

“Recognizing the Ruts and Roots in Our Lives!”

When we begin to look at our lives and are thoroughly honest we will note that often ***we fall into ruts*** in our thought life, our reactions, actions, and attitudes of life. This ruts could be likened unto the ruts on a dirt farm road where deep tracks have been made by a loaded farm truck that has been pulled through by some farmer’s tractor. It is very easy to be stuck in such a situation. I know from experience. And someone has well said that a “*rut is a grave with both ends knocked out!*” These ruts are often inner heart sins. Also when we examine our lives we will note that some things are indeed ***roots and not just symptoms***. When we recognize those things that are root problems then we will understand why we fail and what God desires we should do about it all.

It is my prayer that the Lord will wonderfully use the things that are shared here. I desire this to be a help to every man. May God bless.

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CONSIDER The “DEEP RUTS” of OUR LIVES!

I. WHAT ARE *RUTS*?

A. Why do we so readily sin, follow the same sinful patterns, thoughts, and practices in life? (Consider Romans 8:5-8; Ephesians 4:17-24; Matthew 12:33-35)

B. There Are Two Kinds of Ruts!

In my youth our Jeep often fell into deep ruts cut by large trucks that were used to bring the livestock from the farm to the market. At times the spring thaw would bring such softness to the dirt farm roads that it would necessitate a farmer's tractor to pull the truck a few miles to the pavement or to a graveled road. It was in these ruts that our small jeep would fall and at times we would sit there with all four tires spinning as we hung high-centered in a deep rut.

Often, as Christians we fall into ruts of our own making. Ruts of sinful actions or thoughts that have become a part of our life. These brings failure and ongoing problems to ourselves and many others through our relationships.

1. **First**, there are the **tracks of *thought patterns in our minds which were inherited***.
 - a. These did not come by training.
 - b. These were not chosen by us out of experience,
 - c. but became a part of us as inherited from Adam and Eve and our ancestry.
 - d. These ruts are part of the picture seen in the above portions of Scripture.
2. **Secondly, there are our ways of thinking we built into ourselves** in infancy and early childhood.
 - a. They can be so deep we may not even be aware they exist.
 - b. These may thoroughly guide us daily and can entrap and enslave us.
3. Then, they are also the ***combinations of both inherited and developed ruts***.
 - a. Deep, mental ruts exists in all of us, whether born-again in Christ or not.
 - b. All too often they serve as rivers of fleshly passions to rise nearly unchecked into dominance and control. (Eph. 4:17- 22; Rom. 8:5-8; 12:2)
 - c. Our minds inherit and build tracks in the brain like a vehicle builds tracks in the mud of a country road.
 - d. Turning out of deep ruts in the mind requires the same kind of tough and ***careful steering*** that country driving did back then.
4. ***The Holy Spirit*** (in the saved person) ***runs up against the deep mental ruts*** that have controlled us from childhood. (Gal. 5:16-17; 24; Rom. 8:5-8)

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- a. The internal battle within the carnal mind and the heart can be great.
- b. To whom we yield, and what we meditate upon makes all the difference.
(Phil. 4:8; Prov. 23:7; Matt. 12:33-35)
- c. Every unsaved adult (the older the person the more this is true) has deep ruts of mental rejection toward the idea of needing salvation.

Our transformation is simply in our new-found freedom to choose the way of Christ, and the power by His Holy Spirit to live it, not something set in concrete in ourselves, but requiring our personal surrender, discipline and choice.

II. WE FACE RUTS ARE THAT ARE STRONG ESTABLISHED:

A. Roots (about which we will deal with later in more detail) **And Ruts In All Of Us Are so strongly established**, and so persistent in functioning the way we first inherited or constructed them, that:

1. This fact alone is a foremost proof of the ***need to renew our minds***,
2. and a major reason for the continued necessity of our sanctification and ***transformation*** long after we receive our Lord Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Consider Rom. 12:2; Heb. 3:12.

B. The Greatest Battle We Face ... in the impact of the roots and ruts of life ***is the battle for the control of men's minds!***

- 1 Propagandists have learned to manipulate the media until entire masses of ***people have become brainwashed*** into doing whatever demagogues want them to do.
2. Today, we Christians ***are often caught in the latest delusion*** trumpeted in the mass media.
3. ***Few Christians today realize how seldom the thoughts they think are truly their own in Christ***, and how often they are unwittingly conformed to the world while thinking they are serving only the Lord.
4. The ***warfare for the control of men's minds through mass defilement*** comes again and again. *"Evil will wax worse and worse til Christ comes."*
 - a. We have a veritable flood of pornography, propaganda, false teachings in books, movies, VCR's, magazines, newspapers, etc.
 - b. Even the ***minds of Christians have been swept away*** in the flood of evil and defilement.
 - c. The day is coming when ***only those who pay the price of constant vigilance and daily death to self*** (Luke 9:23) will stand free in our Lord.

