

## **INNER RENEWAL**

### **Renewed Will**

Although God is the creator of the universe and all powerful, there is one area where He has chosen not to exercise His power. It is the freedom which has been given to all people to exercise our will the way we choose. This gift of free will cannot be overridden either by God or by evil spirits. However with this important and valuable gift comes our responsibility to use it wisely. The decisions we make will determine our eternal destiny. We choose whether we reconcile ourselves with God, the level of revelation we receive from God, the level of obedience we have in this life and we choose how near to Him we want to be in our daily life.

The application of our will to make decisions in our life is affected by our emotions and thoughts. God desires our will to be yielded to His will and once this is done we must then apply it to obey God and develop the spirit-centered life He wants us to live. When we yield our will to God, rather than abandoning our own will, we are in fact required to apply it in a far greater way so that we are able to go against the tide of the flesh and live a life for God. This requires strong determination and an unflinching commitment to live our life differently. Even though believers receive spiritual instruction from the Holy Spirit, we always need to exercise our own will to listen and then obey or disobey the instruction. Our inner renewal depends on the extent to which each of us chooses to lay down our life.

Laying down our life means yielding our will so that we can apply it to living a new life for God. In living for God, we engage our will to seek God, come to know Him, know His will and obey Him. We do this through daily prayer, Bible reading, and meditation on God and His word. If we don't seek to daily exercise our will in these ways, our spiritual maturity will not just happen and in fact we will find that there is no change and we once again become comfortable in living the fleshly, self-focused life we lived before.

Jesus yielded His own will to that of God the Father and so He lived the perfect life. As we do, He always had the choice to disengage His will from the Father's but continually and consistently decided to choose to obey the Father's will. Even when He knew of the great suffering He was about to endure on the cross and He sought another way for the Father's will to be accomplished through His life, He told the Father that His own will should not be done but only the will of the Father.

*Luke 22:41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, " Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done. " 43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Jesus surrendered His will to God and all Christians are told to do the same. Because the will is formed by our thoughts and emotions and both have been formed by our life in this world separated from God, our will cannot be trusted in our Christian life. As long as we follow a will based on our unrenewed mind and unchanged emotions, we will continue to walk away from God rather than walk with Him. We must

seek to know and understand God's will and through new thoughts and redirected emotions, establish a will that walks in complete harmony with God's will.

When our will is totally surrendered to God we will be able to live a life of obedience similar to King David and like him, we can become people after God's own heart. Our heart is able to become like God's (pure and undefiled) and we are able to live according to His will.

*Acts 13 vs 22 And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ' I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will. '*

Even though we may commit to diligently yielding our will so that it is applied to obeying the will of God, in this life on earth, it will never be totally surrendered. There will always be a tug that tries to pull us back to the flesh. However, as we experience this, we must continually reaffirm our commitment to allow God's will to be followed in our life. God encourages people to obey His will through a revelation of who He is, by the work of the Holy Spirit and through the threshing of believers.

As we yield our will to God and apply it to live our life for Him, we embark on a journey of transforming our inner life and this is accomplished by applying our will to renew our mind and re-direct our emotions. The strength of our spiritual life is strongly influenced by our ability to control what we think about and the feelings we have.

### **Renewal of the Mind**

Paul tells us that what we think about will determine the transformation of our inner life and our ability to obey the will of God.

*Romans 12 vs 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Having lived in this world, we have built up an array of thoughts and thought patterns that have been formed by a life usually lived for many years without God. The thoughts have been formed by our life experiences, desires, plans and also the influence of evil spirits. Also, without the influence of the Holy Spirit in our life, our soul and spirit have become so much like each other that it is hard to distinguish between the two. We read in the Bible that Satan has so influenced the minds of people that they are blinded to God.

*2 Corinthians 4 vs 3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

Success in living a new life for God requires us to do our part by making significant changes in our life. In his letter to the Roman church, Paul says that the new life we must live means that we must now set our minds on the things of the Spirit. He says

that this new life is lived in accordance with the leading of the Holy Spirit and we receive spiritual life and peace with God. He adds that the way we used to think now works against our spiritual life.

