

# Bible Lessons



*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,  
whosoever 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*

**Volume 56, No. 4**  
**October • November • December**

*Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People*

# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 56      October • November • December      No. 4

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*Publishing Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.  
In this issue, Reflections are contributed by: D. Clay, M. Busbee, J. Booher,  
S. Herron, D. Doolittle, E. Gracey, P. Phillips, T. Browne,  
E. Doolittle, R. Cole, D. Adams*

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Bro. Kevin Sorrell, 5722 S Sooner Rd, Guthrie, OK 73044  
Phone (405)-414-8646

**Bro. Clifford Cole, Editor**  
Phone: (417) 621-1965

## THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS FOR THE 4th QUARTER, 2024

### *Think On These Things*

One of the most effective tools the devil tries to use against us is our own mind. Through that avenue, he introduces all manner of ill, with the sole intent to “steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10). Thankfully, the Lord has an antidote. By His help and grace, we can think on “right things” and “cast down” the bad thoughts that would otherwise trouble us.

Years ago, not only in his preaching and teaching but also in his book *The Moral Law*, Bro. Clifford Wilson reminded us of a law of physics that applies spiritually: “Two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time” (refer to James 3:11). The same is true with our thoughts. If we fill our minds with the right things, there will be no room for rumination or negative thought patterns. It is our job, and no one else’s – not even God’s – to keep our mind filled with that which edifies. If, by God’s grace and power we safeguard our mind, the devil will not have the same opportunity to work through our thoughts and thereby our actions as he would otherwise (refer to Matthew 12:33-37).

What qualifies as a thought worth thinking, or a chain of thoughts worth pursuing further? The Apostle Paul was inspired with the following list. We do well when we consider it: *“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).*

—Bro. Clifford Cole

**OCTOBER 6, 2024**

### **WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE**

**John 18:37** Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness

unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

**John 17:13** And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

**Psalms 100:5** For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

**Psalms 138:2** I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

**Isaiah 26:3** Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

**MEMORY VERSE:** For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

—Psalm 117:2

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** It is of the utmost importance that our thoughts be grounded and established in truth; otherwise, we are like a ship without a rudder on the storm-tossed sea of information and opinions. Thankfully, the Lord has given us His word on which to center our thoughts. We will always be safe and have the peace of God when we keep our minds on God and His word.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

John 18:38 **“Truth”:** reality, fact; free from pretense, falsehood, or deceit (*Thayer*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

During Jesus' trial Pilate asked Him, "What is truth?" Pilate was in great turmoil because of the conflicting thoughts running through his mind. It was evident the Jews hated Jesus, but he could not grasp the full scope of their jealousy. His wife had a dream about Jesus and sent word to him saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19). On one hand, Pilate had a mob calling for Jesus to be crucified while, on the other hand, his wife warned him against it. Pilate was tormented because he could not settle on what "truth" to believe. No wonder he asked, "What is truth?"

Jesus declared, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17b). When we think and meditate on God's word we will be grounded in truth, settled in our minds, instructed in difficulties, and eternally safe!

The psalmist David wrote these profound words, "...for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Psalm 138:2b). Imagine the worth God places on His word by magnifying it above all His name! We can think on the truth of God's word when we face difficulties and decisions in life and discover, in a practical way, what truth really is.

Isaiah wrote about how we can be in perfect peace. When we stay (keep) our minds on God and His word, we will be in perfect peace – because we trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3 paraphrased)!

### DISCUSSION:

1. In what ways was Pilate conflicted in his mind during Jesus' trial?
2. Why did Pilate ask, "What is truth?"
3. How could Pilate have had peace in his mind during Jesus' trial?
4. When Pilate gave over to the demands of the mob, did it give him the desired peace? Why or why not?
5. How important is it that we know truth, accept it, and refuse to forsake it?
6. What should we do when what we believe to be truth conflicts with someone else's understanding of the situation?
7. What can we stand on as the final authority of truth?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Have you ever heard the statement, "Just Google it"? It's so easy to turn to our phone or computer when we have a question on any number of topics. Google, as well as other search engines, make it possible to search the whole world of known information, tapping into the practical experiences of millions of people. The only problem with Google, as well as all other types of man-made information, is there are often conflicting viewpoints. We are left with the dilemma of figuring out which opinion, if any, is absolutely correct. On some subjects, the outcome may not be life-threatening, but in other situations, we desperately need to know the truth.

There is one source of information that never leads us astray. I opened my Bible this morning and read a passage that directly addressed a matter I had been praying about. The Holy Spirit opened my understanding to the words my eyes first fell upon. It settled my mind on the matter. The Word of God has answered my needs countless of times down through the years; it has never let me down or led me astray. What the Lord showed me through His Spirit and His Word years ago is still working today!

*"Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the truth in your Word! Help me to keep your Word ever before me and hidden in my heart that I might know the truth. Help me to reject all other opinions and center my thoughts on what your Word reveals. Amen!"*

## REFLECTIONS

"Whatsoever things are true..." Our thoughts are a vital part of who we are. The scripture says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..." (Proverbs 23:7).

Since we know how important thoughts are to our character and ultimately our spiritual success, we should take control of our thoughts and not let them run wild!

At the top of the list of things worthy of our thoughts is truth. We should ask ourselves, is it true? It is imperative for us not to accept thoughts that are not true, but cast them down. We must fight untrue thoughts that bombard our minds; they are not worth our time!

Why are true thoughts so important? God is truth. If we accept thoughts that are not true, we will find that they will lead us away from that which pertains to God. We must not entertain any thoughts that are not true.

The devil beguiled Eve in this way. He began his deception by giving her a thought that was not true. He told her that she would not "surely die." This statement was not true because she did indeed die. She died a spiritual death. The devil was able through this tactic to cause the downfall of mankind, and he will try beguile us in the same way today!

—Sis. Doris Clay

**OCTOBER 13, 2024**

### **WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST**

**Matthew 7:1** Judge not, that ye be not judged.

2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

**Romans 2:1** Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

**Psalms 15:1** A Psalm of David. LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

**Acts 6:2** Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

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

**MEMORY VERSE:** Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

—I Peter 2:11-12

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God’s plan is for us to first have integrity in our hearts, then in our thoughts, and finally in our actions toward others. Honest intent always precedes honest thoughts, and honest thoughts always precede honest actions and honest words.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Mat 7:1 **“Judge”**: to distinguish, decide, condemn, and punish.

Mat 7:3 **“Mote”**: a dry twig or straw (*Strong’s*); a splinter.

Mat 7:3 **“Beam”**: a timber that holds up part of a building.

Mat 7:5 **“Hypocrite”**: an actor (*Strong’s*); a pretender.



## LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus had a lot to say about the hypocritical Pharisees who judged other men while excusing their own wrong. The Apostle Paul, in the epistle to the Roman church, stressed that it was “inexcusable” to judge someone else while they themselves were in the wrong in other matters. In Psalms 15, David pointed out who would abide in the Lord’s tabernacle and dwell in His holy hill: Those who walk uprightly, work righteousness, speak the truth in their heart, do not backbite with their words, do no evil toward their neighbor, do not take up a reproach against their neighbor (*do not agree with an unjust accusation against someone*), do not hold an unjust or vile person in high regard, but honor those who fear God. This person will keep their word, even when it hurts greatly. This person will not take advantage of anyone, especially the innocent and those who cannot defend themselves. Anyone living this kind of life will have to be extremely honest with themselves and with God. They will always consider themselves before judging someone else, lest there be something in their own life that needs adjustment first.

### DISCUSSION:

1. How easy is it to hold others to a certain standard, yet make an allowance for something in our own life that is subpar?
2. How does it feel to be corrected by someone whom you feel is guilty of something similar, or perhaps even “worse” than that for which they are judging you?
3. When an honest person addresses a difficulty they perceive you may be having and shares how the Lord helped them in similar circumstances, what does that do for you?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

King David was a very honorable and honest man in most of his dealings with his fellow man. One exception was when he fell with Bathsheba. To cover his sin, he tried to trick Uriah into visiting his wife during a military campaign. When his tactics failed multiple times, David sent a letter back by Uriah’s hand ordering Joab to place Uriah in the hottest part of the battle, almost guaranteeing his death.

Later, when David learned of Uriah's death, David thought all would be well. He did not count on the Lord telling Nathan, the prophet, about the whole affair.

When Nathan approached David, he told the story of a poor man with only one little lamb to call his own. A wealthy neighbor came to the poor man and demanded that he give up his pet to feed the guests he was entertaining that evening. David became incensed at the wealthy man and said, "As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity" (II Samuel 12: 5-6). Nathan then told David, "Thou art the man" (II Samuel 12:7)! David acknowledged his sin and repented. However, much harm resulted from his transgression. We read of the heartache he, his family, and the kingdom suffered thereafter.

It is amazing how quick David was to judge the rich man who took his poor neighbor's pet lamb, yet excused his own great sin in taking Bathsheba from her husband – then covering his sin with yet another sin.

*"Dear Lord, help me to be totally honest with myself and with you, especially when I am tempted to judge another man. Amen!"*

## REFLECTIONS

Honesty is generally considered a cardinal virtue as well as a most important moral virtue. Being honest with oneself will promote honesty with God and honesty with people. "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight" (Proverbs 12:22).

I have had experiences when the Spirit of the Lord would identify something in my life, and as soon as the Spirit spoke, I knew it was true. It is only through being honest that we can receive the help we need.

When I had a wreck in 1980, with serious injuries, most healed except for the left arm. The saints fasted and prayed for my healing, but the bone was separated. I eventually had surgery and was given this counsel: "Deal with God after this; if you feel you have failed God, He will hear you." Well, I did feel I failed. I didn't give God up, but I just didn't have peace as before, so I repented. Several months later, I felt I needed to know why God didn't heal my arm; I earnestly

looked to God for the answer. One morning while in prayer, the Lord spoke to me in an almost audible voice: “I could not heal you. You would have taken pride in that kind of healing, and I could never have dealt with you again; you would have thought yourself so holy.” As soon as God spoke this, I knew it was true. Truly God wants to be honest with us, and for us to be honest with Him.

—Sis. Maxine Busbee

**OCTOBER 20, 2024**

**WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST**

**Leviticus 19:15** Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

**Leviticus 19:35** Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.

36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.

**Proverbs 20:14** It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

**Luke 23:50** And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just:

51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

**Acts 10:22** 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.

**James 2:1** My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3 And ye have respect to him that wareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor,

Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

**MEMORY VERSE:** A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight. —Proverbs 11:1

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Just and fair actions first start with honest introspection, then are demonstrated outwardly.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Lev 19:35 **“In meteyard, in weight, or in measure”:** linear dimensions, weight, or volume (*Strong’s*).

Lev 19:36 **“Just”:** right, equal, and even (*Strong’s*).

Pro 20:14 **“Naught”:** bad or worthless (*Strong’s*).

Luke 23:51 **“Had not consented to the counsel and deed of them”:** Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, stood against the majority in their plans to bring Jesus to trial.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

God gave His people explicit instructions about fairness toward others. This counsel included judging conflicts between people and in the buying and selling of goods.

In matters of conflict, the judges were instructed to not favor the rich over the poor in any way. They were to refuse gifts, because gifts cloud judgement.

In commerce, everyone’s linear dimensions, weights, and volumetric measurements were to subscribe to the same standard. Merchants could not use a heavier weight for selling and a lighter weight for buying.

During the time of Jesus’ ministry, Joseph of Arimathea had a reputation as a “just man.” He was fair in his dealings with people. He also resisted joining in with the crowd that wanted to kill Jesus. He refused to let the biased thoughts of the jealous majority taint his own thinking.

The centurion Cornelius was known by all the Jews as a just man, despite the fact he had great authority from Rome. Instead of using his authority in selfish ways, Cornelius dealt with everyone in an even-handed manner, winning their respect.

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. How is our judicial system today patterned after the commandment in Leviticus 19:15?
2. How has the commandment in Leviticus 19:35-36 affected modern day commerce?
3. If our modern judicial system and rules of commerce are taken in large part from the commandments in Leviticus, how much more important is it to handle our brothers and sisters in Christ with the utmost respect and fairness?
4. How does it feel to be treated in a less than just manner?
5. Why is it wrong to conduct business as described in Proverbs 20:14?
6. Who considered Joseph of Arimathea to be a good and just man?
7. Who thought of Cornelius the centurion as a just man?
8. How did Joseph of Arimathea and Cornelius come to have reputations as just men?
9. What does it mean to have “respect of persons,” and how is it harmful?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

While a boy at home, in situations where two children shared a piece of cake or similar treat, our mother let one child divide the treat into two equal parts and the other one got to choose which piece was theirs. How carefully the one doing the cutting ensured that each piece was equal! The other child watched, confident their sibling would be just and fair in the dividing process. It was amazing how equal the pieces always were!

My Grandma liked to tell the story of what happened when no siblings were around to observe the cutting and dividing of a treat. One of her children came in from playing outside and saw a piece of leftover pie sitting on the kitchen table. The family had eaten Sunday dinner and gone their separate ways. Grandma was washing the

dishes when the child came in from playing outside. Out of the corner of her eye, she observed the child standing before the pie tin and wondered in silent amusement what would happen next. Finally, after contemplating a moment or two, the child reached for the last slice of pie and muttered, "I'll just save a fuss!" The child thought it all the way through and concluded that if none of the other children remembered the last piece of pie there would be no harm in eating it.

Many years ago, a mother made one of her sons a few pies to take back with him to the apartment he shared with two friends in a distant city. After carefully hiding the pies, the young man anticipated relishing them for several days. He came home from work soon after that and decided he would have a piece of pie. Going to his secret stash, he discovered nothing but crumbs! His friends had somehow found out about the pies, hunted until they found them, and decided they needed them more than he did! I can only imagine how disappointed he was.

