so complicated, thought is so deeply rooted, and the conditions of happiness vary so vastly with individuals, that a man's entire condition (although it may be known to himself) cannot be judged by another from the external aspect of his life alone.

A man may be honest in certain directions, yet suffer privations. A man may be dishonest in certain directions, yet acquire wealth. But the conclusion usually formed that the one man fails because of his particular honesty, and that the other prospers because of his particular dishonesty, is the result of a superficial judgment, which assumes that the dishonest man is almost totally corrupt, and honest man almost entirely virtuous. In the light of a deeper knowledge and wider experience, such judgment is found to be erroneous. The dishonest man may have some admirable virtues that the other does not possess; and the honest man obnoxious vices that are absent in the other. The honest man reaps the good results of his honest thoughts and acts; he also brings upon himself the sufferings that his vices produce. The dishonest man likewise garners his own suffering and happiness.

It is pleasing to human vanity to believe that one suffers because of one's virtue. But not until a man has surrendered and utterly destroyed every sickly, bitter, and impure thought from his mind, and washed every sinful stain from his soul, can he be in a position to know and declare that his sufferings are the result of his good, and not of his bad qualities. And on the way to spiritual maturity, he will have found working in his mind and life, the Great Law which is absolutely just, and

which cannot give good for evil, evil for good. Possessed of such knowledge, he will then know, looking back upon his past ignorance and blindness, that his life is, and always was, justly ordered, and that all his past experiences, good and bad, were the equitable outworking of his spiritually maturing self. For he realizes that God knows the future, and His plans for us are good and full of hope. As long as God, who knows the future, provides our agenda and goes with us as we fulfill His mission, we can have boundless hope. This does not mean that we will be spared pain, suffering, or hardship, but that God will see us through to a glorious conclusion: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Good thoughts and actions can never produce bad results. Bad thoughts and actions can never produce good results. This is but saying that nothing can come from corn but corn, nothing from nettles but nettles. Men understand this law in the natural world, and work with it. But few understand it in the mental and moral world (though its operation there is just as simple and undeviating), and they, therefore, do not cooperate with it.

Suffering is manifest for many reasons, but sometimes the effect of wrong thought in some direction. It is an indication that the individual is out of harmony with God, with the Law of the Spirit. The sole and supreme use of suffering is to purify, to burn out all that is useless and impure. Suffering ceases for him who is pure. There could be no object in burning gold after the dross had been removed, and perfectly pure and mature being could not suffer.

The circumstances that a man encounters with suffering are the result of his own mental inconsistencies. The circumstances that a man encounters with blessedness, not material possessions, are the measure of right thought. Wretchedness, not lack of material possessions, is the measure of wrong thought. A man may be cursed and rich; he may be blessed and poor. Blessedness and riches are only joined together when the riches are rightly and wisely used. And the poor man only descends into wretchedness when he regards his lot as a burden unjustly imposed.

Indigence and indulgence are the two extremes of wretchedness. They are both equally unnatural and the result of mental disorder. A man is not rightly conditioned until he is whole. And happiness, health, and prosperity are the result of a harmonious adjustment of the inner with the outer, of the man who knows that he is at peace with God and to God.

A man only begins to be a man when he ceases to whine and revile, and commences to search for the hidden justice which regulates his life. And as he adapts his mind to that regulating factor, he ceases to accuse others as the cause of his condition, and builds himself up in strong and noble thoughts. He ceases to kick against circumstances, but begins to use them as aids to his more rapid spiritual progress, and as a means of discovering the hidden powers and possibilities within himself – that true spiritual power flows from true obedience to the divine order in relationships and in personal conduct regardless of circumstance.

God’s Word, His Law, not confusion, is the dominating principle in the universe. Justice, not injustice, is the soul and substance of life. And righteousness, not corruption, is the molding and moving force in the spiritual government of the world. This being so, man has but to be reconciled with God to find that the universe is right; and during the process, he will find that as he alters his thoughts toward things and other people, things and other people will alter toward him. “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Because we were alienated from God, we were strangers to His way of thinking and were “enemies

in our minds.” Sin corrupted our way of thinking about God. Wrong thinking leads to wrong actions that leads to sin, which further perverts and destroys our thoughts about Him. When we are out of harmony with God, our natural condition is to be hostile to His standards (Romans 1:21-32).

