

Thoughts and Imaginations

The Ark

January 17, 2023

Stewardship: *1 Corinthians 8:5 Amplified Not only [did they give materially] as we had hoped, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us [as His representatives] by the will of God [disregarding their personal interests and giving as much as they possibly could].*

One of the major ministries of Paul's third missionary journey was to take up a special relief offering for the church in Judea. In this verse, Paul is talking about the church in Macedonia who gave to this offering in spite of their own poverty and trials.

We see two important ingredients in their giving:

- They had a right **attitude** (they gave themselves firsts. Your giving should be an outward expression of your devotion to God.
- They had a right **motive**. Even in their need they wanted to help others.

Natural wealth is fragile and easily lost, however, what is sown into the kingdom of God is everlasting and can never be lost. Don't just give your money, give your love, your devotion, and your worship first.

Lesson: Thoughts – Imaginations

Proverbs 23:7 (a) KJV *For as he thinks in his heart so is he.*

Thoughts are very powerful.

We are defined by our thoughts.

Our thoughts cause emotions (joy, love, fear, anger, depression)

Our thoughts are like seeds planted in the fertile soil of our brain.

In his book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People"

Stephen Covey said: Sow a thought reap an action

Sow an action reap a habit

Sow a habit, reap a character

Sow a character reap a destiny

Can you see how our thoughts are progressive?

Your thoughts can lead you to success or your thoughts can lead you to failure.

THOUGHT TEST: Philippians 4:8 NKJV Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things.” HOW DO YOUR THOUGHTS MEASURE UP?

Ephesians 4:32 NKJV and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. WE ALL NEED TO BE RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR MIND.

Tonight I want to analyze a passage that will help you understand the power of your thought-life:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Let's look at verses 3-4 NKJV ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

- These verses are about warfare – spiritual warfare. You may not be aware of it, but you are involved in spiritual warfare every day of your life. The great battles of your life are first won or lost in your thought-life. You have three enemies: the world, the flesh, the devil. We must learn to recognize each of these and to combat them properly.
- **“We walk in the flesh”** simply means we live in the natural world. Joy mentioned “Group-thoughts” in her message Sunday... that is a great concept. We form opinions, take up offenses, embrace anger through “Group-thoughts.”
- We are all engaged in a warfare and it is not a natural warfare, but a spiritual warfare.
- Spiritual warfare must be fought with spiritual weapons. (Ephesians 6 speaks of this warfare and our opponents: Ephesians 6:10 NKJV *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the [b]wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of [c]the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.¹³ Therefore take up*

the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

- *Our strength comes from the Lord and we fight in the power of His might....His way of winning doesn't make sense to our human thinking... but it is mighty and it will bring down strongholds.*

Ephesians 6 lists the armor of God, which we will not discuss tonight and then give us THREE WEAPONS and tells us how to use them... (vs. ¹⁶above all, taking the **shield of faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷And take the **helmet of salvation** (a redeemed mind), and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;** ¹⁸**praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,)**

We actually have three opponents:

- The world system (Romans 12:2 Be not conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind)
- the flesh (Galatians
- the Devil.

2 Corinthians 10: 3-4 NKJV ³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: ⁴(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

A stronghold of the mind is **a lie that Satan has established in our thinking that we count as true but is actually a false belief.** When we embrace these lies, they affect our attitudes, emotions, and behaviors and our future!

Is there a stronghold in your mind? Something you simply have not been able to overcome?

Depression – Drugs – Failure – Fear – what's your stronghold? Name that stronghold.

How to do we destroy strongholds?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV ³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: ⁴(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

⁵Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

There is a road from thoughts to imaginations to destruction and the first step to successful spiritual warfare is to recognize the negative or false thought.

- (1) RECOGNIZE THE NEGATIVE THOUGHT!

Imagination = to think that something exists or is true, and to believe something although in fact it is not real or true.

Romans 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

The worst kind of imaginations for “vain imaginations”.

Vain – empty, fruitless, and harmful to our spirit (this includes engaging in fantasy monologues).

Guard against vain imaginations because the end result is darkness in your thinking.

(2) CAST IT DOWN.

⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ

- Catch the thought and pull it down.
- The Word of God is the knowledge of God
- Replace the thought with an obedient thought

(3) REPLACE THE THOUGHT

In her book “Who Switched Off My Brain”, Dr. Caroline Leaf talks about our ability to dismiss any thought from our mind within a certain period of time. (You can cast it down). However, the most important thoughts are those you have just before retiring at night. They are based on the last thing you talk about; watch, or read just before retiring. Those thoughts will wash through your brain all night long and are more difficult to dismiss than those you catch immediately.

DAILY DEVOTIONS AND NIGHTLY PRAYERS HELP YOU KEEP YOUR THOUGHTS FOCUSED. Psalm 55:17 encourages us to pray morning, noon and night...

I pray Psalm 23 every night as a brain cleanse before I retire.

When I’m having negative thoughts I begin to speak the Word of God out-loud.

Pastor Alan’s Scripture prescription: (put these scriptures on screen please)

- I’m strong in the Lord and the Power of His Might (Eph 6:10).
- I walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7)

- I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength (Phil.4:13)
- Thanks be to God for the victory (1 Cor. 15:47)

When I don't feel well, I say out-loud: I thank you Lord for I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

A single verse that covers everything: *Proverbs 3:5 I trust in you Lord with all my heart, I will not lean on my own understanding. I all my ways I will acknowledge You and You will direct my path.*

THE KEY IS TO KEEP YOUR MIND FOCUSED ON GOD....

Isaiah 26:3 I will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Me because he trusts in Me.

LET ME END WITH WHAT GOD IS THINKING ABOUT YOU:

Jeremiah 29:11 NIV For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

God's plans for you will manifest as you "HOLD YOUR MIND IN PLACE."