

Overcoming Sin and Temptation 5 (SS)

(study in JO Vol VI, Practical Implications and Counsel, Chapter 9f)

Welcome back to our class on “Overcoming Sin & Temptation.”

We have arrived at the study on IS that all of you have been anxiously awaiting. The last one!

We have covered a lot of territory and some of it very difficult and challenging, even wearying at times. A lot to digest as it were.

Some of the material that touches the depths of our inner life we will be digesting all our days until we are delivered from “the body of this death.” By our own death and final resurrection at the “last trumpet when we all shall be changed and this perishable body (due to sin) shall put on the imperishable, immortal, glorified spiritual body likened unto the body of our LJC. But until that glorious day, we (like Paul in Romans 7) are still in the flesh and we must be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in this work of the Lord,” coming to a thorough Biblical understanding “the nature, power, deceit, and prevalency of the remainders of IS in believers.”

This tyrant that dwells within us.

That has been our mission in these studies and today we wrap things up by taking in an overview of the balance of the treatise in Ch. 9-17.

I would like for us to focus this one on the importance of the mind in our ongoing difficulties with the enemy within. If you distill the final chapters of the treatise, you will see that emphasis clearly. With that focus we will explore several practical matters and then close our time with (what I trust will be) some helpful counsel. Some of what we will consider has been said already but repetition is crucial to learning, though not always appreciated.

I. The Importance of the Mind

Before we descend into particulars, I want you to think with me a few minutes as to the priority given to “the mind” in the Scriptures. That faculty of our being that sets us apart from the animate creation. That which is unique to those who are made in the image of God.

Let me first just quote a few key texts.

(Rom 12:2) “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed...”

(Eph 4:22-24) “Put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds.”

(Col 3:1F) “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above...”

(Rom 1:28) {Sobering context of judgement} “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up...” To what? A debased, depraved, reprobate MIND.

Now we could spend the balance of our time in the exercise of reciting text after text, but you already know these things.

You already know time after time the people of God are called to remember. Major emphasis in the Psalms to stir up faith is the call to remember who God is and what God has done in the past to give you help in believing.

This is at the heart of the Lord’s Supper. The bread/the fruit of the vine are to be taken “in remembrance of Me.” Remember/Call to Miind all that is accomplished for us in our Lord’s death to encourage faith. Feed faith.

**And low and behold, the Scriptures even tell us in (1 Cor 2:16) that “we have the mind of Christ.”

Now since you are all reasonable people I would expect that your are in agreement as to our premise that the Bible gives peculiar emphasis to the mind.

**Beloved, mature Biblical thinking is vitally connected to balanced, mature Biblical practice!

That being true, then surely the mind stands as the sentinel/the guardian of our souls as it relates to our subject of IS. Understanding it, wrestling with it as we live out our appointed days.

Owen, “The principle care and charge of the soul lies on the mind, and if that fails in its duty, the whole is betrayed.” {Affections will follow, first domino}
“The failing of the mind is like the failing of the watchman is Ezekiel; the whole is lost by his neglect.” (Ez. 33:1-9)
“Would you therefore take the true measure of yourselves, consider how it is with you as to your minds, if there be any decays upon you of any kind, you will find that there has to be the beginning of them!! The soundness and steadfastness of the mind is the great preservative of the soul.”

Now let’s consider one particular issue we struggle with in light of the importance of the mind that we have just established.

II. The Importance of the Mind in Our Walking with God

(Micah 6) {Context/read 6-8} “He has told you, oh man, what is good; what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

It is obvious upon the very surface of this text that God has requirements in our relationship with Him that involve more than outward ceremony. He wants our hearts to be engaged in justice, kindness, humility.

The point I want to make is that we must engage our minds in order to fulfill our duties in our relationship with God.

*With that said, let’s explore this matter of our minds/thinking as it relates to our duties as we walk with God.

1. The Rule of Duties (how they are to be performed)

As we walk with God we are not left to ourselves to determine how that is done. We have instruction. God has not only told us what to do, but how to do it and our minds should be engaged to that end!

Owen, “For the right performance of any duty, it is not enough that the thing itself be performed, but that it be universally squared and fitted unto the rule of it. Herein lies the great duty of the mind, namely, to attend unto the rule of duties, and to take care that all the concernments of them be ordered there thereby.”

The Apostle Paul gives us the same direction in
(Eph 5:15-17) {Read}

(Circumspectly, look carefully, looking around, giving attention, head on a swivel so to see. In order to discern/understand the will of. Anything short of this shows a lack of care and concern for the rule of duty.)