No one is good enough to save himself or herself. If we want to live eternally with Christ, we must depend totally on God’s grace. This is true whether we have been murderers or honest, hardworking citizens. We have all sinned repeatedly, and any sin is enough to cause us to come to Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life. Apart from Christ, there is no way for our sin to be forgiven and removed.

The proof of this truth is in every person, and it therefore admits of easy investigation by systematic introspection and self-analysis. Let a man submit himself to God’s Holy Spirit inspection and he will be unveiled. Then he can choose to follow God’s pathway and begin to alter his thoughts in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, and he will be astonished at the rapid transformation it will effect in the material conditions of his life.

Men imagine that thought can be kept secret, but it cannot. It rapidly crystallizes into habit, and habit solidifies into habits of drunkenness and sensuality, which solidify into circumstances of destitution and disease. Impure thoughts of every kind crystallize into enervating and confusing habits, which solidify into distracting and adverse circumstances. Thoughts of fear, doubt, and indecision crystallize into weak, unmanly, and irresolute habits, which solidify into circumstances of failure, indigence, and slavish dependence.

Lazy thoughts crystallize into habits of uncleanness and dishonesty, which solidify into circumstances of foulness and beggary. Hateful and condemnatory thoughts crystallize into habits of accusation and violence, which solidify into circumstances of injury and persecution. Selfish thoughts of all kinds crystallize into habits of self-seeking, which solidify into circumstances more of less distressing.

On the other hand, beautiful thoughts of all crystallize into habits of grace and kindness, which solidify into genial and sunny circumstances. Pure thoughts crystallize into habits of temperance and self-control, which solidify into circumstances of repose and peace. Thoughts of courage, self-reliance, and decision crystallize into manly habits, which solidify into circumstances of success, plenty, and freedom.

What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Paul tells us to program our minds with thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:8,9).

Energetic thoughts crystallize into habits of cleanliness and industry, which solidify into circumstances of pleasantness. Gentle and forgiving thoughts crystallize into habits of gentleness, which solidify into protective and preservative circumstances. Loving and unselfish thoughts crystallize into habits of self-forgetfulness for others, which solidify into circumstances of sure and abiding prosperity and true riches.

A particular train of thought persisted in, be it good or bad, cannot fail to produce its results on the

character and circumstances. A man cannot directly choose his circumstances, but he can choose his thoughts, and so indirectly, yet surely, shape his circumstances.

The very nature of this fallen world helps every man to the gratification of the thoughts that he most encourages, and opportunities are presented which will most speedily bring to the surface both the good and evil thoughts.

Let a man cease from his sinful thoughts, and all the world will soften toward him, and be ready to help him. Let him put away his weakly and sickly thoughts, and see that opportunities will spring up on every hand to aid his strong resolves. Let him encourage good thoughts, and no hard fate shall bind him down to wretchedness and shame. The world is your kaleidoscope, and the varying combinations of colors that at every succeeding moment it presents to you are the exquisitely adjusted pictures of your ever-moving thoughts.

CHAPTER THREE

Effect of Thought on Health and the Body

The body is the servant of the mind. It obeys the operations of the mind, whether they be deliberately chosen or automatically expressed. At the bidding of unlawful thoughts the body sinks rapidly into disease and decay; at the command of glad and beautiful thoughts it becomes clothed with youthfulness and beauty.

Disease and health, like circumstances, are rooted in thought. Sickly thoughts will express themselves through a sickly body. Thoughts of fear have been known to kill a man as speedily as a bullet, and they are continually killing thousands of people just as surely though less rapidly. The people who live in fear of disease are the people who get it. Anxiety quickly demoralizes the whole body, and lays it open to the entrance of disease; while impure thoughts, even if not physically indulged, will soon shatter the nervous system.