While cake and pie can seem pretty important when dividing and giving them out, there are other matters of far greater significance – paying hired help a fair wage, giving equal time and attention to children/grandchildren (not playing favorites in the family circle), and hearing both sides in a dispute. It is also very important to not “take up a reproach” against anyone by listening to, entertaining, or spreading rumors about anyone.

“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16-19). Every one of the seven things God hates originates from a dishonest and unjust heart, leading to unjust thoughts and ending in unjust actions. There seems to be a progression in the seven events, culminating with the last one—sowing discord among brethren. How God must hate the sowing of discord!

*“Dear Lord, please help me to first be honest with you and myself, then just and fair in my thinking and actions toward my fellow man. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

Our attitude must be, “Lord, I am laying aside my natural sense of justice and asking you to teach me how to treat my family and all others in my life with your righteous justice.” It is an extreme rarity to find a national or world leader from any country who is applying Biblical justice to help with the sufferings of mankind, but each of us can take every opportunity to “be just” to all in our realm of influence.

There are many causes of carnal-minded justice calling to us that violently clash with each other and oppose the true justice that God has instituted. We don’t want to buy into unregenerated man’s ideals of justice that are exalted against God’s true law of justice. I frequently hear the comment that “our world is getting really crazy” as innocent people are violated. Satan wants to both distract our minds and create in us a bitterness toward people under his influence who are inflicting myriads of injustices.

On the other hand, God simply wants us to fervently apply His laws of loving justice toward everyone we have opportunity to touch and especially to those that he has defined as being the weakest in society. When we live out His love and righteousness toward others, the world will see His merciful justice and His redemptive plan offered to them.

Keeping our minds and spirits focused on demonstrating God’s just laws and keeping undistracted by carnal causes of justice is imperative to advancing the kingdom of God.

—Bro. Jeremy Booher

**OCTOBER 27, 2024**

### WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE

**Psalms 18:26** With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.

**Psalms 24:3** Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

**Proverbs 15:26** The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.

**Proverbs 30:12** There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

**Acts 20:25** And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

**Romans 14:19** Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

**1 Timothy 1:5** Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

**James 1:27** 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** 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.

**1 Peter 1:22** Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

**2 Peter 3:1** 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** And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. —Matthew 5:8

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Purity of heart and mind is absolutely essential to living a holy life. As our memory verse points out, we will



not see God in this life, nor in the life to come without it. Purity in thought not only affects our relationship with God, but purity of mind overshadows everything we think about throughout the day – our plans, our work, our free time, and all our relationships. Purity in heart and action springs from purity of thought. If our thoughts are pure, our words and actions will be pure. “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34b).

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Psa 18:26 “**Pure**”: from the primitive root; to clarify, brighten, examine, or select. Cleansed or polished (*Strong’s*).

Psa 18:26 “**Froward**”: distorted, crooked, perverse (*Strong’s*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Adam and Eve were created pure. All their thoughts and actions were pure and innocent. They lived in a pure and perfect environment. When did it all change? It started in their thoughts. Through their thoughts, the devil introduced rebellion against God’s commandment to not touch the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When, after thinking about it, they decided to yield to the temptation, they were no longer pure in thought or deed. All of their innocence and purity were gone in an instant.

After losing their state of purity, Adam and Eve hid from God’s presence and tried to cover themselves with leaves. When called out from hiding and questioned by God about their sudden change in behavior, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent for beguiling them.

One of the sad results of Adam and Eve’s loss of innocence was that they passed on their fallen nature to their children. Animal sacrifices were now required to roll mankind’s sins forward to the time of Christ. However, even the sacrifices became a conduit for impure thoughts. Cain, the firstborn son, insisted on sacrificing according to his own thinking. Abel, his younger brother, sacrificed in obedience and was blessed by God accordingly. Seeing his own sacrifice rejected and his brother’s accepted, Cain began to think evil thoughts, which eventually led him to murder his brother.

Impure thoughts are always destructive when not brought under Jesus' blood and the power and authority of God's Holy Spirit. The long list of resulting evils include not only envy and murder, but all of the other sins listed in Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. What does it mean for God to "show himself pure to the pure, and forward to the forward"?
2. Why does God not fully reveal Himself to the impure?
3. How can someone "be pure in their own eyes," yet not be washed from their filthiness?
4. Paul declared himself to be "pure from the blood of all men." What did he mean?
5. How can we "destroy the work of God" by partaking in something that is pure, yet is offensive to someone else?
6. Wisdom is described in James 3:17 with purity at the head of the list. Why is this?
7. According to I Peter 1:22, how do we purify our souls?
8. How do we "stir up" our pure minds?
9. What is the target, or standard, for purity according to I John 3:3?
10. How safe is it to measure our own purity against someone else's purity?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

When offered a glass of water, would you consider the water pure if you noticed the glass was dirty? What if you were confident the glass was clean, but you could see particles in the water? I would not drink it either! To be considered pure, both the glass and the water have to be free from visible and invisible contaminants.

Regarding the visible contaminants in the water and the visible dirt on the glass, filters for the water and a little scrubbing for the glass can take care of these problems. The same principal applies to our hearts and minds regarding pure thoughts – salvation cleanses our heart (the drinking glass) and sanctification helps to filter our thoughts through the blood of Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God.

What about the invisible contaminants in the water and on the glass? The following steps apply: First, the potential – or probability – of contaminants must be acknowledged, despite the fact they cannot be seen. Secondly, the awareness for potential serious harm from these contaminants is necessary before any further steps become likely. Third, the proper steps for ridding the harmful contaminants must be determined. Fourth, the proper steps must be followed completely. The first three steps are in vain if the fourth step is not taken seriously.

Both water and air contaminants are measured in parts per million. The invisible radioactive gas radon is sometimes present in the ground below homes. This gas is colorless, has no scent, and can only be detected with special equipment. When present in levels above four parts per million, radon can cause lung cancer. Statistics state that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Thankfully, if a home is tested to have unacceptable levels of radon, steps can be taken to rid the home of the gas. If a home isn't tested, however, how likely are the owners going to do what is necessary to bring the levels down?

Why is radon so dangerous? Radon attaches to the dust particles we breathe. After inhaling the radioactive dust particles, they lodge in our lung tissue – never to leave. Over time, the radioactivity can build up to a level that causes cancer. The best way to avoid lung cancer due to radon is to eliminate the radon before it becomes a problem. The same is true with impure thoughts. Impure thinking contaminates our good and necessary everyday thoughts, building up toxic levels to the extent of causing spiritual damage – possibly even spiritual death. “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15).

The EPA has a drinking water standard of 0.010 parts per million (ten parts per billion) for the poison arsenic. Arsenic is dangerous

enough that it must be virtually eliminated in the water we drink, and even in water used for irrigation purposes because it can build up in irrigated soil over time. A similar principal applies spiritually. Through no fault of our own, thoughts can be introduced to our minds through countless methods that can come creeping in like water from a small irrigation line, or flooding in like water from a broken dam. Sometimes, we invite thoughts through what we choose to look at, watch, and hear, just as we consciously pick up a glass of water and drink it.

