

**Strongholds are, in effect, relationship killers—both between you and God, and other people with whom you desire relational intimacy.**

When I learned that my mind has only one voice and that the other voice was a deceptive demon attempting to discourage me and get me to misperceive others, I began to fight the battle for my mind. I began taking my thoughts captive and bringing them into obedience to Jesus 12 years ago. I've enjoyed the freedom of hearing one voice in my mind throughout this time. Oh, the demons do drive-bys, but I realize now that I need to rebuke them by the authority of Jesus and ask Him to give me His thoughts. Sometimes I have to wrestle, but what delicious victory when Jesus prevails!

One beautiful thing has happened during these 12 years that can be your experience as well: I'm able to see everything around me differently. It's as if our Father lifts me out of what is going on around me and gives me His view on matters that affect me. The Mike who once listened to and believed the voices would not understand the Mike with one voice in his mind. Where the demons once agitated me, the Holy Spirit now has control.

### **Are There Consequences for *Not* Taking Your Thoughts Captive? You Betcha!**

When you entertain discussions with the demons you are getting yourself in trouble with your Father. Consider Paul's warning concerning the demonic connection to idols: *"Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"* (1 Cor. 10:19-22).

To paraphrase part of the above passage: *"You can't fellowship with the Lord and entertain demons too; you can't have a part in both the Lord's Presence and enjoy demons in your thought life. Don't arouse the Lord's jealousy. You're weaker than you think."*

Remember, as part of the Covenant you embraced, you promised to love the Lord. Your Father is jealous about His love relationship with you: *"...I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate [who refuse to love] me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments"* (Exo. 20:5,6). *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength"* (Deu. 6:5). Entertaining demons in your

mind not only hinders your love relationship with your Father, but those inner conversations are *spiritual prostitution* in our Father's sight. Throughout the Hebrew Bible our Father accuses the Israelites of spiritual prostitution and adultery in order to convey His deep hurt in their rejection of Him by their worship of idols [demons]. At times they were so hardened in their idolatrous focus on demons that the Lord employed explicit words to convey how repugnant their acts were. Read Ezekiel 23 to grasp the graphic language He used to show Israel how their reliance on the Egyptians and Babylonians aroused His jealous anger. Can you imagine the intense love the Israelites rejected? Can you perceive how much pain our Father endured to have to speak such words?

Entertaining demons in your thought life has this same effect today. That is why Paul was insistent that we *take our thoughts captive*. Entertaining demonically-induced thoughts hinders us from growing in Christ-likeness. If you play with sinful thoughts long enough, you'll take action on them. You'll also arouse a Father jealous for your love, and may even *give birth to death*.

### **Well, Shut My Mouth!**

Someone close to us who is preparing for marriage asked Sue and me about taking our thoughts captive. We told him our personal *halakhah*: We don't share the details of our negative thoughts with each other. We only ask the other person to pray. Sue and I refuse to get between each other's relationship with our Lord. Explicit details drag each other down, while expression that she or I am struggling elicits loving prayer.

Two analogies illustrate the destructive nature of manipulating others to sympathize with you in your negative thoughts.

1. A person who has not taken his thoughts captive comes to you after he's listened to demons play mindgames in his head: *"Let me tell you what the demons have been sharing with me for the past 20 minutes as I've entertained their lies. I'm so depressed now. Would you pray for me?"* Instead, close down those thoughts through the power of Jesus!

Our Father loves you so intensely that when you discuss with others about your time entertaining demons, you arouse His jealousy.

2. Picture a husband coming home from work one day and saying to his wife, *"Honey, you should have seen the luscious woman who just got hired to work next to me. We had the most seductive conversation with each other. Maybe you could pray for us."* If you were his wife, how would you feel? Your spiritual adultery against God as you entertain demonic thoughts is just as ugly.

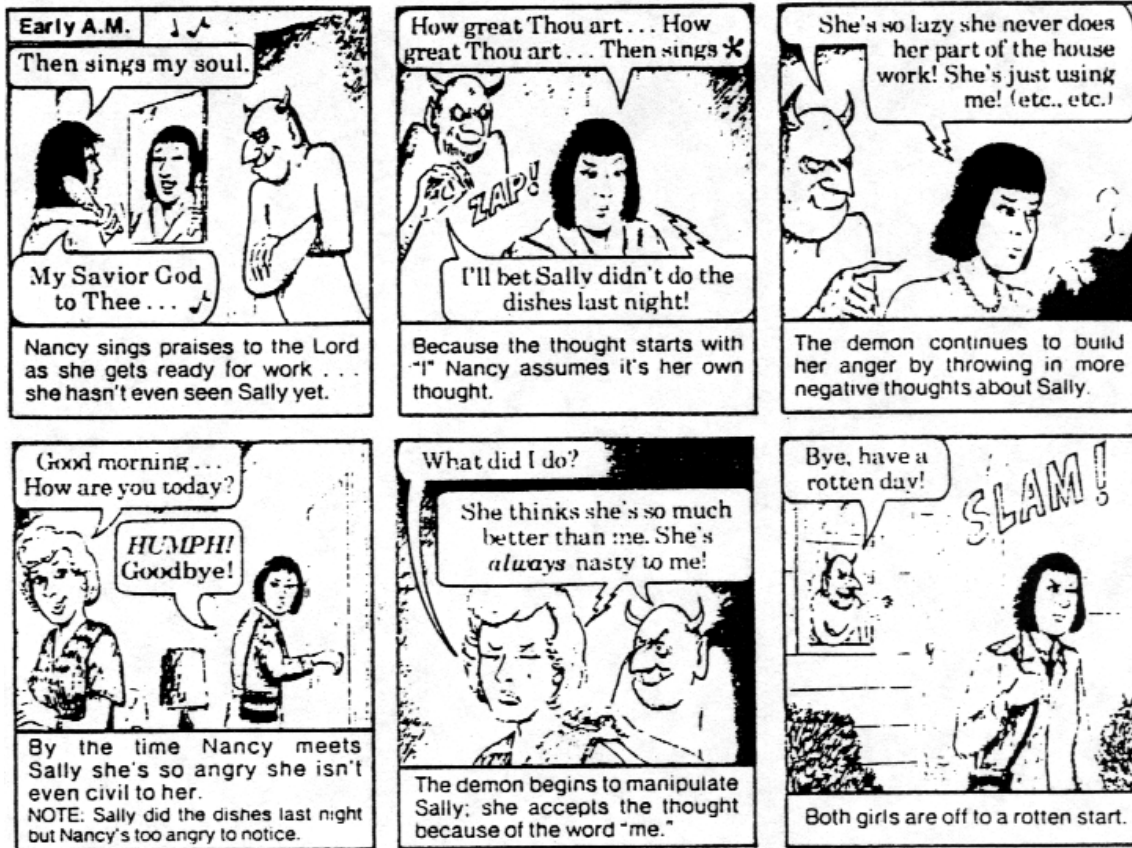
In too many ways Hellenistic psychology has become the panacea for those who refuse to *take their thoughts captive*. Remember, like all Hellenistic pur-

Have you ever wondered how a day that started out joyful could sour so quickly? These illustrations that were passed on to us several years ago can help explain.

When the fortresses of demonic influence — strongholds — have been built in our mind, will, and emotions, our

- HEARING from God is altered;
- BELIEF in God is shaken;
- DESIRES are distorted;
- ACTIONS are disobedient;
- RELATIONSHIPS are debased.

Figure I



Struggling in your own power to resist the Adversary's temptations doesn't work either.

Figure II

