

MAN'S THOUGHTS

There is nothing more deceitful in a profession of Christianity than the thoughts of the natural man. When man in the flesh applies his mind to the things of God the result will always be blindness, ignorance and foolishness. When the Judaising 'Christians' followed Paul into Galatia and taught the people that they must be circumcised and keep the law as well as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and when they started to believe them, the apostle wrote quickly to them in the bluntest of terms: 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth...? ... Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? ... Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you ... Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.'

What had happened? The saints at Galatia had begun to be 'persuaded' to think and reason according to the flesh. Years earlier another man had manifested this carnal way of thinking after he'd had spiritual revelation. Simon Peter had declared Jesus to be 'the Christ, the Son of the living God': a revelation from the Father in heaven, for which revelation Jesus had called Peter 'blessed'. But it wasn't long before his natural reasoning came to the fore as he 'rebuked' Jesus for saying 'that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed', with the words, 'Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee', Matt. 16:13-23.

Upon this Jesus immediately exposed Peter's carnality by saying, '...thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.' And yet although these words were spoken to Peter they were actually addressed to Satan: 'But [Jesus] turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan.'

But how could Peter be called blessed and so soon after be addressed as Satan? The answer lies in the meaning of the word 'savourest' in Jesus' reply to 'Satan': 'Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.' For this is the word which exposed Peter's mind, his way of thinking. Literally Jesus said to Peter – to Satan: 'thou art not thinking the things of God, but those of men.'

It is very important here to understand how that Peter's thinking related to the state of his mind; for although he'd had revelation from the Father, he didn't as

yet have ‘the mind of Christ’, and therefore was still thinking only as men thought. Remember this occurred before the Spirit was given to the disciples and before the commencement of the formation of the church – the one occurring on the day of Jesus’ resurrection, John 20:22, the other on the day of Pentecost. Thus Peter, as yet unregenerate, though a disciple and a chosen apostle of the Lord Jesus, could still be thinking as men thought regarding spiritual things, though he’d received revelation regarding one tremendous truth.

Now to me this rings loud warning bells to all who say they ‘believe the truth’, and who have perhaps had ‘light dawn’ regarding some profound aspect of the doctrine of Christ. For in the original blessing of Peter for his declaration ‘thou art the Christ...’, Jesus had said that he hadn’t received this truth from ‘flesh and blood’: in other words neither his father Jona, nor his synagogue education, had taught it him. But today, beyond the day of Pentecost; beyond the close of the whole canon of scripture; and beyond so many ‘confessions of faith’ and new testament-based doctrinal statements having been set forth, it is now possible for ‘flesh and blood’ to ‘reveal it unto’ us – in Sunday School or catechising classes, for instance; or under ‘word only’ ministries or imbibed denominational tradition – while we yet remain unregenerate: continuing to think only as men think, devoid of the mind of Christ.

Let us try and put this as clearly as we can. The members of the body of Christ: those born again of the Spirit of God, who as lively stones are built up a spiritual house – the only dwelling place of God in the new covenant age – the church; all these have, obviously, ‘the mind of Christ’. They make up his body, they are indwelt of his Spirit, and are joined to Christ their head – and where else can the mind be found but in the head? Therefore being in Christ they are given to ‘think the things of God’ as the mind and thoughts of the Lord Jesus permeate their thinking causing them to think according as God thinks. Indeed, they must do: as they have been granted ‘repentance unto life’, which is a changed mind; are possessed of the life of God and are being taught of him; then how can they not think as he thinks? And as they have the very mind of Christ then how can they not possess his mentality?

The apostles stated in their doctrine that the members of the body of Christ being ‘spiritual, judge – or discern – all things’, 1 Cor. 2:15; they have ‘anointing from the Holy One and they know all things’, 1 John 2:20: to ‘discern’ and to ‘know’ in these contexts are primarily functions of the sanctified mind.

These are statements of fact which apply to all of God's people; they are not things which pertain only to the more mature members of the body of Christ, but are necessary fruits in all who are found 'in Christ'; after all, the words 'we have the mind of Christ' were written even to those sometimes 'carnal' Corinthians, cp. 1 Cor. 1:2, 2:10,16, 3:1. And if the reader does not 'know all things', and cannot 'discern all things' – and if you are not constantly exercised in these things and growing up into them – then you cannot scripturally be said to be in Christ.