Strong, pure, and God-thoughts build up the body in vigor and grace. The body is a delicate and plastic instrument, which responds readily to the thoughts by which it is impressed, and habits of thought will produce their own effects, good or bad, upon it.

Men will continue to have impure and poisoned blood so long as they propagate unclean thoughts. Out of a clean heart comes a clean life and a clean body. Out of a defiled mind proceeds a defiled life and corrupt body. Thought is the fountain of action, life and manifestation - make the fountain pure, and all will be pure.

Change of diet will not help a man who will not change his thoughts. When a man makes his thoughts pure, he no longer desires impure food.

If you would perfect your body, guard your mind. If you would renew your body, beautify your mind. Thoughts of malice, envy, disappointment, despondency, rob the body of its health and grace. A sour face does not come by chance; it is made by sour thoughts. Wrinkles that mar are drawn by folly, passion, and pride.

I know a woman of ninety-six who has the bright, innocent face of a girl. I know a man well under middle age whose face is drawn into inharmonious contours. The one is the result of a sweet and sunny disposition; the other is the outcome of passion and discontent.

As you cannot have a sweet and wholesome abode unless you admit the air and sunshine freely into your rooms, so a strong body and a bright, happy, or serene countenance can only result from the free admittance into the mind of thoughts of joy and good will and serenity of the Holy Spirit.

On the faces of the aged there are wrinkles made by sympathy, others by strong and pure thought, others are carved by passion. Who cannot distinguish them? With those who have lived righteously, age is calm, peaceful, and softly mellowed, like the setting sun. I have recently seen a philosopher on his deathbed. He was not old except in years. He died as sweetly and peacefully as he had lived.

There is no physician like cheerful thought for dissipating the ills of the body; there is no comforter to compare with good will for dispersing the shadows of grief and sorrow. To live continually in thoughts of ill will, cynicism, suspicion, and envy, is to be confined in a self-made prison hole. But to think well of all, to be cheerful with all, to patiently learn to find the good in all - such unselfish thoughts are the very portals of heaven; and to dwell day to day in thoughts of peace toward every creature will bring abounding peace to their possessor.

CHAPTER FOUR

Thought and Purpose

Until thought is linked with purpose there is no intelligent accomplishment. With the majority the bark of thought is allowed to “drift” upon the ocean of life. Aimlessness is a vice, and such drifting must not continue for him who would steer clear of catastrophe and destruction.

They who have no central purpose in their life fall an easy prey to worries, fears, troubles, and self-pitying, all of which are indications of weakness, which lead, just as surely as deliberately planned sins (though by a different route), to failure, unhappiness, and loss, for weakness cannot persist in a power-evolving universe.

David served God’s purpose: “For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed” (Acts 13:36).

Jesus came for a purpose: “This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross” (Acts 2:23). Everything that happened to Jesus was under God’s control. The Roman government or the Jewish officials never disrupted his plans. This was especially comforting to those facing oppression during the time of the early Christian church.

We, too, should discover our purpose in Christ Jesus: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). Evil is prevalent in our fallen world, but God is able to turn every circumstance around for our long-range good. God does not work to make us happy, but to fulfill His purpose. Only those who love God and are called according to his purpose can claim this promise of God. Those who are “called” are those the Holy Spirit convinces and enables to receive Christ. Such people have a new perspective, a new mind-set on life. They trust in God, not life’s treasures; they look for their security in heaven, not on earth; they learn to accept, not resent, pain and persecution because God is with them.

A man should seek to know God’s purpose for him in his heart, and set out to accomplish it. He should make this purpose the centralizing point of his thoughts. He should steadily focus his

thought forces upon the object that he has set before him. He should make this purpose his supreme duty, and should devote himself to its attainment, not allowing his thoughts to wander away into transient fancies, longings, and imaginings. This is the royal road to self-control and true concentration of thought. Even if he fails again and again to accomplish his purpose (as he necessarily must until weakness is overcome), the strength of character gained will be the measure of his true success, and this will form a new starting point for future power and triumph.