*Romans 8vs 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you ...*

The word carnal means fleshly and is used by Paul here to describe the mind that is set upon our fleshly, world-centered life. Paul says that we must become spiritually minded people if we are to draw near to God and be obedient to Him. When we live our lives according to the leading of the Holy Spirit, we are able to gradually change our mind from the carnal or fleshly mind it was to one that is spiritually formed. This new mind is set upon God and His kingdom and is able and inclined to come to know God and be obedient to Him. When a person repents, either at the start of their life as a Christian or sometime after they become a believer, it means that the person is committing to a change in the way that they think. With the changed thinking, a new life of obedience to God is able to be lived.

Due to our old ways of thinking being established over many years and consequently deeply set for most, it takes a considerable amount of time and effort for the changes to occur and be clearly evident in our daily life. However, the changes will come and continue to be more significant as time progresses and as we continue to set our mind on the things above, God's kingdom, rather than the things of the world.

*Colossians 3vs 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Thoughts that feed our fleshly life are thoughts of no spiritual worth. They are from that part of us that will be lost when we die. We are told by Paul that the mind set upon the flesh is death, there is no spiritual life in the thoughts we think. He also says that these thoughts are hostile towards God (Romans 8vs 7). This is so because the thoughts, whether they are good or bad, are sourced from our sinful life. In the same way that we recognize sin as having to be removed from our life, so also we must recognize the need for our old fleshly ways of thinking to also be removed.

*Ephesians 4vs 17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ..... put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. ....*

Although a believer's sin is forgiven, the unrenewed mind is still inclined towards the attractions of the world and sin. Many believers continue to live their life in the same way they did as unbelievers, by setting their mind on the things of the flesh, not able

to know God, understand His will or obey Him. John tells us that whatever comes into our life by the flesh remains flesh and has no spiritual worth. Only the Holy Spirit's work within us can give us spiritual life, spiritual understanding and spiritually matures each of us.

*John 3v6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

The requirement for Christians to separate ourselves from the fleshly life we have lived so that we can live an increasingly spiritual one has its similarities to the nation of Israel having to leave Egypt behind. Even though in Egypt they were in slavery, they had to leave behind the worldly attractions of Egypt for the isolation of the wilderness. In the wilderness they were no longer slaves and they had their freedom but it was freedom within the laws of God. God took them through difficulties so that they could no longer depend on themselves and would have to depend on Him. A significant renewal of their minds and emotions had to take place so that they could come to love, trust, obey and rely on God. Unfortunately many of them could not renew their minds to comprehend the blessings and new life that God had for them. Their minds were caught up with the old life that they had lived with the Egyptians. This resulted in them not obtaining the full blessings that God desired each of them to have.

We must break free from our old thought patterns and habits by immersing ourselves in the Bible and prayer. As we do, over time, we will find that our mind more naturally focuses on God and how we should live to please Him. Our thoughts will become more frequently placed on things that are of God's kingdom and from God's perspective rather than our own selfish and worldly ones. Believer's need to renew our minds so that we can become more like Christ Jesus and reflect the character of the holy nation that God desires.

The great importance of the renewal of the mind for success in living a life directed by the Holy Spirit cannot be overstated. A renewal of the mind takes time and we must be patient and persevere with the daily efforts we make to take control of our thoughts. Old habits and desires cannot be lost without some struggle, emotional pain and sacrifice. We must strive to no longer be guided by our past experiences in the world and the opinion of those around us but only by God's will and His opinion of us.

### **Spiritual Battles**

When we choose to believe in Jesus and become reconciled to God, we choose to now be obedient to God and this immediately causes a spiritual battle in our minds between thoughts that arise from our own soul, those from evil spirits and those from the Holy Spirit. Satan knows that the control of the mind means the control of a person's life and their ability to be transformed.

Satan's main place of influence is in people's minds and we are told that Satan keeps unbelievers as captives in their mind. For unbelievers, there is little spiritual influence from the Holy Spirit on the person's mind and what little conviction there is we are told Satan is able to influence and remove. Jesus said that Satan is able to prevent

unbelievers from coming to God by being able to remove the word of God from their hearts (Luke 8vs12). Recognizing this mind battle and being equipped to fight it will enable a person to take control of their life.

While we were non-believers we were influenced and affected by our experiences in the world which included temptations, deceptions and various passions and desires. These experiences are imprinted into our mind, emotions and heart. Satan has been given access to the mind of people to plant thoughts into it and over time this has resulted in thoughts that darken our mind to God's light. We are held captive in our mind by the structures of thought that have built up and they become spiritual strongholds that must be broken down so that we can change the way we think. The spiritual battle is to overcome these strongholds and our current inclinations through self-imposed spiritual disciplines and by a spirit-led life.

