

“LOVING GOD WITH OUR MINDS”

The mind is a faculty of knowledge and from the beginning of the Old Testament knowledge implies a relationship (cf. Ge 4:1, NIV). Relationship between the Christian and Christ is also understood in the same way (cf. Jn 10:14; 8:32; NIV) and to know Christ is to have faith in Him, to follow Him, to love Him, and to let Him be the highest authority (cf. Jn 14:7; 1Co 8:3; Gal 4:9; 2Ti 2:19, NIV). With such a pattern, “loving God with our minds” should certainly relate to our appreciation of God, submission to God, devotion to God, and God’s dominion over our thought-life. John Piper in his book “Think: The Life Of The Mind And The Love Of God” offers a clarification for his readers to understand the overall meaning of “loving God with all your mind”:

“Loving God is most essentially treasuring God - valuing him, cherishing him, admiring him, desiring him. And loving Him with all our mind means that our thinking is wholly engaged to do all it can to awaken and express this heartfelt fullness of treasuring God above all things” (Piper 2010, 88).

We only appreciate God if we know His truth about who He is and this demands us to embrace His self-revelation. Those who do not have faith in Christ cannot love God, not to say loving God with their minds, and those who fail to hold tightly His truth in His Bible cannot love Him as He desires. This helps explaining why some people think that loving God is to worship “Mary the Mother of God”, to observe the “Sacraments”, or just to go after their feelings - these all relate to the way people think of God’s truth in His Bible. We’re living in an “evil age” (cf. Gal 1:4, NIV) whose way of thinking is suppressive to God’s truth and our redeemed intellect is still subjected to the “lingering corruption” (Webster 2008, 748) therefore we’re to think about what we think about. R. Albert Mohler Jr. puts it well in his article “The Way The World Thinks: Meeting The Natural Mind In The Mirror And In The Marketplace”:

“Because of the biblical imperative to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, Christians must perpetually think about thinking” (Mohler 2011, 48).

Elizabeth George begins her book “Loving God With All Your Mind” with a brief examination on Philippians 4:8 (KJV) to raise almost the same concern as Mohler does in his essay:

“So here’s a first step: Remember these eight words from God’s Word - ‘Whatsoever things are true... Think on these things’” (George 2005, 24).

We should think of the truth of God to know Him and to love Him. Without a full

appreciation of God we will not be able to be overwhelmed under the tremendous affections of all what He is. The true and real comprehension, assessment, and esteem of God over our intellect is indeed the first key for us to love God with our minds.

Once awoken to comprehend an appreciation to God the intellect can express its volition to submit Him. To some people submission simply means to surrender to someone's authority and losing even one's identity but the biblical submission is in fact the new power of a redeemed mind. To us as Christians submission is necessary in order to recognize the authority of God and to fall under His guidance and direction. It means we willingly come under who He is as revealed in Christ and His Word and eventually it means all what in our lives come under "His Word", "His Ways", "His Will", and "His Work". Submission to God helps us developing faith, remaining teachable, being the better leaders, discharging our responsibilities in a better way. It seems in the same course of thought John Piper uses the phrase "wholly engaged to do all it can" (Piper 2010, 88) to describe our volition when we love God with our minds.

Contrarily the lack of submission to God leads to chaos, problems, and painful consequences but not all people want to accept the fact. Natural minds think themselves as "homo sapiens" but they are in fact just "suppressors of truth" (Mohler 2011, 51), they "became fools" (cf. Ro 1:22 NIV) in making their gods as "Higher Consciousness", "Super Consciousness", "Objective Consciousness" and the like. The New Thought Movement even abuses Christ's title in naming its god, namely "Christ Consciousness". Besides, there are also subtle rebellious efforts against God through deceptions and unbiblical teachings within the Church by their worldviews, philosophies, dogmas,... They misrepresent the truth to teach God's people to submit to "the embassy of Scripture" (Webster 2008, 747) instead of God through His Scripture alone.

As a result, both appreciation of God and submission to God may help awakening a devotion to God in the life of the Christian as we often see it happen when the intellect meets the volition within a life and then the loyalty comes. Biblically to think, to be devoted means to be completely "undivided" (cf. 1Co 7:35 NIV. Gr. ἀπερισπάστως) and "pure" (cf. 2Co 11:3 NIV. Gr. ἀπλότης) in devoting to Christ, or to be completely loyal and steadfast to Him as commanded - "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mk 8:34 NIV). Intellectually to put, a devotion to God is an excitement of the mind on what God is - it's an adoration for God, admiration of God, and exaltation to God. The devotion to God demands the renewal of the mind because the natural mind cannot become the Christian mind by itself (cf. Ro 12:2 NIV). Even us as Christians, due to influences of shifts in worldview like the "Five Precepts Of The Modern Mind" (Mohler 2011, 61-62) and the "lingering corruption" (Webster 2008, 748) we should always think about our thinking to make sure that we do love God and walk with Him daily (cf. Eph 4:23 NIV) "until Jesus comes" (Mohler 2011, 65) because our intellect is still vulnerable to remaining

corruption within and without.

