

THE THOUGHTS OF A CHRISTIAN

BIBLE TEXT : Philippians 4:8.

LESSON 341 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established" (Proverbs 16:3).

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:

NOTES:

A Letter

Paul had visited the city of Philippi in Macedonia on his second and third missionary trips. In his prayers, he thanked God for the pleasant memories he had of the disciples there, and for their fellowship (**Philippians 1:3-5** ³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴ Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, ⁵ For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;). The disciples at Philippi remembered Paul, too. They sent offerings to help him in his missionary work. On one occasion they sent their donations by a man named Epaphroditus. When Paul wrote a letter of thanks to the Philippians, he said: "I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18).

The Book of the Bible known as Philippians is Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. God inspired Paul to write it, and the followers of Jesus have received instruction and encouragement from it ever since.

Thoughts

Paul's letter tells how a Christian lives and of some of his duties. Paul gives a list of the good and helpful things that those who are saved should think about. A Christian's thoughts are different from those he had before he was saved. In calling people to repentance, the Prophet Isaiah said: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). God said, concerning His people: "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10).

Good thoughts alone do not make a Christian, but bad thoughts can lead to sin. After a person has received mercy and a pardon for his sins, he wants to keep that peace in his heart. The Prophet Isaiah said: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

David, too, knew how important it is for a Christian to watch his thoughts. He prayed that his meditations or thoughts, as well as his words, would be pleasing to God (**Psalm 19:14** ¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.) David asked God to examine his thoughts to see if there was any wicked way in him (**Psalm 139:23-24** ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.).

God knows our thoughts, and keeps a record of those who think about Him. Malachi the Prophet said: "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).

True Things

Seeing that our thoughts are so important, what should we think about? Paul said, "Whatsoever things are true, . . . think on these things." Many things in the world today are false. How can one know what is true? At one time when Jesus was praying and talking to God, He said, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). God's Word is the Bible, and the Bible is true. It teaches that the promises of God are true. We read that "the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9). In God's promises, both of blessings and of judgments, there is a wealth of good thoughts. Meditating on these things that are true should cause one to purpose in his heart to live for the Lord. Then he will be able to claim those wonderful promises of blessing.

Untruth

Satan is the father of lies, and there is no truth in him (John 8:44). He is the enemy of our soul, and would try to cause us to believe and to think about untruths. When you are sick, he may try to make you think that God will not heal you; but the Lord says, "I am the LORD that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26).

Here is an example of one person who thought about untrue things. Satan, in the form of a serpent, told some lies to Eve in the Garden of Eden. He said to her, "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). God had said: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Because Eve thought about the untruth that Satan had told her, she was tempted and she sinned. She was separated from God, and died spiritually. Not only that, but sin has caused all people to die spiritually. The only way anyone can be made alive is to be saved through the Blood of Jesus.

Let us think about the things that are true. Jesus is referred to as the "true vine" (John 15:1), the "true bread" (John 6:32), and the "true Light" (John 1:9).

Honesty

Honesty is another thing that should be in our thoughts. To be honest means to deal fairly, and to be trustworthy. One who is honest can be trusted to do the right thing. One who is dishonest cannot be trusted by others. Moreover, those who cheat and who do not play fair are not liked by others. It is important that we be honest and that we think about honest deeds. There may be a time, in school, when someone copies. Satan will try to get the other children to think about that dishonest act. He will tell them that it is easy and will suggest that they try it, too. After they think about it and plan it, then the next thing is to do it. No wonder Paul advised people to think about honest things.

Deceit

In the Bible there is an example of those who thought about dishonesty. Some of the disciples were selling their property and giving the money to the Apostles. Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, thought of a way that would give the appearance that they had done that, too. They sold their property. They talked it over and agreed what to do. Ananias took only a part of the money to the Apostles. He pretended that it was the whole amount. He was deceitful and dishonest. Both Ananias and Sapphira were punished by death. A lie is wrong, whether it is acted or spoken. We should be honest and think of honest things.

Just and Pure

To be just, according to God's law, is to be righteous and faithful, measuring up to the standard of living set forth in the Bible. To be pure is to be guiltless, innocent, and clean. Think on

those things. One's thoughts are influenced by the books and magazines he reads, by the pictures and scenes he sees, and by the songs and stories he hears. The influence is not only on our thoughts but on our emotions and actions as well. Children and young people, especially, have been known to commit the same evil deeds and crimes that they have seen in movies, on television, and have heard over the radio. They thought about them, meditated on them, and then tried them. In some cases, this has led to their own death, or death to others and punishment to them.

Do not think that a person can view sin without its making an impression on him. It gives Satan more opportunity to bring those unclean and unjust thoughts to one's mind and to tempt one to sin. Why abuse oneself with sinful things when there are so many clean and lovely things for us to enjoy? Why not read clean literature? Why not listen to good music? Why not view the things of nature? They do not tempt one to sin. The things of nature – a garden of flowers, a crimson sunset, a mountain brook – all in their own way praise God and remind us that we should do the same.

Lovely Things

Think on lovely things! What is lovely? The things that inspire us to love and to admire. A song about God's mercy, a poem about His care, a picture about Jesus' life — do they not inspire us to love Him more? Consider that Christ loved us enough to give His life that we might be saved. Does this not cause you to love Him? We love Him because He first loved us.

Do you think of the good qualities of your schoolmates, your friends, and the people of God? Satan is an accuser of the brethren. He wants us to think about someone's mistake or unwise words or action, or of something that had the appearance of evil. If we harbour such thoughts, they bring ill feeling toward another. "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." There are very few people in the world in whom there is not something good and praiseworthy. One should think of the good and the praiseworthy qualities of his fellow Christians, and pray earnestly that God will help each one to be a true Christian, established "in every good word and work." Let us think about the things, which would inspire us to have a love for God and for His people.

Of Good Report

Christians think about the things that are of good report, instead of meditating on the reports that would cause them to be discouraged and doubtful. A Christian should not listen to gossip, let alone think about it. The Bible gives an example of some people who considered an evil report. Twelve spies were sent to view the Land of Canaan. On their return, ten spies gave a discouraging report, mentioning the walled cities and the giants. One of the spies who gave a good report, said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). The people did not think of God's promises. They thought of the evil report, believed it, and wandered in the wilderness for forty years.

"If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Perhaps these words could sum up all the other admonitions about our thoughts. We can judge a good or bad thought by this: Is there any virtue in it, any admirable quality, any particular moral good? and is there any praise in it, any approval, any honour?

Dropping into the Heart

A person may not be able to keep thoughts from coming to his

mind but he can keep them from staying there. Cast out of mind the evil thoughts that Satan tries to put there, lest they drop into your heart and become sin. This illustration has been given: One cannot keep the birds from flying over his head but he can keep them from building a nest in his hair. In like manner, one may not be able to keep evil thoughts from coming to his mind but he can keep them from remaining there if he deliberately thinks on God and His Word. By quoting the Scripture, Jesus caused the devil to leave Him. We may recall memory verses we have learned, or some verses of Scripture read in our daily devotion; as we fill our minds with them, the devil will leave us, too.

Paul said: "Rejoice in the Lord always: . . . Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7).

QUESTIONS

1. Who wrote this letter to the Philippians?
2. When had he visited Philippi?
3. What is remembered about Lydia, and about the Philippian jailer?
4. In what way did the Philippians remember Paul?
5. How did Paul remember them?
6. What difference does it make what a person thinks?
7. How can thoughts influence one's actions?
8. How can we know whether thoughts are good or bad?
9. Name some things of nature that praise God and should cause us to do so, too.
10. Name some other things that influence our thoughts.