Those who are not prepared for the apprehension of a great purpose should fix the thoughts upon the faultless performance of their duty, no matter how insignificant their task may appear. Only in this way can the thoughts be gathered and focused, and resolution and energy be developed, which being done, there is nothing which may not be accomplished. "Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men" (Proverbs 22:29).

The weakest soul, knowing its own weakness, and believing this truth - that strength can only be developed by effort and practice, will at once begin to exert itself, and adding effort to effort, patience to patience, and strength to strength, will never cease to develop, and will at last grow divinely strong.

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-8).

As the physically weak man can make himself strong by careful and patient training, so the man of weak thoughts can make them strong by exercising himself in right thinking.

To put away aimlessness and weakness, and to begin to think with purpose, is to enter the ranks of those strong ones who only recognize failure as one of the pathways to attainment; who make all conditions serve them, and who think strongly, attempt fearlessly, and accomplish masterfully.

Having conceived of his purpose, a man should mentally mark out a straight pathway to its achievement, looking neither to the right nor to the left: "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Doubts and fears should be rigorously excluded; they are disintegrating elements that break up the straight line of effort, rendering it crooked, ineffectual, useless. Thoughts of doubt and fear never accomplish anything, and never can. They always lead to failure. Purpose, energy, power to do, and all strong thoughts cease when doubt and fear creep in. Jesus tells us: "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7).

The will to do springs from the knowledge that we can do. Doubt and fear are the great enemies of knowledge, and he who encourages them, who does not slay them, thwarts himself at every step.

He who has conquered doubt and fear has conquered failure. His every thought is allied with power, and all difficulties are bravely met and wisely overcome. His purposes are seasonably planted, and they bloom and bring forth fruit that does not fall prematurely to the ground.

Thought allied fearlessly to purpose becomes creative force. He who knows this is ready to become something higher and stronger than a mere bundle of wavering thoughts and fluctuating sensations. He who does this has become the conscious and intelligent wielder of his mental powers.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Thought-Factor in Achievement

All that a man achieves and all that he fails to achieve is the direct result of his own thoughts. In a justly ordered universe, where loss of equilibrium would mean total destruction, individual responsibility must be absolute. A man's weakness and strength, purity and impurity, are his own, and not another man's. They are brought about by himself, and not by another; and they can only be altered by himself, never by another human being. His condition is also his own, and not another man's. His suffering and his happiness begin from within. As he thinks, so he is; as he continues to think, so he remains.

A strong man cannot help a weaker unless the weaker is willing to be helped, and even then the weak man must become strong of himself. He must, by his own efforts, develop the strength that he admires in another. None but himself through the power of God's Holy Spirit can alter his condition.

It has been usual for men to think and to say, "Many men are slaves because one is an oppressor; let us hate the oppressor." Now, however, there is among an increasing few a tendency to reverse this judgment, and to say, "One man is an oppressor because many are slaves; let us despise the slaves." The truth is that oppressor and slave are cooperators in ignorance, and, while seeming to afflict each other, are in reality afflicting themselves. A perfect knowledge perceives the action of law in the weakness of the oppressed and the misapplied power of the oppressor. A perfect love, seeing the suffering that both states entail, condemns neither. A perfect compassion embraces both oppressor and oppressed.

He who has conquered weakness, and has put away all selfish thoughts, belongs neither to oppressor nor oppressed. He is free.

A man can only rise, conquer, and achieve by having the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). He can only remain weak, and abject, and miserable by refusing to lift up his thoughts.

Before a man can achieve anything, even in worldly things, he must lift his thoughts above slavish animal indulgence. He may not, in order to succeed, give up all lower, unrestrained soul response and selfishness, by any means; but a portion of it must, at least, be sacrificed. A man whose first thought is bestial indulgence could neither think clearly nor plan methodically. He could not find and develop his latent resources, and would fail in any undertaking. Not having commenced manfully to control his thoughts, he is not in a position to control affairs and to adopt serious responsibilities. He is not fit to act independently and stand alone, but he is limited only by the thoughts that he chooses.

