

QUESTION: We have a free will, yet at times we don't understand our own emotions, or our mind goes in certain ways, so are we under the influence of Satan at those times? When is it really just us?

ANSWER: We are spirit, soul and body (I Thess. 5:23). The SOUL is made up of MIND, WILL and EMOTIONS. The "**natural man**" is governed **ONLY by his soul and bodily appetites**, because he is spiritually dead (I Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-5). The born-again Christian is to be governed and **controlled by the Holy Spirit and our own born-again spirit**, which is created in the image of God (the "new man", see Eph. 4:17-24), NOT by our SOUL. Our soul, which includes our EMOTIONS, is **UNRELIABLE, we must not trust it**. We MUST renew our minds with the word of God (Romans 12:1-2; Eph. 4:23) and we are RESPONSIBLE (using our FREE WILL) to be careful of what we put before our eyes and allow to enter our minds, because that will AFFECT our EMOTIONS (see Phil. 4:6-9). If you find that your MIND (thoughts) or EMOTIONS are **out of line with what God says**, you MUST NOT allow your SOUL to be the final authority. God's word must be the FINAL AUTHORITY, and **we are told to "take EVERY THOUGHT captive to the OBEDIENCE of Christ"** (II Cor. 10:3-5), which means we must deal with our thought-life and emotions, rather than ALLOWING them to rule us. The "flesh" or "old man" is the REALM of our FIVE PHYSICAL SENSES. We are commanded to "walk by FAITH and not by SIGHT" (II Cor. 5:7) and to not be "CARNALLY MINDED" (Romans 8:5-7). "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the evidence of **things NOT seen**" (Heb. 11:1), so FAITH is the opposite of living our life by our five physical senses and emotions.

All of this is OUR OWN CHOICE to obey what God says in His word, or not. If we obey God and take every thought captive and "guard ourselves" (see I John 5:18), the wicked one (Satan) cannot touch us. It is when we FAIL TO OBEY, and **entertain or harbor those thoughts that are contrary to God's word** ("every high thing that exalts itself AGAINST God"), that Satan is allowed an entrance into our lives (see Eph. 4:26-27). If this sin is not confessed and corrected, if we CONTINUALLY entertain wrong thoughts, we give Satan "ground" and ALLOW him to build strongholds in our life. "Ground" means a sphere of jurisdiction that **we VOLUNTARILY give to the enemy**. Many people are MENTALLY LAZY and PASSIVE, and they ALLOW these wrong thoughts to control them, and ALLOW Satan to build stronghold after stronghold in their lives. They are saved, but they are miserable by their own CHOICE. They ask for OTHER PEOPLE to PRAY FOR THEM, but they remain in the same condition, because God has told THEM to do something about it, and they REFUSE to do it.

As to whether Satan is the one putting wrong thoughts in our minds, I think we have to analyze each situation individually. Sometimes it is the "fiery darts of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16), and we must extinguish them by putting up the "shield of faith." Other times, it is just that we are ALLOWING our CARNAL MIND and fleshly emotions to carry us away (see Isaiah 64:6 - "our iniquities, like the wind, CARRY US AWAY"). Iniquity means DOING OUR OWN WILL, or GOING OUR OWN WAY (see Isaiah 53:6). Sometimes **we are too quick to blame Satan**, because we are not willing to admit the wickedness of our own fallen human nature. Our FLESH is capable of all the "works" listed in Galatians 5:13-21, and it says we are in a constant warfare between our FLESH and the SPIRIT (the Holy Spirit, and our spirit, the "new man" created in Christ Jesus). Romans 7:7-23 also speaks of the battle within ourselves of wanting to do God's will, and another part of us still wanting to sin. Neither the passage in Galatians nor Romans mentions the devil at all, but rather **a constant need for us to SUBMIT our mind, will and emotions to God**.

- **John 14: 1 & 27 "LET NOT** your heart be troubled...." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. **LET NOT (do not allow)** your heart (emotions) be troubled; neither LET it be afraid."

- **I Corinthians 3:1-3** "And I, brethren, could **not** speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to CARNAL, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now **you are still not able**; for you are STILL CARNAL. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not **CARNAL and behaving like mere [unsaved] men?**"
- **Hebrews 5:12-14** "For though by this time you OUGHT TO BE teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles (word) of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is **unskilled in the WORD** of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who by reason of use (CONTINUAL PRACTICE) have **their senses exercised to DISCERN both good and evil.**"
- **Hebrews 4:12** "For the WORD of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the **DIVISION of SOUL and SPIRIT**, and of joints and marrow, and is a **DISCERNER** of the THOUGHTS and INTENTS of the HEART (emotions)."

CONCLUSION: The BOTTOM LINE is still **(1.) GET STRONG IN THE WORD OF GOD**. The word of God is what ENABLES you to DISCERN what is of the flesh, of the Spirit, or of the devil; **(2.) OBEY what you read in the WORD** (be a doer of the word, James 1:22-25; Matt. 7:24-27); **(3.) ALLOW the Holy Spirit to lead and direct you** (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16).