

Dec. 15, 74 A.M.

LP

"Think on These Things"  
AS A MAN THINKETH

Proverbs 23:7  
Phil. 4: 8

INTRODUCTION:

I picked up this little story while visiting in the hospital. My friend, Roland Wagner was enjoying a peaceful afternoon nap, when he was interrupted by a service man who was attempting to change a filter on the air conditioner. As the maintenance man explained the reason for all of the noise, Rev. Wagner gave him this response, "I would like to change the filter in your brain!"

Now this little humorous story, to be appreciated, one must know the man who spoke the words. And yet it is a marvelous thought, when you think about a filter which acts as a screen and removes the trash out of an air conditioner, and it allows the fresh air to pass through. And in like manner, if we had a filter in our brains, in our minds, we could block out a lot of things that come our way. How wonderful it would be.

Coach Howard Jones, a successful leader of the Trojan football team in Southern California, never allowed profanity on the football field. He sent many a man to the locker for swearing during practice. He had three reasons. One, I don't swear myself and therefore I don't like to be around men that swear. Second, most of these players are going to become high school coaches and it will be a poor influence on youth if they are profane. And third, their playing deteriorates when they start swearing.

Abraham Lincoln is reported to have said, my memory is like a piece of metal. Learning is not easy for me. It is rather slow work like engraving with a tool. But when a thing is once printed on my memory, it seems to stay there. It doesn't

wall of my mind. Where I can live with it. In this way, every man can have his own little art gallery and be in the company of great men. For one thing, Lincoln knew the importance of the mind and the things that pass through. He was careful to select the right pictures of his mental art gallery. And of course, he knew that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Yes, a man is what he thinks. He may not be what he thinks he is, but he is what he thinks.

A proverb, "Plant a thought and reap a deed. Plant a deed, you reap a habit. Plant a habit, you reap a character. Plant character, and you reap a life. Plant a life, and you reap eternal destiny."

The deed starts with the thought - look around you. Every institution, every government, every public building, every machine, every invention, every book, every picture, is but a realized thought. It has been said, there is nothing true or false, good or evil in this or any other world that was not first of all a thought.

The human mind will always set itself on something.

Michael Angelo walking through a stone cutter's yard one day saw a rough block of marble over in the corner. The sculptor asked the cutter what he planned to do with it. When the cutter assured him that it was useless and worthless, he could only throw it away. Michael Angelo said, then give it to me. And I will release the angel imprisoned within it. And the story goes that he chiseled his immortal David out of it.

Before the artist touches the canvass with his brush, the picture is painted on the delicate walls of his imagination.



Then before the poet pens his inspiring lines, the thought is conceived in the sanctuary of his soul. Before the music is set in sharps and flats, the musician hears the song in the deepest depths of his spirit. Before the sculptor lifts his chisel and mallet on the shapeless marble, the statue rises sweet and lovely in his mind. Before the earth was formed and the beauty, it was planned in the council of eternity.

Emmerson said, a man is what he thinks about all day long.

The Roman philosopher Marcus Aurelius said in eight words - "our life is what our thoughts make it."

Men become like the thoughts they harbor - the memories they cherish. Thoughts and deeds lead to habits. Habits make character. And character determines eternal destiny. Not only is it true that we are what we think, but it is also true, that we will be what we are. Do you recall Scripture passages - Acts 1:25, when it says Judas went to his own place. A man always goes to his own place. A place for which he has fitted himself by his thoughts, his choices, his actions, his habits, his character, and above all - his thoughts.

The ability to think is one of God's most precious gifts. It is something that separates man from all of the forms of life in this universe. For centuries man has tried to analyze his thought processes. Scientists have probed the brain but they have been forced to admit that the brain is more than just a cerebellum, and a cerebral cortex. We use many terms to describe the action of the brain. Memory, imagination, thought, appreciation, logic, conscious, unconscious.

They say that the unconscious mind is like a vast reservoir. That actually we

never forget anything. And much of the emotional mental illness is a result of some problem in the unconscious. Hence, it is imperative that we fill the unconscious with that which is wholesome.

Now Paul wishes to be quite sure that the Phillipians set their mind on the right thing. This is something of the utmost importance because it is the law of life, that if a man thinks of something often enough and long enough, he will come to the stage and he cannot stop thinking about it.

His thoughts will be quite literally in the groove as we say, and you can't jerk them out. It is therefore of importance that a man sets his thoughts upon the fine things. So here Paul makes a list in Phil. 4:8. Of the things that ought to be first in your mind.

What I think Paul is saying, if I can fit my illustration in, Paul says filter out all of these other things, that come into your mind and your brain except the following five or six things. Now these are the things writes Paul that ought to be in your mind.

#### I. WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE

There are many things in this world that are deceptive - they promise that which they cannot perform. They offer a man a kind of peace and happiness, which in fact, they can never supply. A man should always set his thoughts on the things on which he can rely. The things which will not fail him or let him down.