There can be no progress, no achievement without sacrifice. A man's worldly success will be in the measure that he sacrifices his confused animal thoughts, and fixes his mind on the development of his plans, and the strengthening of his resolution and self-reliance. And the more his thoughts are aligned to God's thoughts, the more upright and righteous he becomes, the greater will be his success, the more blessed and enduring will be his achievements.

The universe does not favor the greedy, the dishonest, the vicious, although on the mere surface it may sometimes appear to do so; it helps the honest, the courageous, and the virtuous. All the great teachers of the ages have declared this in varying forms, and to prove and know it a man has but to persist in making himself more and more virtuous by lifting up his thoughts.

Intellectual achievements are the result of thought consecrated to the search for knowledge, or for the beautiful and true in life and nature. Such achievements may be sometimes connected with vanity and ambition but they are not the outcome of those characteristics. They are the natural outgrowth of long and arduous effort, and of pure and unselfish thoughts.

Spiritual achievements are the consummation of holy aspirations. He who lives constantly in the conception of noble and lofty thoughts, who dwells upon all that is pure and unselfish, will, as surely as the sun reaches its zenith and the moon its full, become wise and noble in character, and rise into a position of influence and blessedness.

Achievement, of whatever kind, is the crown of effort, the diadem of thought. By the aid of self-control, resolution, purity, righteousness, and well-directed thought a man ascends. By the aid of base tendencies, indolence, impurity, corruption, and confusion of thought a man descends.

A man may rise to high success in the world, and even to lofty altitudes in the spiritual realm, and again descend into weakness and wretchedness by allowing arrogant, selfish, and corrupt thoughts to take possession of him.

Victories attained by right thought can only be maintained by watchfulness. Many give way when success is assured, and rapidly fall back into failure. All achievements, whether in the business, intellectual, or spiritual world, are the result of definitely directed thought, are governed by the same law and are of the same method; the only difference lies in the object of attainment.

He who would accomplish little must sacrifice little. He who would achieve much must sacrifice much. He who would attain highly must sacrifice greatly.

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever” (1 Corinthians 9:24,25).

CHAPTER SIX

Visions and Ideals

He who cherishes a beautiful vision, a lofty ideal in his heart, will one day realize it. Columbus cherished a vision of another world, and he discovered it. Copernicus fostered the vision of a multiplicity of worlds and a wider universe, and he revealed it. Stephen beheld the vision of a spiritual world of stainless beauty and perfect peace, and he entered into it.

Cherish your visions. Cherish your ideals. Cherish the music that stirs in your heart, the beauty that forms in your mind, the loveliness that drapes your purest thoughts, for out of them will grow all delightful conditions; of these, if you but remain true to them, your world will at last be built.

To desire spiritual gold is to obtain spiritual gold; to aspire is to achieve. Shall man's basest desires

receive the fullest measure of gratification, and his purest aspirations starve for lack of sustenance? Such is not the law. Such a condition of things can never obtain - "Ask and receive."

Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your vision is the promise of what you shall one day be. Your ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil.

The greatest achievement was at first and for a time a dream. The oak sleeps in the acorn; the bird waits in the egg; and in the highest vision of the soul a glorified man stirs. Dreams are the seedlings of realities.

"I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:24).

Your circumstances may be uncongenial, but they shall not long remain so if you but perceive an ideal and strive to reach it. You cannot travel within and stand still without. Here is a youth hard pressed by poverty and labor; confined long hours in an unhealthy workshop; unschooled, and lacking all the arts of refinement - but he dreams of better things. He thinks of intelligence, of refinement, of grace and beauty. He conceives of, mentally builds up, an ideal condition of life. The vision of the wider liberty and a larger scope takes possession of him; unrest urges him to action, and he utilizes all his spare time and means, small though they are, to the development of his spiritual potential and resources.

Very soon so altered has his mind become that the workshop can no longer hold him. It has become so out of harmony with his mentality that it falls out of his life as a garment is cast aside, and with the growth of opportunities that fit the scope of his expanding reckoning, he passes out of it forever.