The Christian intellect - or “the mind of the Lord” (cf. 1Co 2:16 NIV) - is the regenerated intellect in terms of a correct understanding of the things and plans of God. It’s our worldview (volition) in harmonizing with God’s will (cf. 1Co 2:14 NIV) to help us being spiritual and making righteous judgments about all things while ourselves are still not subjected to “any man’s judgment” (cf. 1Co 2:15 NIV). God even wants the things that the Christian intellect judges to include the times (cf. Rev 13:18; 17:9) as Paul urges the Thessalonians not to allow their understanding to be shaken by false reports that the day of the Lord is already here (cf. 2Th 2:2). It seems in such a state we Christians can say about our emotion the way John Piper put: “In all my rejoicing over all the good things that God has made, God Himself is the heart of my joy, the gladness of my joy” (Piper 2010, 89).

In loving God we appreciate God, we submit to God, and we devote to God - meaning we make God our dominant joy from which all other joys flow (cf. Ps. 16:2 NIV) - therefore in loving God we put all our mental abilities at work for valuing God. This description may seem contrary or strange to some people because “faith is now understood as a blind act of will, a decision to believe something that is either independent of reason or that is a simple choice to believe while ignoring the paltry lack of evidence for what is believed” (Moreland 2012, location 203 of 5026). Human reason nature needs knowledge to believe as well as understanding to love. It’s in the realm of intellect our love for God works although there are people still in an ignorance (or disregard) of interchangeable meanings between (1) the heart and the mind, and (2) the soul and the mind in the Bible.

First of all, in the Old Testament the term “heart” (Hb. בַּל; cf. Ge 6:5) is used figuratively for the inner person, most of its usages is for mentioning to the mind or thought-life (cf. Pr 4:23; 23:7 NIV) therefore “set his heart” (2Ch 12:14 NIV) or “worked with all their heart” (Ne 4:6 NIV) means to make up the mind or decide. In the New Testament the term “heart” as Gr. καρδία (cf. Lk 2:19 NIV) is obviously used for thinking, and another Greek term for “heart” is Gr. νοῦς which is often translated as “mind” (cf. Ro 1:28; Eph 4:17; Col 2:18; 1Ti 6:5; Tit 1:15 NIV) for mentioning a broad concept of the mind to determine a disposition, an inner orientation, a moral inclination, or a course of action. Second, a well known Hebrew term used for “soul” is Hb. נֶפֶשׁ (cf. Dt 6:5 NIV) which refers to the intellectual or mental dimension of life and is often translated as “being”, “life”, “flesh”, “whoever”, “anyone” (cf. Ge 2:7; 12:13; 17:14; Ex 12:15; Lev 4:2 NIV) - and this is obviously for denoting the personhood. Third, it seems that the Old Testament uses several terms for referencing to the mind (or reason) in a wide range of ideas to describe the inward or invisible dimensions of the human being in a holistic manner and they may be perceived as “heart”, “spirit”, or “soul”. “Mind” is used to translate Hb. חוּר (cf. Ge 41:8 NIV), Hb. בַּל (cf. Nu 16:28; Dt 29:4; 2Sa 19:19 NIV), Hb. בַּבֵּל (cf. Dt 28:28; 1Sa 14:7; 2Sa 7:3; 1Ki 10:2 NIV), Hb. נֶפֶשׁ (cf. Dt 28:65; 1Sa 2:35

NIV), and Hb. יֶדְעַת (cf. Job 38:36 NIV). We also see the same pattern for the term “mind” in the New Testament as it is used to translate Gr. καρδία (cf. Mt 23:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 21:14; Ac 4:32 NIV), and Gr. νοῦς (cf. Ro 1:28; 11:34; 1Co 1:10 NIV). We now have at least two things to notice from the observations above: (1) Interchangeable uses between “heart”, “mind”, “soul” and (2) A hidden meaning of “mind” is always laid beneath the meaning of “heart” and “soul”.

The truth is that God says what He means and He means what He says in His Bible by the full course of operation of the Holy Spirit. In order to know and love God as He desires we should rely on the illumination ministry of the Holy Spirit to approach the Bible with a biblically exegetical interpretation, stay away from all kinds of worldview and unbiblical interpretations of the Bible. By doing so we then will gain a biblical insight on “loving God with our minds”: It’s to activate all our “powers of thought to know God as fully as possible in order to treasure Him for all He is worth” (Piper 2010, 90). Once we truly love God with our minds God’s authority, ascendancy, authorization will be a reality over our thought-life and we will totally incline toward Him and Him alone. The age-old debate that the Pharisees once used (cf. Mt 22:36 NIV) is now the primary principle of the Christian life as commanded in the First and Greatest Commandment - “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Mt 22:37 NIV).

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