

MARCH 29, 2020 SERMON

“WHAT IS YOUR MINDSET? TEMPTATION OR SPIRIT?”

ROMANS 8: 6-11

To begin this morning, I have a question for you.....”Who controls your thoughts?” Some of you may say....”God does”, or “The devil does”.....Others may say, “Well Pastor Tom, I do – I control my thoughts”, but do we really? I know I don’t have complete control of the thoughts that enter my mind, or they would be more positive and uplifting.....And I get this.....After I have contact with certain people, or people with certain attitudes.....I get thoughts, and some of these are not great thoughts.....And if I let these thoughts run recklessly on their own, like the rabbit running down its hole – I feel.....Angry....Frustrated....Guilty.....or Hurt. And I do believe that Satan can and will influence our thoughts – whether it’s Lust, or Hatred, or Envy, or Self-Loathing, or Worry.....The Evil-One can influence our thoughts and take us places where we don’t want to go! Any of you been letting your thoughts of the corona-virus take you to fearful places? Thoughts of impending doom, where we’re all just a cough or a spittle away from infection that will certainly kill us, or our loved-ones. The total lack of control, in a new world, where an invisible enemy waits to strike us down at a moment’s notice! And our temptation to sin.....To choose the selfish way – Now, temptation itself is not a sin.....”Even our Lord Jesus Christ was tempted in every way as we are....But he never sinned.” But you see, sin always begins with temptation.....and that temptation begins in our thoughts, our minds.....And what happens when we let our minds be controlled by our sinful nature? Our scripture lesson this morning from Romans 8, verse 7, tells us....”The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God – It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.” Our human-hearts, because of Adam and Eve’s “Fall” in the garden, are set on “Sin” – Our natural desires default automatically to our “Sin nature”.....We seek the things that make us happy.....that make us feel good.....our thoughts and minds work that way....We begin to plan and scheme, and the stronger our thoughts get, as we close in on what we passionately desire. And yes, we might know the law – And we might know what’s right and wrong.....But my “Sin nature” tells me, “Forget the law and do what you want to be happy!” And for the individual who has not been set free from the law of sin and death, by the Spirit of life.....Sin remains the driving force for your decision-making. Selfishness is the filter for our direction, and our selfishness leads to one final destination – Sin and Death! “The mind of the sinful man is death.” The sinful mind is hostile to God, it cannot submit to God’s law.....nor can it do so! Where is your “Mind-Set?” Those who live according to their sinful nature have a thoroughly hardened, predicted way of thinking.....Sin is approached, accepted, and persuaded in the same pattern of thinking.....over and over – Do circumstances influence our thinking? Absolutely! Do people influence our thinking? You Betcha! Are we prone to let our thoughts run down the dark, rabbit-hole, when we’re depressed, stressed, or grieving? Yes, we are, it’s our nature! But, what happens when our minds are controlled by God’s Spirit? The mind controlled by The Spirit is life and peace – our thoughts influenced by the evil-one are dark thoughts – temptations, hatred, fear, greed,

coveting, and lies! We Christians, we must seek the indwelling of The Holy Spirit – to surrender ourselves to Jesus.....Repent and confess to Jesus and to his being our Lord and Savior.....Our Lord, and us....being consummated together in Baptism, and blessed to walk in the newness of life through the gift of the “Spirit of life”....The Spirit of God that lives in us.....And since we Christians are born again in the Spirit, we become Spirit-filled Christians who can put these thoughts of temptation and sin to rest – We can allow God’s Spirit to stop the sin before it kills us! Will this be an easy task? Of course not, surrender never is.....Denying ourselves temptations of the flesh is difficult – Taking up the cross of Christ is never easy – God’s word judges the thoughts and attitudes of our minds – God’s word is the fetter of truth – not my thoughts – not my feelings – not my attitude. Even us Christians – its God’s word that is truth, and we need to deposit this truth in our hearts to keep from sinning – It won’t stop us from being tempted, but it can keep us from following that temptation! Remember, scripture reminds us, “As a person thinks within themselves, so they are.” Some people are locked into wrong habits of living and their thought-processes are a large part of their problem. It’s our sin-nature, and our minds default to this setting – To the desires of the self, instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to be present in our minds.....Us Spirit-filled Christians should start realizing we’re at war, and the first shots fired are in our minds.....And our weapons are heart and mind weapons – They are Spirit of life weapons – It’s why we must make captive every thought to be obedient to Christ. How much of your thinking is self-controlled? How much are you engaged in taking the self-control and turning it over to Jesus for the glory of God? And if you haven’t accepted Christ as Lord over your life? Surrender, and commit yourself over to Christ, realizing that those controlled by their sinful nature will never know or please God! It would be like trying to have a relationship with your children – But you never call – You never spend any time with them – You never give hugs or kisses, or any other personal physical contact with them – Maybe you send them a card on their birthday with a 5 dollar bill...and when you do reach out to them, it’s out of guilt, not out of love...this is how we divorce ourselves from God – We break off the relationship with God because of sin – And because of this sin, we’re hostile to God – We’ve heard of God, and remember God on Christmas or Easter, but there is No surrender – No submission – No reconciliation – It is a guilt-centered relationship – Controlled by our own selfish wants and desires – Jesus Christ is not in the picture, but man he wants to be! And Jesus doesn’t just want to come for a visit – Jesus wants to live in your house, and guide you in a healthy way of living life! He wants to love you as a son or a daughter of Christ! He wants you to have his inheritance of Eternal Life! And when this realization of grace happens in our minds.....The Holy Spirit sets our minds on the thoughts that please Jesus the most – Jesus signs the adoption-papers, and Jesus’ Spirit makes us shout out, “We are home!” The Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead is alive in us! God who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to our mortal-bodies and minds because of his Holy Spirit which lives and reigns in us! So, “What is your mind-set?” Temptation or the Spirit? Surrender to Jesus Christ and The Holy Spirit.....and be at home with God for eternity! May this be so! Amen!