

THE THOUGHTS OF A CHRISTIAN

BIBLE TEXT : Philippians 4:8.

LESSON 341 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:4, 5).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Philippians 4:8

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Essentials of Christian Living

1. Paul enumerates to the saints at Philippi those qualities which are needful for victorious Christian living, Philippians 4:8.
2. Seek after embodied truth as it is in Jesus Christ, was Paul's exhortation to all saints, Philippians 4:8;

Matthew 22:16

¹⁶ And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any *man*: for thou regardest not the person of men.

John 7:18

¹⁸ He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

John 14:6

⁶ Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 1:14

¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 1:17

¹⁷ For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:6

⁶ This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

1 John 5:20

²⁰ And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

3. Honesty in all things is a very necessary quality for the Christian, Philippians 4:8;

Acts 6:3

³ Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Romans 12:17

¹⁷ Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Romans 13:13

¹³ Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

2 Corinthians 8:21

²¹ Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

2 Corinthians 13:7

⁷ Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

1 Thessalonians 4:12

¹² That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.

4. Justice and judgment are to be given due consideration and their proper place in men's lives, Philippians 4:8;

Genesis 18:19

¹⁹ For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Deuteronomy 16:19-20

¹⁹ Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

²⁰ That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

2 Samuel 23:3

³ The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be* just, ruling in the fear of God.

Psalms 82:3

³ Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

Proverbs 11:1

¹ A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight.

Matthew 23:23

²³ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

5. Christians are to value those things which are pure, Philippians 4:8;

1 Timothy 4:12

¹² Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

James 1:27

²⁷ Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

James 3:17

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

2 Peter 3:1

¹ This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

1 John 3:3

³ And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

6. Whatsoever is lovely should be thought upon, Philippians 4:8;

2 Samuel 1:23

²³ Saul and Jonathan *were* lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

Song of Songs 5:16

¹⁶ His mouth *is* most sweet: yea, he *is* altogether lovely. This *is* my beloved, and this *is* my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Mark 10:21

²¹ Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

John 11:36

³⁶ Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

7. Christians should desire and seek to be of a good report, Philippians 4:8;

Acts 6:3

³ Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Acts 10:22

²² And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

Acts 22:12

¹² And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,

1 Timothy 3:7

⁷ Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

1 Timothy 5:10

¹⁰ Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

Hebrews 11:2

² For by it the elders obtained a good report.

8. Virtue is of tremendous value wherever it is found,

Philippians 4:8;

Ruth 3:11

¹¹ And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou *art* a virtuous woman.

Proverbs 12:4

⁴ A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones.

Proverbs 31:10

¹⁰ Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies.

2 Peter 1:3

³ According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

2 Peter 1:4

⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

9. The worship of God cannot be complete without praise for God, Philippians 4:8;

Philippians 1:10-11

¹⁰ That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

¹¹ Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

psalm 33:1

¹ Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: *for* praise is comely for the upright.

Psalm 50:23

²³ Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright* will I shew the salvation of God.

Matthew 21:16

¹⁶ And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

Ephesians 1:6

⁶ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Hebrews 13:15

¹⁵ By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name.

NOTES:

Think on These Things

The subject of our text is an admonition for Christians to "think"; and to think on eight distinct subjects; namely: truth, honesty, justice, purity, loveliness, good reports, virtue, and praise. The mind is the gate to the soul, and those three great enemies of mankind — the world, the flesh, and the devil — are well aware that if the mind of man can be caused to harbour thoughts of sin, the soul will succumb to the temptation. A modern example of this is seen in the great emphasis the Communist Party places on the indoctrination of people into the precepts of their godless and atheistic principles.

Another example is modern advertising which uses every means available, continually and persistently to suggest certain products to the minds of men. The liquor and cigarette industries spend tremendous sums of money every year on advertising to educate the people to the use of their products. The cigarette industry greatly increased the sale of cigarettes in one year by spending fabulous sums to convince women that it is socially proper to smoke.

Our modern magazine stands are crammed with immoral literature. Children are tempted from every angle by the salesmanship of unprincipled companies seeking to increase the sale of their products, regardless of the moral harm it causes. Oh, that Christian parents would supervise their children's reading, and feed and fortify their minds daily by reading to them from the Bible!

The Christian does not need to fear that his Bible has become antiquated and can no longer cope with the modern things. The Author of the Bible is God, and he is omnipotent. A thousand years are as a day with Him. The Word of God is ageless, and is as pertinent and conducive to Christian living in our modern day as it has ever been. Paul's advice and counsel to the saints at Philippi to "think on these things" is as valuable as it has ever been.