How do we handle our daily thoughts to ensure they become pure and stay pure? The first two steps are salvation and sanctification. Salvation “cleans our glass” by the blood of Jesus which clenases our hearts from known sin. Sanctification “fills our glass” with the Holy Spirit, crowding out impure thoughts that would otherwise take over. The last step is asking God to help us on a daily basis to keep our hearts and minds full of the good things of God, lest the impurity all around us get into our thinking and contaminate our souls. Yes, it is a daily battle—but well worth it!

*“Heavenly Father, thank you for the cleansing work of salvation and sanctification. Help me to remember pure thoughts are critical in keeping my spiritual vessel clean. I invite your Holy Spirit to check me with His still and gentle voice when my thoughts are tempted to be less than pure. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

A number of years ago I was in a place where a documentary was playing on a TV. I didn’t want to watch anything just for entertainment, but since it was “true,” I thought it would be okay. I regretted that decision deeply for a long time, and it taught me a lesson.

Philippians 4:8 starts out with “whatsoever things are true,” but there are other qualifiers just as important: honest, just, pure, lovely, good report. It’s a checklist that will help us to keep our mind on things that are wholesome and undefiled. We live in a culture that places great value on knowledge, but not all knowledge has value.

Once, when Corrie ten Boom was young, she asked her father a question about a certain sin. Instead of answering her question, her father asked her to carry his tool case. Corrie tried to lift it but had to

admit that it was too heavy. He then explained that just as the case was too heavy for her, that some knowledge was also too heavy for her. While this example shows an earthly father caring for his child, we have a Heavenly Father who cares for us and doesn't want us to have knowledge of things that are an unnecessary weight to us.

It would be well for us to consider before we open that email, search the web, or scroll through social media, to not only ask, "Is it true?" But, we should also ask, "Is it pure? Is it lovely? Is it a good report?"

—Sis. Sarah Herron

**NOVEMBER 3, 2024**

### **WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY**

**Philippians 4:8** 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.

**Psalms 19:14** Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

**Proverbs 10:32** The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.

**Isaiah 58:1** Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

3 Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice

to be heard on high.

5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

**MEMORY VERSE:** To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. —Proverbs 21:3

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The word “lovely” is interchangeable with “acceptable” many places in the Bible. Our thoughts, which come before our actions, must be acceptable in God’s opinion—not our opinion—before they are truly lovely in God’s eyes. Lovely thoughts, when left to our own interpretation only, can sometimes be nothing more than a “fuzzy feeling” of euphoria when things are going our way. As demonstrated in Isaiah 58, when God’s people had lovely thoughts in their opinion only, they missed the mark. Their “lovely” thoughts caused a lot of harm to others and brought great displeasure to God.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Php 4:8 **“Lovely”**: acceptable, pleasing (*Thayer*); friendly toward, acceptable (*Strong’s*).

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

The LORD reasoned with the house of Israel about their efforts of serving Him according to their own thinking (Isaiah 58). They sought Him daily, professed to delight in knowing His ways, did not forsake His ordinances, and took delight in approaching to God. They fasted but complained that God did not see. They afflicted their soul, yet they felt God did not notice. The LORD’s reply was, “Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.” The LORD explained in great detail what was acceptable to Him: “Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, break every yoke, give your bread to the hungry, bring the poor that are cast out to their house, cover those with no clothes, and refrain from hiding yourself from your own flesh.”

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. Why is it good to pray that our words and thoughts be acceptable (lovely) in the God’s eyes, like the prayer in Psalm 19:14?

2. What could happen to our thoughts and words if we never prayed a prayer like Psalm 19:14?
3. God's people fell into condemnation for thinking their own "lovely" thoughts (Isaiah 58). What were some of the harmful results of their own thinking?
4. Why did they believe their thinking and actions should have been acceptable to God?
5. God said His people fasted for strife and debate. What did He mean?
6. God said His people made a great outward show with their worship. What did He really want?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Five of the main love languages have been categorized as the following: acts of service, touch, gifts, quality time, and words of affirmation. When, for instance, we use the love language of "gifts" as an expression of our love, but the recipient's strongest love language happens to be acts of service, we do not adequately convey to them the love we intended. The recipient of the gift of flowers may very well think, "He gave me flowers, but what I really want is some of his help around the house!" There are many other examples that could be given, but the main point is the beauty of a gift is in the eyes of the recipient, not the giver.

Our Heavenly Father's love language can partially be described with the following words: honesty, humility, faith, and kindness. If I presume to serve or worship God outside the parameters of any one of these four, He will quickly see through it and find my act of love for Him unacceptable. The message to God's people in Isaiah 58 was very clear regarding this type of behavior, especially when they assumed their thoughts and actions were acceptable to God.

If I treat my brother in Christ with honesty, humility, and faith, but leave off kindness, he will notice it immediately and feel grieved over it. God will notice too. If I am humble, have faith, and use kindness, but am not completely honest, the end result will be disastrous. If I am honest, humble, and kind, but operate outside the realm of faith, it will be of little benefit to anyone. Finally, If I am honest, kind, and feel like I am exercising faith, yet lack humility, it



will do much more harm than good. God's love language incorporates all four of these touch-stones. Eliminating or neglecting any of them, as God's people did in Isaiah 58, offends God rather than blesses Him.

*"Dear Heavenly Father, please help my thoughts to be lovely in your eyes. Amen."*

## REFLECTIONS

Eric and I had been married for eight years and were finally ready to buy our first home. I'd always dreamed of walking into a house and falling in love with it. It would have charm and character. If it needed work, it wasn't a deal-breaker.

For several months we had looked at houses but I hadn't yet found "the one." The lease where we lived was about to expire, and Eric felt the pressure to find a place. One day he took us to see a little, nondescript house. Except for a generous front porch, it was the antithesis of everything I'd dreamed. With our lease running out, Eric made an offer and it was accepted. Sad to say, I wasn't grateful. To be honest, I almost despised it.

Through this experience, the Lord took me on a fourteen-year journey of learning to see the loveliness of that little house. Eric is handy with carpentry, and as I learned to see its potential, he transformed it into a place that I loved.

Looking for loveliness in difficult people or circumstances starts with choosing to look for the smallest positive instead of at the negatives. When encountering strident people, I've found earnestly praying for the Lord to bless them changed the way I regarded them. It's intentional. It's a learning process, one I'm still mastering. If we seek Him, God will teach us how to see the potential, the lovely amidst the unlovely. It's how He sees us.

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

**NOVEMBER 10, 2024**

**WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT**

**Acts 10:1** There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:

6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

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.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are

had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

**MEMORY VERSE:** The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat. —Proverbs 15:30

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Cornelius, a centurion with the Italian band, served God with all his heart, but longed for more understanding. Because his innermost thoughts and prayers were found acceptable before God, his public life was also “of good report” by all who knew him. When the time was right, the Lord sent Peter to Cornelius to teach him the way more perfectly.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Acts 10:22 “**Of good report**”: to give an honorable testimony of (*Thayer*); to be a witness of; to bear record of; an honest report of (*Strong’s*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

The Apostle Peter taught from childhood that the Jews were to remain separate from all other people, balked at the idea of associating with anyone who did not share his Jewish heritage. Peter never ate meat labeled unclean.