*Galatians 5vs 16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ... 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

Believers have to overcome the self-willed life that we are used to living and also overcome evil spiritual forces that are intent on making us fail in our daily determination to live for God. Satan and evil spirits are without hope, for their destruction has been predetermined by God. Unlike people, their eternal fate is sealed and they have no hope of salvation or reconciliation with God. They hate God and are committed to the destruction of what God loves most, the lives of people.

Evil spiritual forces are not able to read or control our thoughts but they can influence them through their ability to plant thoughts in our mind through our spirit. They impact our thoughts significantly with the intention of drawing us away from God through tempting and encouraging us to sin. Their influence is through the promotion of thoughts and behaviors which are not in accordance with God's will.

Evil spirits are intent on filling our mind with such thoughts as doubt, fear, pride, hate, lust, envy, rebellion, mistrust, selfishness, greed and worldly busyness. They encourage us to think in a self-focused way, be attracted to the fleshly influences around us, reject God, and focus only on the physical rather on the spiritual realm. By continually prompting us to think in this frame, Satan knows that he can keep us distracted so that we have little time left for God and are unable to listen to the Holy Spirit inside. Consequently he is able to ensure that believers keep living a life that is disobedient and unpleasing to God and that believers remain distant from God. As believers are drawn away from God by their own thoughts and related actions, evil spirits attain their objective of distracting and even destroying their lives.

We should understand that a mind controlled by Satan may not be readily recognizable as being evil. As believers, if we choose to spend time allowing evil influences to come into our heart and mind, we choose to spend our time allowing the world to influence us rather than the Holy Spirit. The thoughts that we allow in our heart will determine the nature of the heart and so establish the sort of person that

each of us is. So we can quickly see that we need to be careful how we think and what we think about.

*Proverbs23vs7 For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.*

We should be spiritually focused so that we spend time nurturing our spiritual life and therefore become more conformed to God's image. This transformation of our thought life requires a complete shift and can usually be successful over time by making a few significant changes to our daily lifestyle.

The spiritual battle that occurs for control of the mind can only be won by the believer acknowledging the need to take control of every thought so that only those thoughts that are in accordance with God's will are entertained and applied to daily living. This means stopping the influence of the world upon our thoughts, and daily seeking to discover more of God's will with an attitude of humility and obedience.

Paul tells us to capture every thought and control it so that it does not end up controlling us and our thought life, emotions and actions. We are warned by Paul that the state of our mind determines our relationship with God and the state of our spiritual life. When we live with our mind set on the things of the Spirit, we find that we no longer live for ourselves but are now living for God. Our own desires and wants are not as important as what God desires and wills for us.

The things of the Spirit which believers are told to think about are very different to the fleshly things that we are used to continually thinking about. They are things that are consistent with God's nature and will. Paul gives us some advice on what our minds should dwell upon and as we read them we can immediately see the contrast to those things that Satan tries to plant in our minds.

*Philippians4vs8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.*

These thoughts are those that draw us towards being holy and they are consistent with the loving and obedient relationship that we must have with God, the love we must show to people around us, and the thankfulness and contentment that should always be in our heart. They are thoughts that are according to God's will which are worthy of receiving praise from God and pure thoughts of faith and hope that flow from our spiritual life in the Lord Jesus. They are thoughts that bring peace to our mind (Isaiah26vs3) because they flow from a deep relationship with God and our trust that He will always keep us in His care. The thoughts we should have are virtuous thoughts which are those that are good and of a high moral standard.

We can guide our mind to think upon the things we know God wants us to by directing it towards Bible reading, reading Christian books, listening to worship music or meditating on God and His creation. Once wrong thoughts enter our mind, we can turn away from the cause of the thoughts or if this is not possible, immediately stop ourselves thinking the thoughts and change them to dwell upon good thoughts. Immediately refocusing our thoughts in a more appropriate direction for a minute or

two will usually allow us to divert the flow of our thoughts. As much as possible we need to keep our focus on God, His will and pleasing Him. This is one reason why Paul tells us to pray without ceasing. If we, as we are able to during the day or night, repeatedly turn over in our mind prayers of petition, intercession, thanks, praise or worship, we direct our mind to God and choose to avoid thinking on things that we should not. Our thought life becomes spiritually productive and constructive.

