

Sunday, December 3, 2023

Unwelcome: Sinful and Intrusive Thoughts

Much Needed Transformation

What are we talking about?

Sinful thoughts can occur at any time. Often, it is quite shocking to be bombarded with these thoughts and they can make us quite uncomfortable. These are unwelcome, intrusive thoughts that can 'pop up' in our mind. These can be vulgar thoughts, violent thoughts, sexual thoughts, blasphemous thoughts, thoughts about hurting ourselves, or others etc.

At work, in church, in prayer, at the gym, in conversation etc.

These thoughts aren't always blasphemous but they can be quite powerful and can quicken us to a downward spiral or deep despair. John Bunyan struggled for many years with thoughts:

While I was in this torment, I often found in my mind a sudden urge to curse and swear, or to speak some grievous thing against God, Christ His Son, or of the Scriptures. Now I thought, surely I am possessed of the devil. At other times, I thought I would lose my mind; for instead of praising and magnifying the Lord with others, if I but heard Him spoken of, presently some most horrible blasphemous thought or other would bolt out of my heart against Him... These things did sink me into very deep despair, for I concluded that such things could not possibly be found among those who loved God.

Where do these thoughts come from?

Sinful thoughts are a result of the fall. It is a result of a sinful, fallen nature. (Original sin-fallen nature of mankind)

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

The doctrine of **Total Depravity** does not mean utter depravity (you are as sinful in the worst ways 100% of the time with no restraint) but it does teach that sin affects the whole person:

Sin affects our bodies (we are dying, wasting away)

Sin affects our minds (weak and darkened)

Sin affects our will (our wills are in bondage)

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

“Man looks on outward acts and judges them to be good. God looks upon outward acts and inward motives... (He sees the Heart 1 Sam 16)

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

“The Bible often talks about thinking not in the organ of the brain but the thoughts and cognition of our inner person” Gifford

These sinful thoughts are sin and they are intentions of the heart. They come from our heart (inner man, soul may also be Biblical terms)

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Effects of the fall extend to our core

etymology for core: literally "heart," from Latin *cor* “heart,”

Why do we do what we do? Our hearts. (The control centre of what we do and think)

We must recognize that satan also has an influence on our thoughts and actions. The Father of lies has fiery arrows that must be quenched by the shield of faith. However satan is NOT omniscient but often uses guilt and lies to influence our thinking [and to keep us from walking in the light/truth]

A sinful thought is **still sinful** even if we don't act on it. We must own and fight those thoughts

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Don't Be Surprised

If you spend time watching/listening to violent, vulgar, immoral entertainment then this will have an effect on you and your 'heart' Be aware, guard your heart. The Proverbs plead with us to walk in 'wisdom' and avoid 'folly' over and over again (seriously read the Proverbs this week in one sitting)

(Biblical counselling teaches that this isn't one dimensional- remember we don't just GIVE up and be overcome, but overcome evil with good)

Ok How Can we Fight?

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life

2 Corinthians Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

We renew our minds in the scriptures are allow (submit) the Holy Spirit to do the needed sanctifying work in our lives. This isn't instant until elimination of sin and glorification.

If you are a Christian you are no longer 'held captive' by sin but have been forgiven from sin and released from its bondage (there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus)

If you are going to study TD as I did this week, please remember to preach the Gospel to yourself

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-by grace you have been saved- Ephesians 2:4-5

"A fish may long to live on the beach, but once it has flipped itself onto the sand, it wants nothing but to return to the water because its nature is not designed for dry land. A fish was created for the water. So it is with us. The nature of those indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to live in righteousness. We may flip ourselves into sin at times, but we can't survive there. The new nature thrives in righteousness and obedience to God. The degree to which we allow the Holy Spirit access to every area of our lives is the degree to which we live as God intended us to live." Got Questions

1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like him, because we shall see Him as He is.

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Matthew 26:41

“We can't expect ourselves to just stop thinking bad thoughts- come on why are you doing that? Often times when we do that forbidden fruit dominates our mind...we need to think Biblically” Gifford

“We submit everything we think-all our ideas, all our worldview, all our viewpoints-to God, and we say “Let your word dismantle me if necessary) Piper (speaking about 2 Corinthians 10:5)

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

This is not a command so much as a statement about what Paul is going to do- however there is application for us here to have thoughts, arguments, strongholds destroyed and taken captive as we read God's word and the Holy Spirit works in us.

Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

One author speaking on the subject outlines it like this:

- 1. Recognize the lies of the enemy*
- 2. Replace those lies with the truth of God*
- 3. Pray through times of strife*
- 4. Proactively use God's Word instead of living defensively and defeated*

Greg Gifford (Biblical counsellor) says the process for change includes the putting off (Ephesians 4:22) and the putting on (Be Renewed) (Ephesians 4:23)

The renewal is the Holy Spirits work in us.

There is legwork we must do as Christians. If the thought is sinful we must confess/repent, and take those thoughts captive with the truth (scriptures etc)

Eg) Popcorn Intrusive thought pops in your head

'Gracious Father, that was wrong of me to think of that person...help me to honour them as image bearers etc.

'Lord, please forgive me. That isn't true... your word says this___'

'Lord please forgive me and work in me so that I don't have those types of thoughts anymore'

Job 31:1 I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman.

Philippians 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Finally, Brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, **think about these things**.

Remember:

- Christians Have the Indwelling Holy Spirit

We don't lose heart. One day we will be free from the presence of sin (Praise the LORD) until then, the Holy Spirit is working in us, transforming us, renewing us as we follow Christ, put off the old and put on the new, put on Christ, and strive for holiness.

- Christians have God's Word

The full testimony of Who God is, what He has done, will do, and all of His promises.

- Christians have prayer

A means of grace that directs our 'hearts' and attention on Christ and things above. We are told to pray against temptations and for deliverance.

- Christians have each other

The body of Christ is another wonderful means of grace and help to fight sin, speak the truth in love, keep accountable, pray for and with, bear burdens.