When the Lord commanded Peter in a vision three times in a row to “rise, kill, and eat” that of which the Jews did not partake, Peter wondered what the vision meant. While he was still pondering, he was called out of his comfort zone for the good of someone else.

God, as He does so often, had also been working on the other end. God told Cornelius that his prayers and alms had been noted.

We don't know how long Cornelius had been seeking God, but his sincerity paid off in the end. God knows every one of our thoughts and desires, and He takes great pleasure in fulfilling them. Sometimes our prayers are answered quickly, and sometimes it takes a little longer, but God is always faithful.

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. What profit is there in dwelling on negative rumors?
2. Who is the ultimate judge of our thoughts?
3. What does it mean to think on things “of good report”?
4. Who or what is the main source of this kind of positive thinking?
5. What influence will thinking on good things, rather than bad, have on our lives?
6. How did the life and faith of Cornelius affect his household?
7. What influence did Cornelius have over the troops that served under him?
8. How did the Jews in Cornelius' jurisdiction regard him?
9. Who loses when we think on things “of good report”?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

There is a natural tendency to veer toward what we are looking at while driving. This aspect also holds true in life—we tend to become more and more like what we think about. If our thoughts lean more toward the positive, our actions and words tend to be more positive. If we find ourselves thinking primarily negative thoughts, the outward manifestation leans more toward the negative.

Can we make ourselves into better people simply by thinking positive thoughts? No, not at all; but, our habit of thinking either helps or hinders God in His work to clean us up and make us into the person He wants us to be.

I observed a young man walking along the top of a wall at a construction site a few years ago. The board at the top of the wall he was walking on was exactly 3-½” wide, and the wall itself was about 20' long. He could have asked for a ladder, climbed down the ladder,

moved the ladder to the new location, climbed up the ladder, and then performed the task he needed to do. Yet, the most efficient way to get from point A to point B was to “walk the wall.” It was also the most dangerous, at least in my opinion; however, it did not seem to bother the young man at all. I asked him how he accomplished his “wall walking” without falling. He told me, “I never think of falling. I only think of getting to where I need to go. If I thought about falling, I probably would!”

In the same way spiritually, when we fill our minds with the good things God has for us and that lead to our success, our success is that much more assured. These kinds of thoughts are approved of God; they are “of good report” with Him. These good thoughts influence our words and actions to such a degree that they will also be noted to be “of good report” by others.

One final observation about how my thinking affects me. If I am in the habit of thinking good things about a person, everything I observe them do or say will almost always reinforce my current opinion. If I am in the habit of thinking not-so-good thoughts about that person, everything that happens will usually support that train of thought as well. In other words, my current thought pattern about someone greatly impacts my future thoughts about that person! This fact remains true of my thoughts about myself, God, all other people, and life in general.

*“Dear Lord in Heaven, help me to fill my mind with the things that are of good report with you. Help me point others the way to you, the author of all things of good report. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

How strange that we should be told to think on things of good report. You would think the mind would naturally drift in that direction. There was a newspaper, it seems, that dedicated itself only to good news. I understand it went out of business.

Is the glass of water half full, or half empty? How we view things has a lot to do with how we are within. Matthew 6:22 says, “...if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” Verse 23 states, “...if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.”

We read in Numbers 13:32 where ten of twelve spies brought back an evil report; ten of them were negative and only two had a good report.

I may hear a political speech on the radio and afterwards someone may comment on it. They are so negative it is almost like we did not hear the same speech. Titus 3:2 teaches, "Speak evil of no man." Someone has said, "If you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything at all." Sometimes silence is golden.

—Bro. E.E. Gracey

**NOVEMBER 17, 2024**

**IF THERE BE ANY VIRTUE**

**Philippians 4:8** 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.

**2 Peter 1:3** 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:

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.

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. —I Corinthians 16:13

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God has called us to “glory and virtue,” giving us enabling grace through His divine power and encouraging us through “exceeding great and precious promises.” We add to our faith the virtue that God wants to give us. We then add knowledge to our God-given virtue. Faith, virtue, and knowledge are the first three building blocks of living a godly life. Temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity follow close behind.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Philippians 4:8 “**Virtue**”: manliness, valor (*Strong’s*); moral goodness or excellence, such as modesty and purity (*Thayer*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

The Apostle Peter possessed certain personality and character traits that marked every part of his day-to-day behavior and impacted his major decisions. He was, by nature, an impulsive man. He did not take long to come to conclusions and then act upon them. This character trait is part of the reason Peter is the only man, besides Jesus, to have walked on water. It is also why Peter drew a sword and cut an ear off the high priest’s servant. When Peter denied Christ three times after the cock crowed, his impulsive nature was yet again on display. Our character traits, while seemingly a strength at times, can also let us down when we need them most!

Nothing in our own character, as good as it may seem to us and others, will ever be enough to keep us from falling into trouble. Only true godly virtue—manliness and valor given through the power of the Holy Spirit—will give us the moral goodness necessary to live a successful Christian life.



## **DISCUSSION:**

1. 2 Peter 1:3 tells us that God gives us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” If we refuse what God gives us, what will the devil instead give us?
2. We attain these things “through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” How much value does God place on the glory and virtue He gives us?
3. How is thinking tied to knowledge?
4. If our thinking becomes tainted with subject matter that is not “virtuous,” how will our “glory and virtue” be affected?
5. 2 Peter 1:5-7 lists good things God wants us to add to our spiritual life, by His grace and power. Why is virtue second on the list, coming only after faith?
6. What will be the end result if these good things are found in our life?
7. What will happen if these things are found missing in our life?
8. Referring to the memory verse, what does it mean to “quit you like men”?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

It is important to include virtuous thoughts in our daily thinking. Our thoughts determine our actions, and our actions soon become habits. Habits eventually affect our character. Our character defines who we really are. How important it is that our thoughts, the springboard of all that follows after, are based on that which is wholesome and virtuous! When we are tempted to think something that does not pass the litmus test of virtue, that thought is no longer worthy of our time and consideration. Thoughts contrary to godly virtue can only be destructive if entertained for very long.

Governor Agricola of Armenia was confronted with “mutiny.” Forty soldiers refused to offer the sacrifice ordered by emperor Licinius. The forty who stood before him that wintry fourth-century day in Sevaste were fine specimens of manhood who radiated an aura of courage. He was determined to make them see reason. But the soldiers were adamant. They refused to sacrifice. To do so was to betray their faith in Christ. "But what about your comrades?" asked

Agricola. "Consider—you alone of all Caesar's thousands of troops defy him! Think of the disgrace you bring upon your legion!"

