

HIDDEN IN MY HEART

By Jerry L. Henderson

A few days ago I read a news item on some internet news list titled: "The Dangers Of Externalizing Knowledge". It dealt with the information available at the touch of a few buttons on electronic devices we use, and retain very little, because we know we can access it again with the touch of a few buttons. So, we are externalizing instead of internalizing information; we are not storing needed information in our minds. The author of this article asks the question: "If these things you've collected are important to you, or you found them interesting, why aren't they inside you?" Yes, there is much information we do not need to store and some we must not even allow to enter our minds. However, we have become so dependent (this writer included) on our electronic devices that we can't even remember phone numbers or addresses of family and friends. It has gotten almost so bad that we can't find the way to "Grandma's house" without an electronic gadget with a map program in it to show us the way. I am not suggesting that electronic gadgets are inherently bad or using them is in some way wrong, although they can be used in a way that is wrong. However, I am somewhat concerned about their affect on our memories, especially from a spiritual standpoint.

The first phrase of Psalms 119:11 says: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart." How much of God's word have we hidden in our hearts? When thinking about this verse as a basis for this article, I used a Bible program on my computer to look it up, because I did not remember exactly where it was. So, like many others, I have come to depend on a computer Bible program. This just accentuates this phenomenon we are dealing with in our electronic age. I know as we advance in age we lose some of our ability to remember and some of us, this scribe in particular, either never had a good memory or did not exercise it in our younger years. Years ago I urged my sons, as they began thinking about preaching the Gospel, to memorize Bible verses. Even then I was wishing I had memorized more from the Bible. Some verses I memorized in my younger years, I can still quote and tell where they are found. Yet, sometimes when I am ask a Bible question, I am aware of what the Bible teaches, but have a hard time remembering where a verse is found. So, I urge us all to work at memorizing Bible verses so they are ready when we are studying with others. No, I am not saying we have to have a lot of Scriptures memorized to study with others, but it is easier if we can readily give book, chapter and verse for individuals to read. I remember my dad telling about studies he had with a co-worker (at work during break time). This man would ask a question and dad, if he did not remember where a passage was, (he knew many because of his study) that evening after work would look up and write down the location of verses dealing with the question and then give them to the man the next day for him to read. This process went on for quite a while and the man finally obeyed the Gospel and then converted his wife and children. So, it can be done, but it is much easier and faster if we can give book chapter and verse immediately, it just takes WORK.

The second phrase of Psa 119: 11 says: "that I might not sin against thee." David hid God's word in his heart to keep from sinning. Our mind is like the computer

we use so frequently, it stores information. Note some examples of what storing information from the Bible will do for us. Heb 10:25 "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." When tempted to miss services, if I have this verse stored I will not miss unless it is impossible. Col 4:6 "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." When I am tempted to gossip, use foul language, tell lies, etc., I need to have this verse stored; it will help me keep from sinning with my tongue. Psa 101:3 "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. . ." With this verse hid I will do my best to control what I watch. (What do I watch on TV and the internet via my computer?)

You see God's word acts as a barrier to sin. 1Jhn 3:9 says: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Remember, the seed is the word of God Lk 8:11. A farmer puts a fence between his cow and cornfield. The cow cannot eat the corn because of the barrier (the fence). If the fence is somehow removed the cow can eat the corn. So 1Jhn 3:9 shows, as long as God's word is in our hearts we can't sin. We all do sin at times Rom 3:23, and when we do, we in some way remove God's word from our hearts. This is why it is so very important that we continue our efforts to "internalize" rather than just externalize" God's word. I am not discouraging the use of electronic Bible programs. I use them extensively and Dottie and I have given many of a particular Bible program as gifts, especially to young people. 2Pet 1:12-15 keeps coming to mind, where Peter makes reference three times to his efforts to put them in remembrance of the things he had taught. We need to keep reinforcing our memories on a regular basis by continuing to study God's word, making a concerted effort to internalize, that is, to remember what we study, because we do forget things learned in the past. Are we hiding God's word in our hearts, are we internalizing or just externalizing God's word?