Years later we see this youth as a full-grown man. We find him a master of certain forces of the mind that he wields with worldwide influence and almost unequaled power. In his hands he holds the cords of gigantic responsibilities. He speaks, and lo, lives are changed. Men and women hang upon his words and remold their characters, and, sun-like, he becomes the fixed and luminous center around which innumerable destinies are changed as a result not of his being, but Christ living through him. He has realized the vision of his youth. He has become one with Christ.

And you, too, youthful reader, will realize the vision (not the idle wish) of your heart, be it base or beautiful, or a mixture of both, for you will always gravitate toward that which you secretly most love. Into your hands will be placed the exact results of your own thoughts; you will receive that which you earn, no more, no less. Whatever your present environment may be, you will fall, remain, or rise with your thoughts, your vision, and your ideal. You will become as small as your controlling desire - as great as your dominant aspiration.

In the beautiful words of Stanton Kirkham Dave, "You may be keeping accounts, and presently you shall walk out of the door that for so long has seemed to you the barrier of your ideals, and shall find yourself before an audience - the pen still behind your ear, the ink stains on your fingers - and then and there shall pour out the torrent of your inspiration. You may be driving sheep, and you shall wander to the city - bucolic and open mouthed; shall wander under the intrepid guidance of the spirit into the studio of the master, and after a time he shall say, 'I have nothing more to teach you.' And now you have become the master, who did so recently dream of great things while driving sheep. You shall lay down the saw and the plane to take upon yourself the regeneration of the world."

The thoughtless, the ignorant, and the indolent, seeing only the apparent effects of things and not the things themselves, talk of luck, of fortune, and chance. See a man grow rich, they say, "How lucky he is!" Observing another become intellectual, they exclaim, "How highly favored he is!" And noting the saintly character and wide influence of another, they remark, "How chance aids him at every turn!"

They do not see the trials and failures and struggles that these men have voluntarily encountered in order to gain their experience. They have no knowledge of the sacrifices they have made, of the undaunted efforts they have put forth, of the faith they have exercised, that they might overcome the apparently insurmountable, and realize the vision of their heart. They do not know the darkness and the heartaches; they only see the light and joy, and call it "luck"; do not see the long and arduous journey, but only behold the pleasant goal, and call it "good fortune"; do not understand the process, but only perceive the result, and call it "chance."

In all human affairs there are efforts, and there are results, and the strength of the effort is the measure of the result. Chance is not. Talents, powers, material, intellectual, and spiritual possessions are the fruits of effort. They are thoughts completed, objects accomplished, visions realized.

The vision that you glorify in your mind, the ideal that you enthrone in your heart - this you will build your life by, this you will become.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Serenity

Calmness of mind is one of the beautiful jewels of wisdom. It is born of the Holy Spirit and the result of long and patient effort in self-control. Its presence is an indication of ripened experience, and of a more than ordinary knowledge of the laws and operations of thought.

A man becomes calm in the measure that he understands himself in light of God, his creator, for such knowledge necessitates the understanding of others as the result of thought. As he develops a right understanding, and sees more and more clearly the internal relations of things by the action of cause and effect, he ceases to fuss and fume and worry and grieve, and remains poised, steadfast, serene.

The calm man, having learned how to govern himself, knows how to adapt himself to others; and they, in turn, reverence his spiritual strength, and feel that they can learn of him and rely upon him. The more tranquil a man becomes, the greater is his success, his influence, and his power for good. Even the ordinary trader will find his business prosperity increase as he develops a greater self-control and equanimity - of being Holy Spirit-led - for people will always prefer to deal with a man whose demeanor is strongly equable.

The strong calm man is always loved and revered. He is like a shade-giving tree in a thirsty land, or a sheltering rock in a storm. Who does not love a tranquil heart, a sweet-tempered, balanced life? It does not matter whether it rains or shines, or what changes come to those possessing these blessings, for they are always sweet, serene, and calm. That exquisite poise of character that we call serenity is the last lesson culture; it is the flowering of life, the fruitage of the soul in harmony with the Spirit. It is precious as wisdom, more to be desired than gold - than even fine gold. How insignificant mere money-seeking looks in comparison with a serene life - a life that dwells in the ocean of Truth, beneath the waves, beyond the reach of tempests, in the Eternal Calm!