"To disgrace the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is more terrible still," replied the men. Exasperated, the governor threatened to flog and torture them. The soldiers stood firm, although they knew he would carry out his threat. In the fourth century, there were few civil rights. Boldly the men answered, "Nothing you can offer us would replace what we would lose in the next world. As for your threats—we despise our bodies when the welfare of our souls is at stake."

Pairs of guards seized each man and dragged them out into the cold where they were stripped and tied to posts. Whips laid open their backs and iron hooks tore their sides. Still the forty refused to surrender. Agricola chained them in his dungeons. Finally, he commanded that they be stripped naked and driven onto the ice of a pond below Sevaste.

The "rebels" did not wait for the sentence to be imposed, but tearing off their own clothes, ran to the pond in the raw March air. "We are soldiers of the Lord and fear no hardship," they said. "What is death for us but an entrance into eternal life?" On this day, March 9, 320 A.D., singing hymns, they stood shivering on the pond as the sun sank. Baffled, Agricola ordered hot baths placed around the pond. Surely the warm water would lure the men off the ice! But the crisp night air carried a prayer to all ears: "Lord, there are forty of us engaged in this battle; grant that forty may be crowned and not one be wanting from this sacred number." One of the men did lose his nerve, however, and crawled off the ice to a bath. He died the instant he touched the hot water. This was too much for one of the guards. He shucked off his clothes, marched onto the ice and took the place of the man who had failed."

<https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/301-600/40-men-died-on-ice-for-christ-11629647.html>

*"Dear God, please help me to recognize and choose between thoughts that lack true godly virtue and those full of virtue. Amen."*

## REFLECTIONS

### THE MEASURE OF A MAN

Say, how do you measure the size of a man?  
Is it the height of his stature, of muscle or span?  
Or how big is his bank account, bill-fold or purse;  
If wealth went he forward or went in reverse?

Do you measure his size by his popular fame?  
Or how often the newspaper published his name?  
Just how fancy his car, or how spacious his home,  
Or how many the traveling miles he did roam?

Is his stature revealed in the books he has read?  
Is his wit to be gauged by the words he has said?  
Whether he's a Republican or Democrat,  
If he's good on the ball-field to kick or to bat?

Say, isn't there better a measurement found  
To measure a man that is more just and sound;  
How deep in his bosom abides godly fear,  
How earnestly seeks he to God to draw near?

How does he trust in the Lord Jesus Christ,  
How much does he value the treasures He priced?  
How Lowly and meek, is he humble, contrite?  
Would he suffer the wrong, or get ready to fight?

How pleasant his manner, how big is his smile,  
How easily walks he the long, second mile?  
How many the injuries will he forgive,  
To whom and for whom is he striving to live?

And how strong is his faith in the trials of life?  
Is he steadfast, unmovable in all its strife?  
Is he joyful in hardship, patient in trial?  
Is he gentle and loving and sweet all the while?

How helpful to others, how quick to respond  
To the challenge of duty that calls him beyond?  
How loving with children, how friendly and kind?  
What thoughts and deep feelings hold sway o'er his mind?

Just how do you think that God measures a man?  
Remember, before Him one day we shall stand!  
And the rule He will use as a measure that day  
Is found in the Bible and its holy way.

For not on the outward and countenance fair-  
God looks on the heart, lays His measure-line there.  
Though small and despised, you can stand straight and tall,  
For the meek and the lowly is greater than all!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

*Note: Just before going to press, the above poem was read at Bro. Dan Gellenbeck's funeral, representing the life of virtue he chose to live. Bro. Dan was the husband of long-time Bible Lesson editor, Sis. Angela (Busbee) Gellenbeck. The poem was written by Sis. Angela's father. Please keep Bro. Dan's family in your prayers.*

## NOVEMBER 24, 2024

### IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE

**Philippians 4:8** 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.

**Psalms 22:3** But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

**Psalms 22:23** Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

25 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

**Psalms 33:1** Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.

**Psalms 40:1** To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

**Psalms 42:5** Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

**Psalms 50:23** Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

**Proverbs 17:22** A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

**Philippians 4:4** Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

**MEMORY VERSE:** 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. —Hebrews 13:15

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God inhabits, or dwells, in our praise of Him. When our thoughts are thankful, and when we praise God's goodness and faithfulness, God is pleased. He made us specifically that we might chose to serve, trust, praise, and thank Him. A thankful heart that is full of praise to God is also a happy heart. The attitude of praise "doeth good like a medicine" (Proverbs 17:22).

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Php 4:8 **“Praise”**: to express warm approval or admiration of (*Oxford*); to glorify (*Merriam-Webster*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The Psalmist David experienced miraculous deliverances many times. Before he ever met Goliath, God enabled him to kill the lion and bear who had attacked his father’s sheep. From David’s description of his struggle with the beasts, he “caught him (*the lion or bear*) by his beard, and smote him, and slew him” (I Samuel 17:35). David was in close proximity to claws and teeth, but the Lord delivered him unharmed. When the time came for David to meet Goliath, he was unable to use king Saul’s armor and weapons comfortably. Therefore, he approached the giant with only a sling and five stones.

King Saul did not let David return home to his father after killing Goliath. Unfortunately, however, he soon became jealous of David when he heard the women coming out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, saying, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (I Samuel 18:7). King Saul attempted to kill David many times, but God intervened.

David finally wearied of running for his life from King Saul and decided to escape to Achish, the king of Gath. A short time later, David and his men marched with king Achish against King Saul and his army. The Lord, however, caused the Philistine princes to demand that Achish send David and his men back to Ziklag, saying, “Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?”

When David and his men approached Ziklag, they discovered the city had been burned, and their wives and children had all been taken captive. David and his men “lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep” (I Samuel 30:4). “And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (I Samuel 30:6). God miraculously delivered their wives and children, along with the spoils of war, back to David and his men.

After David had been king for many years, two of his sons, on separate occasions, tried to take over the throne. One can only imagine how David must have felt; however, he put his trust in God and his life was preserved.

David faced many difficulties and challenges, but God always helped him when he prayed. After one of his narrow escapes, David wrote, “I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalms 34:4). When it finally came time for David to pass on to his heavenly reward, he drew his feet up into his bed and passed away peacefully. His life could have ended much differently so many times, but his passing was remarkably calm.

About half of the book of Psalms is attributed to David. The psalms, or songs, of David tell of so many of his trials, his trust in God, and the Lord’s miraculous deliverances. The Psalms are such an encouragement to us today!

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. In Psalms 22:3, David wrote of God inhabiting the praises of Israel. What did he mean?
2. In the next two verses, what did David reveal about the benefit of trusting God?
3. Referring to Psalm 22:24, how does God regard our troubles and afflictions?
4. How did David’s view of how God and life’s difficulties affect his attitude toward God?
5. How does God respond to our praise of His goodness, faithfulness, mercy, power, and love?
6. Psalm 42:5 reminds us that we can look forward to God’s help, even when it looks dark at the present. How is this fact worthy of our praise?
7. How does praise glorify God?
8. How does a merry, or thankful, heart do good “like a medicine”?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

When the Congress of the United States convened for the first time in September of 1774, prayer was offered for two hours. The men assembled also studied three chapters of the Bible, Psalms 35

being one of them. The last verse of this chapter reads, “And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.”