In our world where our values are heavily influenced by marketing and the influence of the print and television media, there is much in the way we think that must be controlled and changed if we are to live in a way that is pleasing to God. Our life can no longer be determined by living up to the expectations of the world and the people of the world but we must now live to meet God's expectations. The pull of the world and commercialism, the habits that we have formed, the desires we have, and our selfishness, make it very hard to change but a radical change is what must happen for a person to live the spiritual life required by God. Typically the radical change required will only come through an increasing level of understanding of God's will and by repeatedly making daily conscious decisions to control the thoughts in our mind and our actions whenever we become aware that they are wandering outside of God's will.

It is only after walking closely with God for a number of years that we realize the extent of the darkness that used to fill our lives. What each of us sets our eyes to see and ears to hear, will determine the thoughts in our mind and what it dwells upon. Although we are not always able to control what goes in through our eyes and ears, we are always able to choose to reject anything that will adversely impact our spiritual walk with God. Through daily discipline and commitment we must take charge of the thoughts by determining how we handle thoughts that enter into our mind. We can choose to not allow our mind to dwell on those things that are outside of God's will for us and we can also choose to stop doing things and going to places we know God would not approve of. Charles Spurgeon once said:

*There are many amusements in the world, and you can always tell which are right and which are wrong by this test. You may do anything upon which you can ask God's blessing, but if you cannot ask God's blessing upon it, have nothing to do with it. If there are any things about which you have any doubt, leave them alone.<sup>16</sup>*

Each day it is important to be careful in deciding where we go, what we see and what we hear, keeping in mind that the Holy Spirit is within us and we are directed not to grieve or quench Him. We must not forget that He is holy and that we are also told to be holy, God-like in our thoughts, emotions, words and actions.

Darkness and light cannot live with each other. Whenever we choose to turn on a light, darkness must go. In reverse, if a person chooses to let darkness in, it will come rushing in and quickly remove the light. The spiritual life is very similar, where God's spiritual light shines there can be no evil spiritual influence in a person's life, but if you choose to let in spiritual darkness, God's presence will retreat. It is always our choice, what we think upon, what we feel and what we do. God has never and will never force His presence upon any of us if we choose to let spiritual darkness into our life. The choices we make each day, our thoughts, our words and our actions, will determine the condition of our spiritual life.

Mind battles will regularly occur during the process of renewal due to the influence of evil spirits and our own difficulties in overcoming and removing our habits and worldly thought patterns. Paul speaks of this battle within the mind of the believer in the following way.

*2Corinthians10vs 3 For though we walk in the fl esh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Believers are provided with spiritual weapons from God that can be used effectively to overcome the battles that are fought out in the mind. The battle is spiritual and we use spiritual weapons.

*Ephesians6vs11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

Paul states that our spiritual weapons are truth, righteousness, spreading the gospel of peace with God, faith, our salvation, the word of God and unceasing prayer. If believers do not live a life helped and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, our ability to be well equipped with these spiritual weapons is greatly diminished, and in some cases, totally ineffective. The greatest means of renewing the mind is the daily diligent washing of it by the word of God (the Bible). As we read and meditate on the Bible, we focus our minds, opening ourselves up to the instruction of the Holy Spirit. In doing so we deliberately set our mind on God and His spiritual realm and turn away from our carnal thoughts. We open our mind to the instruction of the Holy Spirit and we come to gradually know God, His will, and His plans and purposes.

### **Redirected Emotions**

Our emotions or feelings are formed through our personality at birth and also from our experiences in life. When we become believers, there is typically a continuation of emotions from the life that we have lived without God. However, with the new life that we are called by God to live, our emotions must change by our old passions and desires now being redirected so that they are consistent with God's will and are generated from our spiritual life (Galatians5vs24).

Our emotions significantly affect our thoughts and our will and therefore it is essential that they be changed. As they are, we will find it easier to follow the spiritual disciplines and be obedient to God. The commandments, given to show us how we should live, are based around a key emotion, our love for God and our love for people. When we love God in the way we should, putting Him first and above all else, we are able to also more easily renew our thoughts and will. As our emotions are God-centered, we find it easier to live the spiritual life that He wants us to. Our emotions as we live our life on earth must reflect those of God. Because God loves

people, we do also.