The days of Paul were notorious for extravagance and sin. No doubt there was as much to tempt the Christian of Paul's day as there has ever been in any age. While in the early Christian era, there were not the elaborate mechanisms for entertainment that there are in this modern day — such as television, radio, movies — still the opportunity to indulge in sin was ever present. Any student of ancient history knows the extent of national vice and wickedness that went on as a matter of course in the days of the Apostles. And what were the Christians of that day advised to do to counteract such things? Think on the things of God — and those things, which are holy and good!

It is unreasonable to think that a Christian can indulge in all manner of thoughts which are contrary to the Spirit of God and the things of God and still retain any degree of proper worship for God in his heart. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Someone has said that a "man will not be any better than the books he reads." There is only one all-important Book for the Christian, and that is the Bible. If a man will faithfully read and ponder the Word of God daily, his soul and mind will be elevated and fed. The Bible is the greatest piece of literature ever placed into the hands of men. It is eternal, and it is the source of every moral principle in life. It is the revelation of God and His righteousness, and it is the sole authority for the proper way for men to live. In this day of ten thousand voices clamouring enticements to sin, the Bible still stands mountain-high, proclaiming with voice of thunder that the way of God is

right. A Christian must, as our text commands, devote determined and mature thinking to the things of God.

Good and Evil

The knowledge of evil that a sinner has acquired by his sinning is a library of thought that can become his worst enemy when he has become converted. Salvation is the gift of God, and by the grace of God men are lifted out of their sins and cleansed by the Blood of Christ. However, for anyone to retain salvation after he has once received it of God, he must put forth effort. It is not enough for a Christian to float supinely along the currents of life without effort to cultivate the Spirit of God in his heart. One old divine of years gone by said concerning the necessity of working out our own salvation with diligence: "No fine emotions, no select moments of rapture and communion will ever avail to take the place of dogged perseverance and prosaic hard work which wins in all other fields, and win, as is the only thing that does win, in this one too."

Eve's acceptance of the devil's suggestion to do evil was the downfall of man. Listening to the suggestions of Satan is but one step removed from the transgression. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" is not an idle warning. The prophet said, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

It should be remembered that the harbouring of evil thoughts will make us guilty before God of committing the deed. It was the condemnation of the antediluvians that "GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). **(Deuteronomy 29:19-20 19 And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: 20 The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven. Matthew 15:19 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:)** God said of Israel that He would bring evil upon them, even the fruit of their thoughts, because of their rejection of His law **(Jeremiah 6:19 19 Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.)**. Again the Lord charged Israel with walking after the imaginations of their own heart **(Jeremiah 9:14 14 But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:)**. Ezekiel was taken by God in the spirit and shown the wickedness of Israel as they harboured sin in the chambers of their imagery **(Ezekiel 8:12 12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.)**. It is indeed true that the mind is the gate to the soul.

Thinking on God

The thoughts of the wicked are known to God, and so also are the thoughts of the righteous. Great blessing is promised those who think on His name. We read: "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16).

In the cynical days in which we live, there is a great lack of

acknowledgment in men's lives of the value of such things as truth in the inward parts, honesty, justice, purity, and virtue. Be that as it may, there is no rebuke to sin so weighty and sharp as a pure, holy, Christian life. In "The Works of John Wesley" we find this thought set forth: When swarms of vice steal in, and it seems that the spirit and life of religion is about to be lost, then the best way to resist such temptations is for the clergy (and for that matter, every Christian) to make themselves notorious and visible examples of all the contrary virtues — to make their own self-denying and heavenly life a plain, open, and constant reproof of all vain indulgences.

Our thoughts are the expressions of our heart's desires and possessions. We will voice those thoughts sooner or later, and our lives will live out what we think; for what we think, we are (**Proverbs 23:7 7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.**). By thinking of these things, which will make us of good report, we shall acquire them as our own. Much thought on them will result in their becoming part of our soul. Truth and equity will become ingrained within our very being. We shall cultivate a taste for the qualities, which are edifying and inspiring to our soul's salvation. Our conversation will be in heaven, and our fellowship with those who are in agreement with such subjects. We shall have fellowship with the Lord, for "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

QUESTIONS

1. What are the eight things the Christian is commanded to think on?
2. Why is it important to think on such subjects?
3. Why does modern advertising place such emphasis upon reaching the minds of men?
4. What is the gate to the soul?
5. Can we be one thing in our heart, and another in our mind?
6. How does the devil try to reach the souls of men with temptation?
7. Are we guilty of sin when we harbour evil thoughts?
8. What kind of reading should a Christian concentrate on?
9. Does the Bible still offer good advice for Christian living in this modern day? Explain your answer.
10. What do you understand virtue to be? Define purity, justice.