

Kirjath-Sepher, or the Mind of Christ

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of conquering the carnal mind and receiving the mind of Christ, which leads to a life of victory and the fulness of God's grace.

Scripture: Joshua 15:16

Topics: "Surrendering to God", "The Mind of Christ"

Description

A.B. Simpson explores the significance of Kirjath-Sepher, representing the conquest of the mind and the importance of surrendering our thoughts to Christ. He emphasizes that true victory over the carnal mind requires the power of God, as exemplified by Othniel, who represents the strength of the Holy Spirit. Simpson highlights the need for believers to receive the mind of Christ, which transforms our thoughts and speech, leading to a life filled with grace and divine blessings. The sermon illustrates how Achsah's request for springs symbolizes the abundant grace available to those who overcome their natural inclinations. Ultimately, Simpson calls for a complete surrender to God, allowing His Spirit to guide our thoughts and actions.

Transcript

"And Caleb said, He that smites Kirjath-Sepher, and takes it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What would you have? Who answered, Give me a blessing; for you have given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs." (Josh. 15: 16-19.)

The conquest of Hebron by Caleb was followed a few days afterwards by the capture of Kirjath-Sepher, also known as Debir. For its capture Caleb offered as a prize the hand of his daughter Achsah; and Othniel, Caleb's own nephew, took up the challenge and won both the city and the maiden.

She brought her husband not only her fair self, but a still richer dowry from her father, who gave her, at her request, not only the splendid inheritance looking toward the south, but also the upper and the nether springs.

All this is full of holy suggestiveness and sacred teaching in connection with our higher inheritance in Christ.

KIRJATH-SEPHER

Kirjath-Sepher and Debir suggest the victory of faith over the natural mind and the wisdom of the world. Kirjath-Sepher means "the city of the oracle, or the book," and Debir means "the speaker." One is the fitting symbol of the natural mind, and the other of its most powerful instrument and expression, the tongue, and both together represent the hardest victory of the spiritual life, the conquest of our thoughts and our words.

Human nature is threefold, and consists of the spirit, soul and body. We have not only a spiritual nature, but we have an intellectual being, the seat of reason, mind and intelligence.

THE CARNAL MIND

This has been blighted by the fall, and requires to be renewed through the blood and Spirit of Christ just as much as any other part of our being.

Our mind influences our whole character and life. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he," and intelligence without character is the most dangerous of created powers. Satan himself is just a great unholy intelligence. In one of the versions of the Bible his name is translated "the knowing one." He is a being of transcendent brightness, but utterly without any right principle, his whole moral and spiritual being perverted and corrupted. Like the serpent -- his Scriptural image -- his life is all centered in his head. You cannot kill a serpent until you strike its head. You may bruise its whole body, but if you leave the head intact it still lives. Hence the first promise of redemption was, "You shall bruise his head."

He came to our first parents' intelligence. There was one tree in the garden that was prohibited to them. Everything else that could constitute happiness was theirs. All possible delights were given to them without stint. But there was one little bit of knowledge they must not claim; one single tree whose fruit they must not taste; one secret that must remain unknown, and it was with this that he tempted them, and with this that he destroyed them. He lured them on to enter the forbidden precincts. He attracted them by the dazzling promise of divine wisdom. He covered the forbidden prize with the glamour of his false light until everything else seemed eclipsed by its delusive brightness, and they reached forward over the precipice to grasp it, and when they claimed it they found it was but an empty bubble; but it had cost them an eternity of ruin for all their race.

And so still the tree of forbidden knowledge is the mystery with which he lures men and women on until they venture beyond God's holy prohibitions and sink into the depths of ruin.

OUR THOUGHTS

Temptations still assail us chiefly through our thoughts. In speaking of the depths of corruption in the days of Noah, God said, "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually." It is through imagination that sin approaches. Floating like a beautiful vision through the mind, the evil thought at first seems harmless, but if entertained and allowed to lodge, it becomes the seed that springs up into a living plant of unholy desire, which quickly bursts into blossoms of unwholesome fragrance, and if they are permitted to fertilize and linger, the fruit of evil choice, sinful yielding and actual transgression follows with awful certainty and rapidity.

We must meet temptation, therefore, in our thoughts. We are so constituted that if we dwell on an evil thought it creates its own character within our spirit. The man of old who looked on the Gorgon's head was

instantly turned into stone, and the soul that complacently and willingly indulges the thought of evil absorbs the evil into his own nature.

Walk down the street and let your eyes be fixed for a moment on a picture of obscenity, and you will immediately find your whole soul clouded by spiritual darkness and defilement, and although your spirit may revolt from it, still you will be conscious of a horrible fascination, and if you allow it to linger it will overpower your better feelings and change your nature into that of another man. Even your very body will be affected, and you will be conscious of being benumbed with the draught from the fountains of the pit.

The inventive genius of modern literature has given us the picture of a man who, by a certain draught, could be changed from one man into another of higher, nobler character, but would immediately fall back from the nobler man into the lower ideal the moment he thought of it, feared it and recognized it. There is a strange truth here. The consciousness of evil creates evil, the thought of good becomes the fertile soil of good.

