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TRANSFORMATION OF THE MIND

An AJET Editorial

One tragedy in the Christian church is the great number of leaders who fall into sin. Some fall into immorality. Others become dishonest. Still others are lifted up in pride once they are elevated to a position of authority.

How does this all begin? The problem begins in *the mind*. Nowhere else! The persons who fall into sin have not guarded their thinking. Out of the inner life flows the sinful actions we see. The mind is central to the whole inner being. Thoughts in the mind stir up the emotions and motivate the will.

AJET is concerned with the cultivation of a "Christian mind" and the development of a biblical "world view." This involves not only a biblical theology purged of syncretism. It involves values and ideals which are treasured and guarded. It involves the *transformation of the mind* so that the thoughts of the mind glorify God and lead to godly behaviour and conversation. A key passage on the transformation of the mind is II Corinthians 3:7-4:6.

The mind is blinded by Satan- at birth, before conversion: According to II Corinthians 4:3,4, "The god of this age has blinded the *minds* (*νοῦς*) of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel..." Without Christ we are unable to understand the truth of God. Even the unconverted Jews were blind to the truth in Jesus. "Their minds were made dull" (3:14). How blind is the human race whose minds are unable to know and value the beauty of Christ.

The mind becomes enlightened by Christ- at conversion: God took the initiative. He spoke in the midst of darkness, "Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen. 1:2,3). Paul applies the creation narrative to the re-creation. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). Paul spoke these words out of his own experience on the road to Damascus. Blinded to the good news of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, he persecuted the followers of the Way. Saul was converted. Only when the light shown, only then could he understand the Gospel.

The mind is being transformed by the Spirit- during sanctification: The emphasis of this editorial is on the continuous need for a work of sanctification, involving the transformation of the mind. Too many Christians are being "squeezed in the mold" of this world (Rom. 12:2). The values of this fallen world, whether they are spoken by word of mouth in the villages or shown on the screens in the cinema or paraded before students by their professors, are values

which emanate from "the god of this age." These values are attractive to the sinful nature which Christians still possess. When the mind feeds on the values and desires of this world, the end result is catastrophic failure.

This *transformation of the mind* cannot be done by self-help, for the tense is passive (II Cor. 3:18). God is the author of divine life. The mind, the seat of the thought life, must be transformed by the power of God himself. The same emphasis of being worked upon by God is expressed in Colossians 3:9, "...the new self, which is *being renewed* in knowledge in the image off its Creator."

But passive believers will never be transformed. Human responsibility is paramount. The key verse in our text is II Corinthians 3:18. "And we, who *with unveiled faces all contemplate the Lord's glory*, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:18). We are transformed by beholding Christ.

The Greek word standing behind the NIV translation, "contemplate," has three related meanings: 1) beholding as in a mirror; 2) reflecting like a mirror; 3) beholding (with no reference to a mirror). "To behold" is the primary meaning of the word. But since Corinth was famous for its superior quality of bronze mirrors, it would seem natural that Paul would reflect this in his metaphor. The stress is not on seeing "indistinctly" or "in a distorted way" but *indirectly* (as in a mirror) in contrast to "face to face" in heaven.

How does one "behold (or contemplate) the Lord's glory"? Through the eye of faith as we contemplate God through the pages of Scripture. The Bible is God's revelation of himself and his will to mankind. The *mind* is renewed as we behold Christ in Scripture. Renewal of our personality begins with renewal of the mind (Rom. 12:2). The greatest privilege and goal in life should be to *know God* in a personal way by the power of the Spirit and through one's walk with God. Failure to "behold Christ" with the inner eye of faith will surely lead to disaster.

Transformation of the mind also involves "putting off" the old self and "putting on" the new self (Col. 3:5-12). This is an active responsibility. The old self loves the desires of the sinful nature. Anything which feeds these desires must be rejected. Paul speaks of warfare when he says, "we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). We are indeed in spiritual warfare and the battle is won or lost in the mind. The "putting on" of the new self involves thinking godly thoughts. "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think on such things" (Phil. 4:8). This challenge belongs to all of us.

**"Above all else,
guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life." (Prov. 4:23)**