The importance of emotions to the spiritual life is clearly seen in many verses of the Bible. God commands us to love Him and people and we also find that we must show gratitude, be joyful, have a contrite heart, fear God, have zeal and hate sin. Emotions are a key motivator of our actions and we see even in the spiritually perfect life of Jesus that His actions were influenced by His strong emotions. Jesus loved His Father and lived His life from this perspective. He had compassion on the crowds and that prompted Him to exercise His will to teach and heal them. He was also troubled when He came and saw Mary and Martha when their brother Lazarus died. However, emotions alone must never direct our action. Like Jesus, our words, thoughts and actions must always flow from a strong spiritual life, which includes a renewed mind as well, lived under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

In order to spiritually mature, our emotions must be redirected because if they are not, they will affect our ability to follow the spiritual disciplines, discern the thoughts from our spirit and live our life according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Our inclination to worry must be replaced with trust in God and the peace that flows from a relationship with Him. Also our feelings of doubt must be replaced with faith and our feelings of pride and self-confidence must be replaced with humility and confidence in God alone. As we identify and redirect our emotions, they should drive us towards an ever increasing closer relationship with God and a distancing from the influences of the world around us.

There are emotions that will assist and others that will hinder our walk with God. God's main commandments have to do with the positive emotions, the most important being love. Also, we know that a result of obeying God is a life of enduring hope, joy and peace. However, God also wants us to control our desires and our passions that draw us away from following Him, such as, misdirected love and affection, selfishness, fear, pride, envy, greed, lust, anger, impatience, hate and doubt.

Emotions that are developed through our spiritual relationship with God are deeper and more powerful than those developed through our natural life. We are able to love God in a self-less way and love people even when they do not deserve to be loved. We love what God loves and hate what He hates. We desire Him and what He wants rather than our own selfish desires. We allow those emotions within us that are required for a close walk with God to strengthen while stamping out the impure emotions that harm our spiritual life.

The spiritual life must be one where there is an appropriate balance between the use of our mind and the use of our emotions. While both are essential, leaning too far to either side will tend to adversely affect our spiritual growth. The correct balance can only be achieved by being led and taught daily by the Holy Spirit. As we live our spirit-led life, it will yield the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5 vs 22,23). The emotions that arise from the teaching we receive from the Holy Spirit are those that we must develop and build. However, we must be careful that even these emotions, such as kindness, compassion, sorrow, love and mercy, flow from our intention to live a life of obedience to the Holy Spirit rather than them arising out of our old selfish life. The right emotions flowing from a heart that is directed to God, gives glory to God.

## **New Heart**

The condition of the heart is of utmost importance to God. Our heart is where we hold our deepest thoughts and emotions. It determines what we value, how we make our decisions and how we will live our daily life. It will ultimately determine whether we please God and receive eternal life or not.

God must reign in our heart and this will be reflected by us daily putting God above all else in our life, even ourselves, and living our life from the spirit within us. The heart that is set upon God is able to transform us, for who we are is determined by what we hold dear in our heart.

*Proverbs27vs19 As in water face reflects face, so a man's heart reveals the man.*

While the heart determines how we develop and apply our thoughts, emotions and will, it is also formed by them as we live our daily life. We are required to willfully introduce new thoughts and new emotions that are based on our daily life being directed by the Holy Spirit. We must yield to God, turning away from the flesh and the world. We must set our heart upon God and His kingdom and the perfection that we know He desires for us.

The application of our will to renew our mind and our emotions is the key to living a successful Christian Spiritual Life because as we live each day in this way, our heart is transformed. As Christians, the presence of the Holy Spirit is able to transform our heart from its hardness and wickedness to one that is softened towards God and God-focused rather than self-focused. The presence of the Holy Spirit becomes the dominant spiritual influence on our heart and we are able to come to know God, love Him and live a new life for Him. The new heart that God wants to create in us is one that is inclined to consistently love Him. It is a heart that is directed towards the kingdom of God rather than this world. It is a heart that will follow the spirit rather than the physical body and live a life of obedience to God's will as it is revealed by the Holy Spirit. We are therefore warned to take care of our heart for it will determine how we live our life, whether we choose to do God's will or choose to follow our own desires and will. If our heart is not watched, guarded and transformed, we will not be able to live the spiritual life that God wants us to. Our physical and spiritual life, as well as our destiny, springs from our heart and we must watch it with great diligence.