When we think of that which is true, we contrast it with the opposite - falsehood. But in God's sight, the emphasis is always positive. The word true means enduring



and eternal. Sometimes we use the word true in our courts of law. And enjoy a witness to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

And we usually mean that which is ugly or repulsive.

The truth is beautiful - Our Lord said I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. John 14:6. Let this mind be exercised - breathed, braced.

Now this truth is grounded in God. Our business is not to conduct a Gallop poll to learn what popular opinion or how it may be shifting. Our business is to make a standard out of the reality out of what we see in God. As it stands in Jesus Christ.

Take thou our minds, dear Lord, we humbly pray  
Give us the mind of Christ, each passing day  
Teach us to know the truth that sets us free  
Grant us in all our thoughts to honor thee.

## II. WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST

Now this is another picture that we need on the wall - the mind. The Greek word here means literally worthy of reverence. That which is honest is honorable. And as Matthew Arnold puts it - nobly serious. That is grave, serious, solemn thoughts, are to fill your mind. Think on things worthy of honor and reverence. This too belongs to the Christian excellence. The word honest is not to be rejected out of our minds.

translate. Sometimes it is honest, honorable, reverend, or worthy. It is the word which is characteristically used of the Gods. The word which is used in the temples of the Gods. When it is used to describe a man, it describes a person who, it has been said, moves throughout the world as if the whole world were the temple of God. And that is why Matthew Arnold suggests the translation - nobly serious. But the word really describes that which has the dignity of holiness upon it. There are things in this world which are cheap and flipant. Things which are attracted to the like minded. But it is on the things that are grave and serious, and dignified that the Christian will set his mind.

### III. WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST

When we think of the things that are just - we are thinking on the things that are lawful, fair, and right.

Justice is symbolized as a goddess blind-folded. One hand holding a pair of scales and another hand bearing a sword. The blindness suggests impartially. And the scales represent a demand for an exact balance. The sword says that maintaining justice often means a struggle. Justice is an inheritant quality of human personality.

There is something within us that calls for equity and fairness in our dealings with others. George Elliott once said, justice is like a kingdom of God. It is not without us, as a fact, it is within us.

And the word in the Greek defines a man as a righteous man. A man who gives to God and men there due. In other words, we may put it this way, being just is the word of duty faced and duty done. There are those who set their minds and thoughts on pleasure, easy things and easy ways. The Christian's thoughts are on duty demand and duty to God.

## Confessing Yours, Or The Sins Of Others

In my church paper the "Gladhander" of the All Church Press we had this story.

The mother had returned from town. She found someone had done something that deserved punishment. She called the little five year old apart. Then she called the older boy about nine and gave him a good whipping.

When he was through crying the older boy called the little brother aside and said, "How come mother just whipped me? You were in that as much as I. You got me into it!"

"I 'fessed," he answered.

"Yes, I know. That's the reason I got my whipping. But why didn't she whip you? You were in it just as much as I."

"I jest 'fessed on you!" was the reply.

Confess your own sins! Not the members, not your brothers!



So here is righteousness that is applied to both God and to man. It is the right way of looking at things. Romans 2:13. According to God's standard. So it is in every appropriate expression in the Christian conduct, we have justice.

Now this is why a police force is sent to a practice range for marksmanship. That is, it is to describe a preparation for protection of life and property of the innocent and defenseless citizens. So what constitutes justice and righteousness, in this complicated world - we come to the place of good and what is right.

#### IV. WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE

Purity is defined as friendliness, spotlessness, freedom from defilement, and it is not sinless. It is against sin. It is a much higher quality than innocence. A man is innocent when he knows no evil. Pure when he knows evil and keeps himself untouched by its defilement. The world that describes this is that we are morally pure. Undefiled. When it is used as a ceremony, it describes a cleansing that has been brought about in service to God. Now this world is full of sin that is soiled, shabby, and smutty. Many a man gets his mind into such a state that he soils everything of which it thinks.

Now the Christian mind is set on the things which are pure. His thoughts are so clean that they can stand even the scrutiny of God.

The mind becomes a battlefield with the temptations and to think on that which is pure is note worthy and is something that takes character to perform.

#### V. WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY



and you want your life to be lovely, then learn how to think on whatsoever things are lovely.

Moffitt says whatsoever things are attractive, and this is a good translation of this. It might be that which calls for love. There are those whose minds are so set on vengeance and punishment - that they call forth bitterness. And fear in others.

There are those whose minds are set on criticism and rebuke. That they call forth resentment in others.

The mind of a Christian is set on lovely things. Kindness, sympathy, forbearance, love, so that the Christian is a winsome person. Whom to see, is to love.

Helen Keller once said, I have often thought it would be a blessing if each human being were stricken blind and deaf for a few days - sometime early in adult life. Darkness would make him more appreciative of sight. And silence, would teach him the joys of sound.