A Root Problem -- The Desire To Be Independent!

"I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul." Wm. E. Henley
"I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps." (Jere. 10:23)

What are the roots of our lives? What are some of the **ROOT causes** of why we do what we do... and why we feel as we feel? ***I think we are looking at a basic root problem.***

I. A ROOT PROBLEM . . . Often Men are Raised to Be INDEPENDENT!

A. Considering the Usual Concepts:

1. We learn early that we can author our own destiny; we can be the captain of our soul, the master of our own fate or so it seems.
2. Most men embrace a concept, "that we are to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps." "*Life is what you make of it,*" we're told.
3. Men desire to control their own lives. Our sinful human nature (roots) pull us this way.
4. We want the freedom to chart our own course, we want the power to shape the events of our lives.
 - a. These are hallmarks of our desire to be independent.
 - b. But, in our effort to be self-reliant, we often break ranks with God and go our own independent way.

B. Consider How This Works Out in Live!

1. There is a big difference between taking *responsibility* of our lives and trying to live *independent* from God.
 - a. Responsibility recognizes *our* part and *God's* part.
 - b. Our part is to **trust** God and faithfully **fulfill** our duties. God's part is to direct us in His will and way -- as we we walk in His will and place of blessing. This is conditional, based on our obedience.
2. Independence rebels against the influence of God. Our attitude may be:
 - a. "*I want to do what I want to do, when I want to do it, wherever I want to do it, with whomever I want to do it.*"
 - b. "*I want to be in control, I want to satisfy my own ambitions, I don't want to be dependent upon anyone.*"
 - c. "*If I can be independent then I won't need to rely upon anyone else. I won't have to trust anyone else, I will be able to avoid the pain of being disappointed and disillusioned.*"
 - d. We think we can meet our own needs. Do we trust HIM or do we trust ourselves and the philosophies of the world?

3. We may practice a sort of passive self-reliance. . . not open rebellion. . . but really not seeking the counsel of God and often shunning His directives, commands, and will . . . as we do our own thing.
4. Today we hear much from the *Human Potential Movement!* There is a great emphasis upon *self-esteem, self-reliance, and doing your own thing.*
 - a. Books expound the merits of willing-your-way-to-success! "*What the mind can conceive and believe it can achieve!*" is the basis premise.
 - b. You can have it all. . . the power is in your own hands. . . is their message!

II. CONTRASTING "TRUST IN MAN and TRUST IN GOD"!

A. The Independent Man (Jere. 17:5-6; Psa. 78:22; Isa 42:17; Psa. 118:8-9; Prov. 28:26; Job. 9:26; Isa. 59:4; 30:1-2; 28:18)

1. The man who depends on his own strength or trusts in the value system of this world will be miserable.
2. He has turned his heart away from God. He is like a bush which bears no seed, he tumbles along producing no fruit, heading nowhere.
3. He is never able to satisfy his thirst for significance and purpose.
4. He feels he is the master of his own fate, captain of his destiny and soul, and is in fear in the process.

B. The Dependent, Trusting Man (Jere. 17:7-8; 26:3; Psa. 27:1,14; Psa. 1:1-3; Psa. 112:7; Psa. 65:5; Phil. 3:3-4; II Cor. 1:9; Eph. 3:12; Psa. 23)

1. He will be blessed. The simile of a tree close to water conjures up an image of lush, tropical surroundings, with much fruit -- an oasis. (Jh 4:14; 7:37-39)
2. Even in the midst of tribulation he has peace that comes from trust and reliance on the Lord. (Isa. 26:3; Psa. 61; 62; 37)
3. Circumstances may be the same as the independent person faces, but his response is different.
4. One has a trusting, reliant, peaceful heart -- the other has a turbulent, anxious heart with much inner unrest, despair, and emptiness.

C. Maybe We Exhibit the Illusion of Power.

1. If we were going to be independent. . . we would need power. What is power... *genuine power?* (Consider -- Col. 1:16-17)
2. We can't change the color of our a single hair -- Matt. 5:36
3. We do not have the power to add a single cubit to our stature. (Matt 6:27)
4. James 4:14 reminds us we cannot even say with certainty what will happen a single minute, or tomorrow.

