

Mind Control

BY B. G. ECHOLS

When we find ourselves in difficult situations, we often fall to the temptation of forgetting many things that are vital to our spiritual welfare.

Two things of great importance to Christians that may be forgotten in times of trial are dealt with in the last part of 1 Peter, chapter one. There Peter exhorts his readers to personal holiness (1:13-21) and brotherly love (1:22-25). Both begin with mind control. "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:13).

The figure of "girding up the loins of your mind" is taken from a runner or worker who tucked up his garment in a girdle so it would not be in the way (Lk. 12:35). Here it refers to a determined effort by Christians to control their thinking. "Set your mind on things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth" (Col. 3:2). The idea also involves preparedness. There is mental and spiritual preparedness necessary to meet the assignments and work of being a Christian. Our minds must be braced and prepared for the trials of faith. "Wherefore" connects this to the prior thought of the blessings that excited the prophets and fixed the attention of angels. With those blessings in view, let us act with determination. We have to take some initiative.

A Christian's work is not over as soon as he is baptized. It is just beginning. God's word should

guide our choices. Christians must not allow pressure from outside to determine their behavior. "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2). Without our minds being set, we cannot see our hope.

How can we control our mind? Paul's words to the Ephesians gives our answer. "Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth..." (Eph. 6:14). Truth must be the guiding element. True holiness begins with the proper preparation of our mind. This means we must fill our minds with the word of God. We are given our minds to use. The current rage among some religionists to exalt their experience and emotion is an occult avoidance of thinking. We cannot interpret the word of God by our experience. We must test our experience by the word of God.

Holiness is God's ultimate goal for us. "Because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). There is no holiness without effort because there is no holiness without self-discipline. That involves controlling one's mind. Just as loose clothes get caught, so loose ends of the mind can be snared by Satan's barbs.

Furthermore, we must "be sober." This is not merely abstinence from drunkenness, but being vigilant, clear-eyed, and level-headed. The word describes one who is calm and collected in spirit, temperate, well-balanced, and self-controlled. Such a mental attitude makes it easier to ward off Satan. "Be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer" (1 Pet. 4:7). "Be sober, be watchful..." (1 Pet. 5:8). One who is sober exhibits great restraint of temper, controlled habits of thought, and a calm attitude toward irritations of whatever nature. Soberness opposes fanaticism. "I am not mad, most excellent Festus; but speak forth words of truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25). A sober mind is able to consider matters in a careful and sensible way so as to make wise decisions.

Controlling our mind requires setting our hope perfectly. Hope is more than a vague desire. It requires clear and firm thinking. It must be held without wavering. "Perfectly" means "completely." You can't put your trust and hope partially in God and partially on some human scheme. Hope is an encouragement to holiness. If we give up hope, we more easily give up the high standard of conduct before God. Believing the Lord will come and bestow the crown of life upon the faithful, let us continue in constancy. Hope is the theme of 1 Peter. We are not to hope halfheartedly (Heb. 6:19).