Do you look for that which is lovely all about you. There are so many beautiful things in the world. And a man's heart and life becomes more beautiful as he thinks upon them.

Now let's imagine that you are standing alone on the beach. The rest of the world has gone to sleep - but here you are. You are restless, you got up and dressed, walked out on the beach and suddenly you find your eyes rising to the Heavens. For a brief moment, you throw your soul out into that universe. You expand yourself into identification with the great God and his creation. You stand there - the pounding of the surf and your memory exercised and you remember that the things you can hear. The ocean, the wind, and the sound of the beach grass

wrestling, and then you begin to think of the things you can feel. The spray in your face. The bite of the cool night air. And then you think of what you can taste. There is the salt in the air. Actually you can taste the salt of the ocean.

And then you re-create this peaceful experience. And in a few moments you are feeling that here is something lovely, something vast, something wonderful. The tensions of your mind have been released and you have found something of the solutions to your problems.

Like the Psalmist, I can say with the poet,

I cannot know why suddenly the storm,  
Should rage so fiercely, around me in its wrath,  
But this I know, God watches all my path,  
And I can trust.

I may not draw aside the mystic veil,  
That hides the unknown future, from my sight,  
Nor know if for me waits the dark or light.  
But I can trust.

I have no power, to look across the tide,  
To see while here, the land beyond the river,  
But this I know, I shall be with God forever,  
So I can trust.

No wonder Paul encourages us to think on the things that are lovely.



VI. WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT

Think on the good news, Paul says. He has discovered the invigorating force that comes into the life of men and women who magnify the positive. Could it be that we are too problem conscious in our modern day lives, and in our churches. The first Christians had very little to say about their problems. They had much to say about the power of God in Jesus Christ. We need to think of the miracles of God, that they are continuing in our midst.

In the margin of the Bible it says, good report, suggests gracious. That is whatever has a good name. Now it is not easy to get the meaning of this word, but it literally means fair speaking. But in one special connection, it is connected with the holy silence at the beginning of the sacrifice in the presence of the Gods. I think it might not be too far if we should describe the things which are fit for God to hear. Now there are ugly words, false words, and impure words. And far too many of them in this world. Now on the lips of the Christian, and in the mind of the Christian - there will only be words that are fit for God to hear.

Now this good report is like a tuning fork. It gets things in tune - it is like a piano. You must keep it in tune. And so the mind must be sensitive to the spiritual things and be kept clean.

Paul also wrote the church, let this mind be new. Which was also in Christ Jesus. Chapter 2 - Verse 5. Think of that demand and we are almost overwhelmed. When we think of our frailty - we feel somehow like the young artist. Who stood before one of Raphael's masterpieces, and he was trying to copy it. When the work was nearly done - he stood back, compared his work with the origin and then cried out. How can I do what Raphael has done, without the mind of Raphael.

It is no easy thing to discipline our thinking. All of us suffer because the Gods of this world have blinded men's eyes. And that is why Paul wrote, be ye not conformed to this world but ye transformed by the renewing of your minds. Rom. 12:2.

Paul goes on to say, if there be any virtue, if they be any excellence. The odd fact is that this is one of the great classical words and yet Paul usually seems deliberately to avoid it and this is the only time it occurs in his writing. In classical thought, it described every kind of excellence. It could describe the excellence of the ground in a field. The excellence of a tool for his purpose. The physical excellence of an animal. The excellence of the courage of a soldier. And the virtue of a man.

Someone has suggested with this word Paul called in all that was excellent in the pagan background of his friends. He said, if the old pagan idea of excellence in which you were brought up, has any influence over you - think of that. As if to say, think of your past life at it's very highest to spur you on to the new heights of the Christian way.

The world has it's impurities, but the world has also it's nobilities. And it is the high things on which the Christian must think.

Now we know that 10% somebody has said think, 20% think they think, and the rest would rather die than think. But actually Paul's word here is a strong one. It means to think in a sense of calculate. As a builder does. When he takes careful measurements before attempting to build. It takes into account the things with the view of committing yourself to them.

Finally, he says, if there be any praise. In a sense, it is true that the



necessary.

Now this will help you to conquer your giants.

Jess L. Laskey, a founder of a motion picture center, had a special room set up which he called a silent room. A table, one stiff-backed chair, and on the table was a Bible. Whenever he found himself in pressure, he went to this room. He would sit and gaze at that majestic mountain <sup>mountain</sup> and read Psalm 121:1 - I will lift up mine eye unto the hills. And then he would open his Bible at random and read. And he said it never failed him to refresh and renew his spirit. And I think we could conquer some of these giants today if we would arrange a little room where we might call upon him and look upon him as Caleb - who had that power and that experience.

v. 6 - Stop being worried about anything -  
v. 7. God will guard over your Hearts & Thoughts -

Prodigal Son - Began To Think:

1. My father has plenty to eat.
2. I am dying of Hunger -
3. I have sinned against God & my father -
4. I Am going home & confess !