“How many people we know who sour their lives, who ruin all that is sweet and beautiful by explosive tempers, who destroy their poise of character, and make bad blood! It is a question whether the great majorities of people do not ruin their lives and mar their happiness by lack of self-control. How few people we meet in life who are well-balanced, who have that exquisite poise which is characteristic of the finished character!”

Yes, humanity surges with uncontrolled passion, is tumultuous with ungoverned grief, is blown about by anxiety and doubt. Only the wise man, only he whose thoughts are Holy Spirit-controlled and purified, makes the winds and the storms of the soul obey him.

Tempest-tossed souls, wherever you may be, under whatsoever conditions you may live, know this - in the ocean of life the isles of Blessedness are smiling, and sunny shore of your ideal awaits your coming. Keep your hand firmly upon the helm of thought. In the bark of your soul reclines the commanding Master; He does not sleep. The surrendered life is self-control is strength; right thought is mastery; peace is His abiding presence.

Say unto your heart, “Peace, be still!”

The End

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Oswald Chambers wrote: “It is only a faithful person who truly believes that God sovereignly controls his circumstances. We take our circumstances for granted, saying God is in control, but not really believing it. We act as if the things that happen were completely controlled by people. To be faithful in every circumstance means that we have only one loyalty, or object of our faith the Lord Jesus Christ. God may cause our circumstances to suddenly fall apart, which may bring the realization of our unfaithfulness to Him for not recognizing that He had ordained the situation. We never saw what He was trying to accomplish, and that exact event will never be repeated in our life. This is where the test of our faithfulness comes. If we will just learn to worship God even during the difficult circumstances, He will change them for the better very quickly if He so chooses.”

Continuing, he writes, “Being faithful to Jesus Christ is the most difficult thing we try to do today. We will be faithful to our work, to serving others, or to anything else; just don’t ask us to be faithful to Jesus Christ. Many Christians become very impatient when we talk about faithfulness to Jesus. Our Lord is dethroned more deliberately by Christian workers than by the world. We treat God as if He were a machine designed only to bless us, and we think of Jesus as just another one of the workers.”

Finally, Chambers exhorts, “The goal of faithfulness is not that we will do work for God, but that He will be free to do His work through us. God calls us to His service and places tremendous responsibilities on us. He expects no complaining on our part and offers no explanation on His part. God wants to use us as He used His own Son.”

We must be fully convinced that God is sovereignly in control of all things. Jesus is Lord.

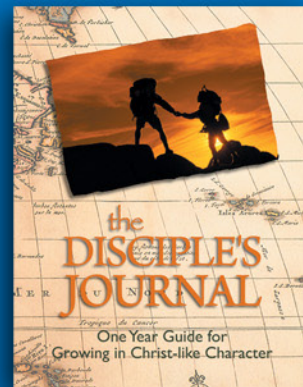
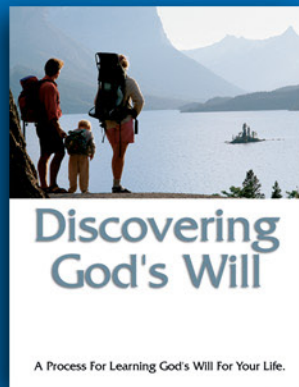
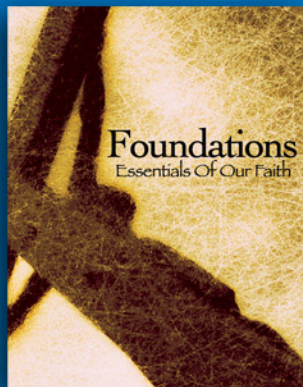
“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2).

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May God grant that we become
His disciples by His grace,

Doug & Suzie Morrell
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