

Section III

Leaving Guilt Behind: The Power of Thoughts

I had a vivid dream one night that brought me a step deeper into the understanding of the spiritual warfare that surrounds us daily. Before I describe my dream, I must explain my mind set prior to my falling asleep. The night before, my husband and I were lying in bed discussing how we can overcome the thoughts Satan places in our minds by constantly staying in the Word of God. We spoke about how we must do this so that the Word of God infiltrates our minds so much that we recognize Satan and his evil ways. When I fell asleep, my mind continued to think about our conversation. In my dream, my husband and I had encountered an intruder in our home in the middle of the night. Immediately my husband began to fight physically with the intruder as he took on the responsibility of protecting his family. However, I recognized the intruder as being Satan even though he sat before us as flesh and blood. I exclaimed to my husband, "It is Satan. We must fight with the power of Jesus!" I began to call upon Jesus for His strength to overcome. As I did the intruder began to shrink in size and I woke up. Immediately when I awoke I thought, "Wow, what a vivid description! Calling upon the name of Jesus is so powerful why would I do anything but?!" Then my heart marveled in the moment as God spoke these truths directly to my soul.

Satan is a liar and deceiver. He enters our lives in many ways. However, the main way he stagnates our Christian walk is through the thoughts he places in our minds. Many times we try to fight him in our fleshly ways and we lose battles one after another. Why? We are fighting with the wrong weapons. We fight against the thoughts we have with fleshly wisdom and when we do so we lose the fight. The thoughts begin to take over and they begin to influence our decisions.

While thoughts could bring us to a choice of obedience to God's principles, many times it is not that simple. The more we allow Satan to set up camp in our minds the harder it becomes to determine truth. Satan's lies make us believe we are a terrible person. We become trapped and unable to reach our full potential in Christ because we believe these lies that give us a poor self image.

Satan uses thoughts of guilt to lead us to unhealthy views of ourselves. We feel guilty for a sin or bad choice we have made in the past, and we allow that guilt to convince us of who we are instead of believing God's truth. We begin thinking that we are such a weak person that we feel we can never gain strength to overcome. A stronghold is created in our mind and we begin to live out the life that Satan's lie has bound us to. The lie tells us that we can never get over the things of our past. However, it is important that we realize how Satan works. When he is deceiving us he will intermingle enough of the truth that we feel his lies *are* the truth when in reality they are deception. It is true that we, in our flesh, cannot get over the things of our past. We cannot get past the guilty feelings they bring. We cannot stop the lies and thoughts from trapping us. However, the good news and fulfillment of that truth is Jesus can! He has already. We just have to call upon His Name and we begin to do so by staying in His Word. Jesus is the Word and when we stay in the Scriptures our minds will be equipped for the battle.

Dear one, our thoughts can be powerful. They can be the difference between a life of joy and peace and a life of despair and guilt. But Jesus did the remarkable when He died on the cross. He paid for our sins. He paid the price and won the victory! We only have to claim His victory. When we claim this victory, we begin to fight Satan with the only power that can defeat him – Jesus Christ!

Spiritual warfare is real and Satan is using his power by giving you thoughts of deception. He wants you to believe that you cannot get over the guilt of the past. Oh how I want you to believe the truth. Claim Jesus' victory over Satan. Marinate yourself in God's Word. Let His Word penetrate your heart and mind. For when you do, the Spirit will pull forth the truth with every thought Satan throws out for you to believe. Let the Spirit lead you and measure the truth against the lies of Satan, then choose to allow your mind to follow the truth not the lies. When you do so, you will claim victory – the victory in Jesus!

Looking deeper . . .

There is a guilt that is like an overcast cloud in our lives and many times this guilt stems from the sin of not putting God first. As a woman, I know many times I feel guilty because I can't be a glamorous wife, super mom, and sensational Christian all at the same time. And I have to continue to remind myself that as long as I allow myself to feel guilty over such things, I am allowing the guilt to drive my life, not God.

When we believe something, it will affect our feelings. When we believe we are a failure, we will feel like one. When we believe we are a forgiven saint, we will feel like one. The difference between a guilt-ridden Christian and a light-hearted and joyful Christian is often one simple thing – what they are thinking about. Whatever you keep your mind on will affect your whole being.

Write Isaiah 26:3 below:

Is your mind steadfast with the trust that you have in God? Think about it. What thoughts of deception have you been entertaining? Write down how you will overcome by putting into practice the principles stated in Philippians 4:8.

Read Philippians 4:4-7:

- What does Paul tell us we should always do? (verse 4)

- What should we do instead of being anxious? (verse 6)

- If we do these things, what will guard our hearts and minds? (verse 7)

In 2 Corinthians 10:5, what does Paul tell us to do with the thoughts that set themselves up against the knowledge of God?

Read the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11. How did Jesus respond to Satan each time he tempted Him?

How do we take thoughts captive? By not backing down! When Satan's thoughts of deception enter your mind you must fight with the power of the Word as Jesus did in the desert. This is why it is very important we consistently read the Word of God on a daily basis.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of salvation. Thank You for Your Son, Who paid the price so that I may be victorious over Satan. Help me to always remember that I cannot fight Satan with my own strength and I must rely on Your Word. Give me the wisdom to know how to capture thoughts and measure them against the truth of Your Word. Amen.