The United States of America, prior to the Revolutionary War, had no army, no navy, and no money. The only thing they had was a desire to be free from British rule, a longing to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, and to trust in God. Is it any wonder they felt a need to call upon God for help in such circumstances?

Congress, from 1776 to 1784, called Americans to “humble themselves, fast, pray, and give thanks to God” on sixteen different occasions. The calls for prayer and fasting were generally in the spring and summer months, while the call to thanksgiving came later in the year. (<https://christianheritagefellowship.com/post-series/when-congress-asked-america-to-fast-pray-and-give-thanks-to-god/>) The National Day of Prayer and the national holiday of Thanksgiving grew out of this precedent.

President Lincoln proclaimed “Thursday, the 30th day of April 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer.” (<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>) President Harry S. Truman proclaimed a National Day of Prayer to be observed on July 4, 1952. This National Day of Prayer was observed every year at this time until President Ronald Reagan moved the observance to the first Thursday in May. (<https://www.nationaldaycalendar.com>)

The first Federal Congress passed a resolution asking that President George Washington proclaim a day of thanksgiving. President Washington designated Thursday, November 26, 1789, as a “Day of Publick Thanksgiving.” Presidents following issued Thanksgiving Proclamations on various dates. To avoid confusion, Congress, in 1941, eventually fixed a permanent date of the fourth Thursday of November as a National Day of Thanksgiving. President Roosevelt signed the resolution on December 26, 1941. (<https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/thanksgiving>)

In the early days of World War II, 338,000 Allied soldiers were trapped at Dunkirk, France. The German forces were before them and the sea was behind them, a position much like that of the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt. On May 23, 1940, King George VI requested that the following Sunday be a National Day of Prayer for England. On Saturday, the day before the National



Day of Prayer, the military decided to evacuate as many Allied soldiers as possible. During this time, Adolf Hitler ordered his army to halt. This decision enraged his generals and baffles military historians to this day. For three days, the German tanks and soldiers stood around while the evacuation took place. Bad weather on Tuesday prevented the Luftwaffe from flying overhead, which allowed the Allied soldiers to march to the beaches unhindered. On Wednesday, the sea was remarkably calm, which made the evacuation much easier than normal. When the German army was finally ordered to resume their attack, all 338,000 Allied troops were already across the English Channel. The war could have taken a much different direction had it not been for the “miracle of Dunkirk.” On Sunday, June 9, 1940, a National Day of Thanksgiving for the British people was called. (<https://canonijohn.com/2017/07/17/national-day-of-prayer-during-dunkirk-1940/>)

*“Dear Heavenly Father, I give you praise and thanksgiving for your exceedingly abundant wisdom, power, mercy, love, and faithfulness. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

Several years ago someone near and dear to me hurt me unintentionally. Even though I knew it was unintentional, I was very hurt and thought about it constantly. I sought relief by talking about it to one or two people, but it didn’t help. As I got off the phone from one of these conversations, the Lord spoke to me and said, “Quit talking about it and quit thinking about it.” I determined to obey, but stopping the thoughts was much more challenging than not talking about them.

The Lord showed me to replace the thoughts with a hymn. At first I had to replace the thoughts over and over again, every few minutes. Gradually, I was able to go for longer lengths of time, and eventually my mind was free and no longer dwelling on the offense. My relationship with this individual was not broken or damaged and they were a blessing to me for many years.

The Lord delivered me another time when I was suffering for months with depression. One day I was so tired of feeling this way that I said to myself, “I’m going to fight it. But how? I’m praying and

reading the Bible. What else can I do?” God spoke to me one word: PRAISE. As I obeyed, the spirit of depression was broken, and I was free. Praise the Lord!

I have found that while the enemy opposes both praise and thanksgiving, he especially opposes praise. Giving thanks for what God has done is good, and the enemy doesn't like it; but praise is worshipping God for Who He is, and the enemy hates it. Praise is a powerful weapon that can defeat the foe and give us the victory.

—Sis. Sarah Herron

**DECEMBER 1, 2024**

### **CASTING DOWN IMAGINATIONS**

**2 Corinthians 10:4** (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 exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

**Genesis 6:5** And 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.

6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

**Genesis 8:20** And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

**Genesis 11:1** And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they

found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

**Jeremiah 18:11** Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

12 And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.

**Proverbs 6:16** These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

**Romans 1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

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.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

—I Chronicles 28:9

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** From the time satan tempted Eve in the garden to the present moment, his primary mode of attack has been through our imaginations. Our imaginations envision the tallest giants and the strongest foes. Our imagination is the conduit of every fear that tempts us to doubt God.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

2 Co 10:4 **“Imaginations”**: a reasoning, such as is hostile to the Christian faith; a judgement or decision, such as conscience passes (*Thayer*).

Rom 1:21 **“Vain”**: to render foolish; morally wicked (*Strong’s*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

People generally lived between 700 and 950 years before the Great Flood. With most of the population living so long, the population of the earth grew exponentially. Some estimates put earth’s population before the flood higher than the current population of 8 billion—that is, unless much of the population had been killed through wars and murder. Disease was not common, the climate was perfect, food was plentiful and nutritious, and people

were generally healthy. (<https://www.ldolphin.org/pickett.html>)

With everyone living so long, yet forgetting God in their daily lives, it is no wonder that the general trajectory of mankind's thoughts went on such a downward spiral. The fact that Noah and his immediate family alone had the faith to obey God to build the ark and get on board before it started raining, put the the rest of the general population at being almost 100 percent corrupt. In mathematical terms, eight souls saved out of 8 billion means 99.99999999% of the earth's population was lost in the flood.

After the flood, a few chose to serve God, but yet again, the vast majority chose not to. The whole human family lived in one area and began building a great tower. God came down to have a closer look at the tower and determined that He would have to disperse mankind over the face of the earth because "nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Genesis 11:6b).

Many years later, as written by the prophet Jeremiah, God's people felt there was no hope in serving Him. Therefore, they determined that they would, "...walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." (Jeremiah 18:12). It is amazing they still chose their own path, given the examples they had of where human imagination had taken their predecessors.

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. If the weapons of our spiritual warfare are not carnal, how do we categorize our imaginations?
2. How do we "cast down" imaginations?
3. Why are imaginations among the "high things" that exalt against the knowledge of God?
4. What in the story of mankind before the Great Flood warns us about our imaginations?
5. How could "every imagination of the thoughts of [their] heart be evil only continually"?
6. Why was it necessary for God to both confound the language of those building the Tower of Babel and scatter the people?
7. Why would the men of Judah in Jeremiah 18:12 say, "There is no hope"?