5. Nothing is easier than **self-deceit**. *For what each man wishes, that he also believes to be true!*

John White wrote this about what people think of God:

“During the past half century God has in fact been trivialized, packaged for entertainment, presented as a sort of psychological panacea, a heavenly glue to keep happy families together, a celestial slot machine to respond to our whims, a formula for success, a fund raiser for pseudo-religious enterprises, a slick phrase for bumper stickers, and a sort of holy pie and ice cream.”

6. We must seek God for WHO HE IS, WHAT HE wants to BE to us, and HOW we enter into this truth.
- a. This means a total heart reliance based on surrender to His sovereign right in our life.
 - b. This means a simple heart trust that yields all to HIS will and care.
 - c. This means a simple dependence on the providence of God.
 - d. The temptation is to take charge of our lives and to make our own rules.
 - e. The temptation is to trust the institutions and plans of man.
 - f. The temptation is the determination to walk by sight and not by faith.

E. Today There Are So Many Substitute gods (or idols):

1. money, 2. career, 3. country clubs, 4. influence
5. prestige, 6. possessions, 7. power

and all of these consume huge investments of time in many lives.

- We are told to “*keep yourselves from idols.*” (I Jh 5:21)
- We need to pray a prayer of commitment to follow Christ and seek GOD for WHO HE IS:

A suggested prayer could be: *Lord Jesus, I confess that I have sinned against you by seeking my own independent way, rebelling against you, and trusting in myself. I have not known you as you really are, but instead, have sought the God I wanted. Forgive me, Lord. I open the door of my life to yield my heart totally to you, to walk by faith, to do your will, and to walk in dependency upon you.”*

A Root Problem -- Do YOU Have a Secret Thought Life?

The world says: *The secret thoughts of a man run over all things, holy, profane, clean, obscene, grave and light, without shame and blame.*

Here is a **root problem** that many men face on a ongoing, daily basis: ***It is to have a clean heart and mind.*** David prayed thus: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psa. 51:10). II Corinthians 7:1 says, “Cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Behind this **root problem** of the thought life are many symptoms from failing to keep a clean heart and mind.

I. THE PROBLEM EXPOSED:

A. Looking At The Questions We Must Face:

1. Are you living a secret thought life significantly different from the ***you*** that is known by others?
2. Would you be embarrassed if your friends and associates knew what went on inside your mind?
3. If your thoughts were audible would your wife want a divorce?
4. How would you feel if your past life was revealed on a screen for all to see including every thought you ever had?

B. Looking At Life As It Is:

1. Each of us leads a secret thought life, an invisible life known only to us. It is unknown to others.
2. This secret life is usually very different from the visible you. . . the you that others know. Yet it is the real “you,” the “you” that is ***known to God.***
3. For some of us, our private thought life consists of a dream world of fantasies which concoct intricate plans that would make us wealthy, famous, or very powerful.
4. Others fabricate chance meetings with some beautiful woman who seduces them.
5. Each person can easily invent a secret image of how we wish we were, which would bring embarrassment if others knew.
6. Others may boil in a hate-world filled with bitterness and resentment over a life that hasn’t turned out like we had planned.
7. Or we seeth with jealousy and envy over some lucky break the other person seemingly had dumped in his lap. May we have contempt for someone who has succeeded.

8. Maybe others face a perpetual flow of negative thoughts which flow through their minds.

- Because our secret thought life is so sensitive, far too little attention has been devoted to the subject.
- Why do men lead a secret thought life?
- What is happening up there in the recesses of our minds?

II. WE FACE AN ONGOING BATTLE. . . FOR THE MIND:

A. That Battle Is Very Real:

1. A continual war between good and evil, right and wrong, rages for control of our thought life.
2. This real battle takes place in the inner sanctuary of our minds. Sometimes far removed from what is taking place around us.
3. The Bible speaks clearly about our thoughts: (Write in the phrases that apply from the portions below.)

a. Psa. 15:2 _____

b. Psa 51:6 _____

c. Prov. 23:7 _____

d. Psa. 139:23-24 _____

e. II Cor. 10:3-5 _____

f. Rom. 5:5-8 _____

Those who live according to the sinful nature have ***their minds set on*** what the sin nature desires; ***but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*** The mind of sinful man is death, (brings the things of death or corruption) but the mind controlled by the Spirit is (brings) life and peace.

4. When we begin to grasp the simplicity of this battle for our minds, we can equip ourselves with some firepower to retake control of our secret thought lives.
5. But, too often we are ill-equipped for this struggle. James 1:5-8 teaches us that we can easily be ***double minded in all our ways*** as we flit from a mind controlled by God to a mind controlled by our sin nature.

B. Temptation Is Very Real:

1. When do we cross the fuzzy line from temptation to sin? What separates the two?
2. What is the difference between temptation and the actual sin itself?