*Proverbs4vs23 Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.*

Believers keep their hearts with all diligence by ensuring that they have a heart that is consistently committed towards following Jesus. Although people who have received the Holy Spirit are not freed from sinning again, because the choice to sin is always ours, with the Holy Spirit within us, He convicts us of sins we commit and leads us to repent of them. Although our heart is positioned towards knowing and obeying God, it is in the process of being purified and renewed. The daily confession of sin confirms our commitment to obey God and ensures that our heart remains soft and open to the work of the Holy Spirit. God requires that we maintain a clean heart before Him, a heart filled with truth. When we confess sin, we fill our heart with truth.

*Psalm51vs6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.*

We should always appreciate how our lives can be misdirected by our heart adoring anything or anyone more than we adore God. This adoration supplants the position that only God must hold and we lose the God-focus in life that we must have. Our thoughts, words and deeds flow from what we hold dear in our hearts. We are pleasing to God when we treasure Him in our heart and our life reflects this. In the same way as good things flow from a heart that treasures God, a corrupt heart results in bad things that distance us from God.

*Matthew12vs35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.*

*Mark7vs21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,...*

*Proverbs 11vs20 Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the Lord, But the blameless in their ways are His delight.*

We must be careful about what we let into our hearts through our mind. The mind or intellect of a person may be seen as something far deeper than our ability to think or our power of reasoning. In addition, it impacts the condition of our heart by what we allow it to dwell upon.

God must be the great treasure in our life which we hold dear above all else. He gives us spiritual life, is with us to help us live it and then provides us with eternal life. He is the Creator of the universe and the one by whose hand all the universe is held in place. Our investments should consistently be in heavenly treasures rather than in earthly ones. For those of us who treasure God, we will find that our heart has been set clearly on living for Him. Similarly, when we set up ourselves, someone else or something else as our treasure, we will be unable to draw near to God and live for Him, for our heart will always follow our treasure (Matthew6vs 21).

We must build up the treasure in heaven, treasure that will not be lost and left behind when we die. Jesus warned us not to focus our life on the accumulation of things and riches for in doing so we usually neglect our spiritual life. He said that we need to live a life that is rich towards God and ensure that we have a treasure in heaven rather than a large treasure on earth. Even though we may accumulate riches on earth, there is no assurance that we will continue to live on earth to make use of them.

*Luke12vs 15 And He said to them, " Take heed and beware of covetousness (greed), for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. " 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: " The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, ` What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops? ' 18 So he said, ` I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, " Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry. " ' 20 But God said to him, ` Fool! This night your soul will be*

*required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? ' 21 " So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."*

While money is required to live and also to help build God's kingdom on this earth, its pursuit must always fall behind an individual's pursuit of God. The priority that money and making money has in our life must always be honestly monitored so that our priorities can be corrected whenever they may fall out of place.

Whether you have been an unbeliever who now believes in Jesus Christ or a Christian who has never known about the life God wants you to live, an absolute necessity is to make a decision to live your life now turned towards God, continually seeking and pursuing Him with all your heart. He must be the center of your life, the one you think most about and the one you love the most. Jesus made it clear that there is only one important thing in a person's life and that is a heart set on God, to know Him, to love Him and to live for Him. It is this total commitment that is required of each of us who is drawn to be reconciled to God. Jesus promised that when we get our life priorities correct and place God first, wholeheartedly turning to God, the rest of our life would fall into place.

So many of us live our life in a busy and pre-occupied way with our minds mainly focused on other people and our physical activities, needs and desires. We must turn around and redirect our life to God and His spiritual kingdom. We draw near to God by the effort we make each day to purify our hearts. God must always be the main event in our life and we are required to draw away from sin, by controlling our thoughts, emotions, words and actions. As we draw near to God, we are told that we can expect God to draw near to us.

*James 4vs 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

Living in a spirit-centered way enables us to progressively renew our mind and emotions, apply our will to obey God's will and transform our heart. We are able to increasingly come to know God and understand how we must live a life to please Him.

**16. Taken from Classic Sermons on the Will of God © Copyright 1998 by Spurgeon C.S. Wiersbe W.W. Published by Kregal Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All right reserved.**

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