So we conclude that the mind must be engaged to determine the rule of duty.

2. The Underlying Principle of All Duty

That being? Faith “without faith it is impossible to please God.”

And as we seek to perform our duties in the midst of the conflict of IS, we must focus our faith upon the one who is ready to help us. Give us the strength and determination to press forward in our duties even when we don’t feel like it.

Who (pray tell) would that be?? Our LJC, through His personal ministry brought to our hearts by the one He sent for that very purpose!

(John 14:16) "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper, that He may be with you forever."

To what end??

(John 15:5) "I am the vine you are the branches; He who abides in Me, and I in Him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."

**In the heat of battle brethren, you must "gird up the loins of your mind" and focus upon this truth. You must believe it. You must exercise faith focusing upon the power of Christ that is in you. "All things possible if you believe."

3. Primary Motivation in All Duty

Ask – What would you say is the primary motivation in our duties according to the Bible?? Love!! Key text??

(Matt. 22:34-40) Have someone read if time.

{All that has been taught, all that has been prophesized can be summarized in this: Love. To God and man. Love is both principled and affectionate.}

*Love/affection/emotions/our feelings, if you will, responding to God's love for us as revealed in Jesus Christ. (1 John 4:10-11) "In this is love, not that we loved God, but ...

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another."

And when the mind processes that truth and the affections are engaged and responsive, the will falls into action in accordance with the duty!! And all is well!!

But as you well know, due to the remainder of IS, things don't always operate with that ideal harmony.

**Need to read/meditate, pray, worship, engage my time in good work, submit to Christ's appointed rule and government in the church, own my sin to wife, husband, children.

**I don't feel like it.

**Here lies our point. The mind must rule the day. That simple. Difficult to be sure, but simple. (1 Cor 16:14) "Let all you do be done in love."

{Two examples from Scripture to illustrate the point. One who did not follow the mind's rule to our ruin, one who did to our salvation.

Two gardens with me:
Eden, Gethsemane}

***Which patterns will you, will I, will we follow brethren??

{Qualification – don't always have time to analyze the Biblical psychology just described. Sin surprises, defiant to the flesh, renewing our minds and instincts takes time.}

III. The Danger We Face

Due to the power and prevalency of IS in believers (real Christians), minds can be drawn off from its watchfulness, distracted if you will, from its duty.

**Ignorance, errors, carelessness, slothfulness, weariness, cherishing some secret lust.

(Mark 4:19) "Worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."

And we could go on and on, but my burden lies here. Please listen to this quote from Owen, pg 285,286 "If we see a lamb run from the fold into the wilderness, we wonder not if it be torn and rent of wild beasts. If we see a sheep leaving its green pastures and water-holes, to abide in dry barren hearths, we count it no marvel, none inquire further, if we see him lean and ready to perish. But if we find lambs wounded in the fold, and wounded at the ?? and rage of the beasts of prey that do set upon them there. So it is with ?? Christians. We marvel not that those who forsake their own mercies and run away from the pasture and fold of

Christ in His ordinances, are rent and torn with divers lusts, and do pine away with hunger and famine. But to see men living under and enjoying all the means of spiritual thriving, yet to decay, not to be fat and flourishing, but rather daily to whither ?? for a powerful release, whose poisonous and noxious qualities hinder the virtue and efficacy of the means they enjoy, this is Indwelling Sin!

**It should well make us tremble, to see men living under and in use of the means of the Gospel to ?? decline as to the ?? of holiness which they had attained unto."

Whatever patterns that may have this effect that Owen warns of starts here. In our minds.

Certainly more could be said but that is my burden for today. The importance of the mind as it relates to our ongoing battle with IS.

Counsel: What do I do with all this overwhelming, difficulty of remaining sin?

First: Tune in to the next two lessons on mortification of sin for the Bible's answer.

Second: Learn three key texts (Rom 7:21), (Gal 5:17), (Rom 8:1)

Third: Resist "lone ranger" Christianity. Stick with the church. All in this together. Safety in that. (Ecc 4:9) "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! ¹¹ Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? ¹² And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Fourth: (Most important) Remember the compassion, patience, power, and love of God in Christ to us His children. (Ps 103) "Just as a Father has compassion on His.. He knows our frame, He knows we are but dust."

The same Apostle Paul who gave us (Rom 7:14-25) also gave us (Rom 8:38-39)
"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

*We will prevail

*We will conquer

*Never give up/never give in

*When you fall, get up