Therefore we can conclude thus far that Simon Peter could be addressed as Satan because, despite his blessed revelation, the settled state of his thinking was not yet 'as God thought'.

But still, how was it that Jesus addressed Peter as Satan? Well, Peter wasn't Satan, but it was Satan who was speaking in Peter: this is why Jesus addressed him as such. The Saviour had just begun to tell his disciples that 'he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day', Matt. 16:21. Immediately Peter had taken Jesus aside with his rebuke, 'Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee', verse 22. In saying this Peter was exposing his state of ignorance – recent revelation or not: he was ignorant of what Jesus meant by his words – although they couldn't really convey any other meaning than what was obvious; he was ignorant of who it was that was speaking in him; and he was ignorant of the fact that although he had been blessed with heavenly revelation his mind was as yet unchanged: 'thou thinkest as men, not as God.'

But in this the Lord Jesus gives us an intimation of the 'wrestling' of the children of God in this world; for he didn't say, 'Get thee behind me, Peter', for he knew that the greatest enemies of both himself and of his soon-to-be-built church, were not 'flesh and blood', but 'principalities and powers; the rulers of the darkness of this world; spiritual wickedness in high places', Eph. 6:12. No sooner had Jesus begun to open to his disciples the truth of the reason for his coming, when immediately not Peter in his ignorance, but Satan – who knew the cross would be his defeat – rose up to 'rebuke Jesus'. And so Jesus knowing from whom the words came addressed the speaker: Satan.

And how all this 'offended' the Lord – the word is 'scandalised': 'thou art an offence unto me.' And although the words of Peter offended Jesus it was primarily his way of thinking which was so scandalous – and indeed grievous –

to the Saviour: 'thou thinkest not the things of God.' We often forget that the Lord Jesus knows what is in man, John 2:23-25, beyond what we merely say or do: he sees into the mind and heart: 'Why reason ye these things in your hearts?', Mark 2:8; and whereas we might take offence at what others say, the Lord is often offended by what we think: 'And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?' Matt. 9:4; cp. also Mark 3:5. Then beware, reader; beware lest by your carnal thinking in 'religion' you offend the Lord of glory, the coming judge of all men.

Yet this is one of the chief elements of the 'much tribulation' that the Spirit-born children of God have to endure in their journey through the spiritual wilderness of this world: men with carnal minds applying themselves to the things of God. It seems to me that the vast majority of professing Christians today cannot testify to one grain of truth received by revelation: all seem to gain their 'learning' from 'flesh and blood', albeit religious flesh and blood. But this learning will do them no good on the day of judgment when only the teaching of the LORD will stand, Is. 54:13; for as we know, 'flesh and blood', and anything which emanates from flesh and blood, 'cannot inherit the kingdom of God', 1 Cor. 15:50.

All of God's children know their calling only by revelation. They have been taught their sinnership by revelation: the commandment has 'come' to them and they have 'died' by revelation: Christ and the work of his cross has been opened to them by revelation – way beyond the mere letter of the doctrine: and in the light of it their crying for mercy, their seeking and striving to enter in at the strait gate, has come upon them only by revelation: their repentance toward God, their faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ: their belief of the gospel – the form of doctrine delivered unto them in the power of the Spirit – and therefore their knowledge of salvation and the forgiveness of sins has only come by the revelation of these tremendous truths from 'my Father which is in heaven': only, only, only.

Oh, yes, you can read of these things on the pages of scripture – for they are all to be found written therein – and give the 'amen' to the true doctrine: but that in itself is not saving, as Jesus said: 'flesh and blood *hath not* revealed it unto thee, *but* – only – my Father which is in heaven'; and without *that* revelation, you can believe the truth all you like; you can glory in the soundness of your Calvinistic Confessions and Articles of Faith to your dying breath; and still

appear on the day of judgment having only ever ‘thought as men thought, and never as God.’

Seek, then, that heavenly revelation, reader; seek it with every fibre of your being, until you see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man, John 1:43-51.