Christian Science, which is itself one of Satan's false and unholy thoughts, has one truth in it, as all lies have, and that truth is that the thought of evil creates evil, and the thought of good has a tendency to produce good.

THE MIND OF CHRIST

Not only do we need to correct our thoughts, but we must go farther and actually crucify the old natural mind and receive an entirely new mind in Christ. The sanctification of the spirit is not the improvement of the old natural spirit, but the renouncing it and the receiving of God's Holy Spirit instead. So the sanctification of our mind must be just as radical. We must recognize that our natural mind is wrong and must be laid wholly down, and we receive the mind of Christ instead, to think in us God's thoughts after God. So that our first experience is not the correcting of our thoughts, but the entire surrender of our mental being to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be crucified with Him.

The Apostle has said that the wisdom of this world is entirely wrong in its principles and nature. His language is exceedingly strong. He says, "The world by wisdom knew not God." Its very wisdom kept it from God. "If any man would be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise, for the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God." David says, "I hate thoughts"; not only vain thoughts, but all thoughts that are human. This is the source of all our unbelief, our anxious care, our doubts and fears, our envies, jealousies, irritations, seditions, strifes, controversies -- all have their seat in the strong intellectual life of the human heart; the willfulness of our opinions and the entertaining of thoughts, questionings, evil surmisings and imaginings that disquiet and defile the soul. From all these Christ wants to save us, to give us the mind "stayed on Him," "the peace of God that passes all understanding," and garrisons the thought and the heart through Christ Jesus; the heart so subdued that every evil imagination is cast down, and every high thing that exalts itself brought low, and every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

In the picture given of the works of the flesh, in Galatians, seditions, strifes and controversies are spoken of in the same category as adulteries, fornications and uncleanness. All these things are just as unholy in God's sight as the things that we call immoral.

THE TONGUE

Thus, Kirjath-Sepher not only represents the mental source of evil thought, but the outward expression of it, the tongue. The control of the tongue, James says, is the rarest form of practical righteousness, and he adds that he who wins this victory will have little trouble in living a triumphant life in every other direction. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

The awful evils of the tongue are well described by the same Apostle in language of terrible strength. "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."

This is the Kirjath-Sepher and the Debir that the Lord Jesus Christ is calling on us to smite and take. When we win this citadel of Canaan, we receive in Christ a divine inheritance in the very thing that we have surrendered. Instead of our own mind, we have the mind of Christ. Instead of our foolish and restless thoughts, we have the thoughts of God. Instead of our vain imaginings, we have the vision of His light and glory. Instead of our limited knowledge, the eyes of our understanding are enlightened, and we are able to know the "hope of our calling and the exceeding greatness of His power towards us."

Instead of the profoundest thoughts of man, we are led into "the deep things of God." "For eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." God will open His glorious Word to us, and give the revelation and illumination of the Holy Ghost, and "our eyes shall see the King in His beauty and the land of far distances."

The tongue that has learned to be silent for self and Satan will become the instrument of God's messages and the channel of His glorious power. The very symbol of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost was a cloven tongue. The very member He wants to use most is our voice and our power of utterance, but He will not use it until He has its absolute control and He can stamp it with His own signature and monogram, as His exclusive property and His own living voice.

Beloved, is not this a glorious possibility? Is not this a choice possession? Shall we go up and smite Kirjath-Sepher and take it, to be henceforth owned and occupied by the Holy Ghost, to the glory of God alone?

It will be noticed that Kirjath-Sepher comes after Hebron. It is love first, and then light. It is only as we learn the love-life of the Lord, and get out of self and all its sensitiveness, that we can do rightly, speak rightly, think rightly and know rightly. We want to get the seat of life centered not in the brain, but in the heart and spirit; in love, and not in truth. Then we shall understand the meaning of "Speaking the truth in love, we grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ."

OTHNIEL

Othniel is the type of the secret victory over the natural mind. The word Othniel means "the lion of God," or "the force of God," as Dr. Young translates it. He represents the power of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost in a courageous spirit.

Nothing less than Omnipotent power can overcome the pride and strength of the carnal mind. It needs the very "force of God." "The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It is a wild and

desperate rebel; your own resolution never can control it. But if we will be brave enough to choose to die to it Christ is able to subdue it. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

We are so glad that God put that word "mighty" there. Every one who has tried to still the over-active brain; to subdue the flood of thought; to drive out the burning image from the imagination; to cleanse the foul picture from the chambers of the heart; to think calmly; or better, cease thinking altogether, knows how useless the endeavor in the strength of the human will.

But there is a voice that says to the wildest tempest of the heart and brain: "Peace, be still"; and lo! there is a great calm! There is a power that can keep every thought, like hand-maids and servants, waiting outside the inner chamber to come at call, a troupe of obedient servants, not a horde of wild disturbers; waiting for the call of will and conscience, and utterly controlled by the voice of the Holy Ghost.

Oh, this indeed is peace! Happy are they who know it! Thank God, it waits for all who are willing to yield themselves in complete surrender to the mind of Christ and the thoughts of God.

