



August 13, 2021

Thoughts of the Heart

*Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." - **Genesis. 6:5-7***

Depending upon our circumstances, we are frightened that our needs for physical things will not be met. But truth be told, most of us would rather die of starvation than look bad. And we are also afraid of what other people will do to us—that they will either hurt us physically or hurt us in other ways, such as thwarting our career goals. Given the world in which we live, these are not unfounded fears. Not a day goes by—not a minute—in which someone is not harmed in one way or another by a fellow human being.

But if we are to experience a life without lack as we go out into the world every day, we must, by the grace of God, deal with these fears—or we will be in bondage to Satan. We will be bound both in terms of fear and the temptation to meet our needs in a way that is not right before God, which reveals our lack of faith in him and lack of trust in his all-sufficient care and strength.

After Satan pulled his original trick on Eve in Genesis 3, we see one person after another falling in lock step behind the great deceiver. By the time of Noah, things on earth had reached a crisis point. While we do not have a lot of information, what we do know is dreadful. So dreadful, in fact, that when God viewed the human condition he essentially said it was all but hopeless. We are given a mournful and fateful description of the situation in the passage above from Genesis 6.

What a tragic commentary! How did things get so bad with what God once declared to be so “very good”? The short answer, which should no longer be surprising, is Satan. It is revealing that right before we read of God’s decision to destroy all human and animal life on earth (one family notwithstanding) we find these words: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (v. 5).

When God looks at human wickedness, he is not looking exclusively at our actions, but at our minds and hearts, our thoughts and intentions. God looks on the heart for two reasons: (1) our heart is the source of our actions and life, but more important here, (2) our thoughts are where Satan plies his trade. He governs through images, through ideas, through feelings and fears. From this complex arena of our minds and hearts come most of our actions, so this is the arena where Satan focuses his work.

Reflect: *Again I remind you, human beings cannot be forced to do evil. They cannot be forced to do good either. They must choose to do evil or good. How do they choose? By being persuaded that one course of action is better than another. (Q) So Satan works upon the heart through the mind, since this is so, how will you today go about setting your mind and your heart on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1-4).*