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- a. Thoughts that enter our minds are not sin . . . it is the entertaining, and embracing of the thoughts that begin the sin process.
 - b. As we have no control over the words of a vulgar man next to us who is using profanity. . . so we have no control over the kinds of thoughts that may arrive at the door of our minds.
 - c. But we do have control over what we will do with those thoughts, just as we can choose to ignore the vulgar language next to us.
3. Many men *beat themselves up*, because of the thoughts of temptation that knock at the door of their minds. (*But sometimes we are accountable.*)
- a. Recurring thoughts of temptation can be lessened by the filling of our minds and hearts with the Word of God. (Psa. 119:9-11)
 - b. If we put junk into our minds... then we will have mental attraction to the garbage that comes to us from: TV, conversation of others, etc.
 - c. Are we allowing our minds to meditate upon, or have fantasies of that which is sinful, sexual, unclean? If we do the battle for the mind will be all the greater!
4. When does sexual temptation become sinful?
- a. *“Temptation can be sexual attraction to a beautiful woman. Sin is walking around the block for another look, or just taking a second long look with desire! Sin is then conceived by the thoughts in the mind.”*
 - b. When our *normal* observations become *abnormal* preoccupations, then we have crossed the line into sin.
 - c. Lust is not noticing a woman who is sexually attractive but lust is born when we turn simple awareness into a preoccupied fantasy or desire.
 - d. It is easy to invite the thoughts in, then dwell on them, nurture them, feed them, and enjoy them. **That is SIN!**
 - e. Sadly, this becomes personal, concealed sin that we may feel doesn't really matter. . . for we reason. . . *“we are not hurting anyone.”*
 - No **secrets** are kept from God.
 - We may have become **skilled concealers** of secret thoughts.
 - He knows our **every** thought, and intent of the heart. (Read Psalm 139, and Heb. 4:12.)
 - The goal of our secret life must be **holiness**. (II Cor. 7:1)
 - Mark it down -- when we conceal sin. . . **we will not prosper**, but if we **confess** and **renounce** the sin we will have mercy. (Prov. 28:13)

C. Do We Practice Low-awareness Sins?

1. Maybe we carefully control the outward, visible sins? We think, *what will others say?*
2. But are we careless about low awareness or low visibility types of sin? We think, *what they don't know won't hurt them.*

3. Low-awareness sins are usually the sins of our private thought life.
4. The Psalmist was concerned about hidden sins committed presumptuously as if God did not care. (Study Psalm 19:12-14.) ***He wanted to be aware of these hidden sins!***
5. We can, with pride, rejoice in the visible sins we have ditched, while with little thought continue the hidden sins of the heart and mind. This is the result of lust that we continue to entertain. (Prov. 16:1-2)

III. WE CAN TAKE THOUGHTS CAPTIVE FOR GOD!

A. We Can Conquer the Secret Thought Life!

1. It is a personal choice! Victory comes through recognition of the problem, first of all, then acting Biblically so that victory can be ours.
2. The Holy Spirit will search our hearts making us aware of our inner need. (Psa. 139:23-24; Gal. 5:16, 24)
3. We need God's examination of our thoughts for too often we don't see the seriousness of our sins.
3. Christ came to set us free. (Gal. 1:4; Col. 2:14; I Jh 5:1-4; Rom. 8:37)
4. God knows all about us, why try to hide it? (Psa. 139:7)

B. We Must Act; We Must Take Control Of Our Thought Life!

1. As our children test the outer limits of our rules. . . so our sinful minds will test the outer limits. Whatever boundary we have set for them, children will test and retest the limits of our patience. So often our sinful thoughts will bring testing to us as to whether we really truly care or not. Do we want victory?
2. It takes determination, courage and discipline to bring thoughts under God's control. (II Cor. 10:5) *We are to take **captive** every thought. . . unto obedience to Christ.*
3. Our thoughts seek to cross over the boundary of rule and order we have set for them. This is because we have a *wicked heart!* (Jere. 17:9)
 - a. No thought should be allowed to have its own way.
 - b. We should never allow our thoughts to just *run along any direction they want to go.*
 - c. God has stated that every thought will be brought unto judgment. (Eccl. 12:14; Matt 12:33-35; II Cor. 10:3-5)
4. When Christ is in control, Lord of our lives . . . then the Holy Spirit's power is in us. When the old sinful nature is in control. . . then the Holy Spirit is quenched and grieved. (Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19)
 - a. The solution is to bring every thought captive to Christ.
 - b. When we fail, immediately confess it, forsake it, renounce it, yield to Christ.