ACHSAH

Achsah or abounding grace for victorious souls.

Othniel's victory was accepted as the price of Caleb's daughter, the fair Achsah, whose name signifies grace, and who may be regarded as the type of the special grace which Christ will give to victorious souls, and especially to those who have overcome the carnal mind.

GRACE

There is a grace that saves the sinful soul, but there is a deeper, richer grace that sanctifies and fills it with all the fulness of God.

"We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that you, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work." "They who have received abundance of grace shall reign in life by One, which is Jesus Christ." "Out of His fulness have we received grace for grace," the grace that meets the need of every moment, and supplies the lack of grace in us for every emergency.

Do we need the grace of faith, of love, of patience? There is grace for this, grace to supply it in abundance; so that we shall be patient in His patience, gentle in His gentleness, strong in His strength, and loving in His love.

This is the grace that Jesus has to give the souls that have become victorious over their own self-will and self-sufficiency, and are content to take Him as their strength and wisdom. Achsah moved her husband to ask great things of her father. And so the grace of God moves us to the highest, mightiest prayers and to take the riches of divine grace and blessing.

Achsah, it would seem, moved Othniel to ask even more than Othniel asked for himself. We find her going to her father with a large prayer for him and for herself. And so grace asks for us even more than we ask for ourselves. She brought her husband a rich inheritance, the south land, lying toward the warm

sunshine, and then she claimed for herself and him an added and a double blessing.

It is very beautiful to see her alighting off her ass, before she approaches her father with her great request. Grace stoops to plead, and the lower it goes, the more it can ask and receive. Abraham got on his face when he asked the everlasting covenant from Jehovah. The Syrophenician woman rose to the very highest faith in the New Testament from the deepest humiliation, accepting even the terrible word the Master spoke about her sin and willing to count herself "a dog," yet claiming and receiving all the fulness of His infinite grace. And so grace can stoop to the very depths of self-abasement, and yet rise to the heights of glory to claim all the fulness of God.

What she asked her father for was springs, and this grace always has for thirsting hearts. The life of works is a life of constant labor and painful effort, and the life of grace is a perpetual spring of spontaneous fulness and freedom.

It is so delightful to live and work for God from impulses that carry us beyond ourselves. There is a place in the mid-stream of human life where the current sweeps us along in the infinite fulness of God. But there is a place where we have to contend with eddies and cross-currents, to row and struggle against the stream and to press our way through the greatest difficulties.

Oh, it is so blessed to be carried on the current of His love and fulness and say continually, with an overflowing heart: "All my springs are in You."

Achsah asked for springs, and her father gave her more than she asked; "he gave her the upper and the nether springs."

FULNESS OF GRACE

This beautiful figure tells us that the glorious fulness of the grace of God sweeps the whole circle of our being, and gives "promise both of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come."

There are upper springs, -- springs of faith, that keep us trusting in the face of every discouragement; springs of prayer, that come from the promptings of the Holy Ghost, and carry our petitions straight to the throne, with a consciousness of acceptance; springs of love that leap up to God, and enable us to say, "The love of God constrains me"; springs of joy that burst from the eternal hills, a joy so unspeakable that it is full of glory; springs of hope that reach out to the yet unseen and invisible, anticipating all that shall yet be revealed in our future inheritance; springs of power, that make our service a delight, our testimony a great overflow from a heart that cannot be silent, because it is so full. These are some of the upper springs.

But there are nether springs which we value even more. There are springs that flow in the low places of life, in the hard places, in the desert places, in the lone places, in the common places which seem farthest removed from all that is sacred and divine. How blessed it is to drink from the springs of health, and find our strength renewed day by day, and the life of God flowing into even our physical organs and functions!

How delightful it is to have His gladness in the low places of sorrow, and to be able to "glory even in tribulation also."

How precious the springs that flow into the places of temptation, for there is nothing in life so trying as the touch of Satan's hand and the breath of the destroyer.

Oh, how sweet it is even there to find that the light is as deep as the shadow, and heaven is nearest when we are hard by the gates of hell, so that we can "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations," and say "Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, that the Lord has promised to them that love Him."

SPRINGS IN THE DESERT

There are springs that flow amid the place of toil and secular business. It is possible to be filled amid the common things of life with the conscious presence of God. It is possible to work in the shop and the kitchen with a zest as sweet as that which inspires the preacher in his sublimest flights of thought, the singer in her highest notes of devotion, the saint in his most blessed moment of communion.

God loves to cheer those that toil in lowly places, and we can hear the sweet bells of the high priest's garment within the veil and the echoes of the harps of God even amid the din of the busy streets and the rattle and roar of the ten thousand hammers and the whirling wheels of the factory.

The heart that has its spring within can be happy anywhere. The soul that is set to heavenly music can never be out of tune. The light that is kindled from above can shine in darkness, though "the darkness comprehends it not."

Beloved, God has for us these springs, and we need them every day. Let us drink of the living waters. No, let us receive them into our very hearts, so that we shall carry the fountain with us wherever we go, that it may be true of us as He said of old, "Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

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