8. How can feeling hopeless cause our imaginations to kick into high gear?
9. What is the best thing to do when we have feelings of hopelessness?
10. Our memory verse tells us that God searches our hearts and understands all the imaginations of our thoughts. How does this help us pray when we feel hopeless?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The story of Gideon and the army of 300, as recorded in Judges 7, is a perfect example of how God used the power of imagination to defeat the host of the Midianites. Gideon's small band of men were instructed to divide into three companies before approaching the sleeping enemy camp. Each man was armed with a trumpet, a clay pot, and a burning lamp inside the pot. At Gideon's signal, every man blew his trumpet and broke his pot, revealing the burning lamp within. The soldiers shouted in unison, "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon!" "The LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host (Judges 7:19-22). We are not told if the three companies of Gideon's men completely surrounded the Midianite camp, but if they formed a complete circle with a diameter of one mile, that would put the 300 men about 55 feet apart from each other. Whatever the exact arrangement was, the Midianites must have assumed—or imagined—that each of the 300 trumpets represented a large group of soldiers. The effect was tremendous!

When David was sent by his father to check on his brothers and he found the whole Israelite army terrorized by Goliath, he grew angry at the realization that Israel was allowing the enemy to set all the rules of engagement. It seemed even the bravest of soldiers, including King Saul, could only imagine how impossible it would be to fight Goliath in a duel to the death. Their imaginations clouded their judgment to such a degree that they simply gave in, rather than saying, "No one has to fight this giant alone! We will gang up on him and fight him in the name of the LORD!"

During WWII, great efforts were made on both sides of the European conflict to trick one another into believing alternate

realities. One of the most notable instances of subterfuge was code named Operation Fortitude. The plan was to convince the German command that the Allies would attack at or near Calais, France, while actually attacking at Normandy. Calais was the most obvious choice since it was the shortest path across the English Channel, so the German forces fortified Calais for this eventuality—and the Allies helped them along in their assumptions.

Part of the deception included a “dummy army” constituting mostly of inflatable tanks and landing craft positioned directly across the English Channel from Calais. General George Patton commanded the fake forces, giving more realism to the feint. While the fake army was positioned for a Calais invasion, the real troop buildup in other areas prepared for an attack at Normandy.

<https://www.history.com/news/d-day-hitler-germany-defenses-miscalculations>

Operation Mincemeat, another successful ploy, involved creating a false identity for a homeless man that had recently perished from eating rat poison. The homeless man was given the identity of Major William Martin of the Royal Marines. “Major Martin” was carried by submarine to a point off the Spanish coast where he would most likely wash up on shore and be discovered by Nazi sympathizers. The corpse was outfitted in a Royal Navy uniform, an identity card, various articles of everyday life placed in his pockets, and two documents that contained information intended to deceive the German army into thinking an attack on Sicily was only a diversionary tactic to draw attention away from an attack on Greece and Crete. The ruse worked. The German High Command reinforced Greece and Crete much more than Sicily, the true focus of the eventual Allied attack.

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/secret-agents-secret-armies-operation-mincemeat>

The devil tries to use our own imaginations against us whenever he can get away with it. His ploys are endless: “He looked at me in an odd way. I believe he has something against me!” “She said something that removes all doubt what she really believes on the subject.” “They did that on purpose, just to make me upset!” If we fall for Satan’s tactics, he will have the satisfaction of diverting our attention, through the power of imagination alone, from the real threats to our souls.

*“Dear Lord in Heaven, please help me recognize the harm my imagination can bring to me and to others. Help me submit my imagination to your scrutiny. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

Many years ago, Bro. Woodrow Warren preached a message during a Wichita revival and asked, “What is the largest nation in the world?” Some began to ponder, a few whispered the names of the nations such as China or India. Then he answered, “The largest nation in the world is imagination!” It has been the largest and will always be the largest, for everyone has an opinion, thought, or bias to offer on most any subject.

Imagination doesn’t need any proof or facts to be convincing to many. It doesn’t need factual material to fill in the blanks about events in life. Our minds can easily run away with us, causing us to think and/or spread many untruths. It can work against us through thinking about things that could happen before anything even takes place. Therefore, imagination is a battleground of the mind and heart where satan tries to sow doubt, fear, unrest, bitterness, envy, jealousy, misunderstanding, misconceptions, lusts, etc. When such things are working in the heart they can be very difficult to root out and overcome. The Father has provided weapons in the spiritual realm to overcome all that exalts itself against God. II Corinthians 6:6-7 gives us weapons to utilize so that we can pull down strongholds by the grace and power of God.

Though not mentioned a great deal in the Bible, the usual connotation for imagination is not very good. Biblically, man’s imagination is many times based on false assumptions, false information, false systems of philosophy, proud conceits, and carnal reasons. All of these are areas in which satan loves to traffic in when dealing with man.

We must use the weapons of purity, kindness, longsuffering, and love without hypocrisy to overcome the reasonings and opinions that lead us away from God, and to overcome all strongholds.

—Bro. Paul Phillips



**DECEMBER 8, 2024**

**BE SOBER, BE VIGILANT**

**1 Peter 5:8** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

**1 Thessalonians 5:5** Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

**1 Timothy 3:2** A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

**1 Timothy 3:8** Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

**Titus 2:1** But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.

7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

**1 Peter 1:13** Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

**MEMORY VERSE:** But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. —I Peter 4:7

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Bro. Paul and Bro. Peter both exhorted the young, the old, the brothers, the sisters, the deacons, and the bishops to be sober, vigilant, prayerful, and watchful. We have an adversary that never sleeps and is always watching for a chance to slip something onto our path to cause us to stumble. Praise God, we have an advocate who helps us avoid these pitfalls, but it is important we do our little part. Considering the list of those mentioned in the scriptures who must be careful, no one is exempt.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Pe 5:8 **“Sober”**: to abstain from wine; discreet; watchful (Strong’s); calm, collected in spirit, temperate, dispassionate, circumspect (*Thayer*).

1 Pe 5:8 **“Vigilant”**: to keep awake; watchful (*Strong’s*); to give strict attention to; cautious; active (*Thayer*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

When satan approached Eve with his cunning, twisted logic, he came when she was alone—and most likely when she was in a vulnerable frame of mind. Did she know she was at a weak point? Perhaps not, since every life happening would have been a new concept to her. She could have been a little drowsy, bored, or just hungry. Whatever the situation was, the devil made his move when he perceived she was at her weakest.

At the start of Jesus' ministry, the devil tempted him in the wilderness on three major points. He struck when he thought Jesus would be the least watchful—after forty days of fasting. The first temptation was cloaked in the need to eat. After all, Jesus intended to eat soon anyway. What could be wrong about making a stone into bread?

Three and a half years later, Jesus asked Peter, James, and John, to watch with Him in the garden of Gethsemane during the darkest time of His life. Not only did He need their support, but He knew they needed to watch for the sake of their own souls. His disciples, however, “slept for sorrow,” and were unmindful of the stealthy foot tread of those seeking to take Jesus by force.

### DISCUSSION:

1. The devil sometimes comes “as a roaring lion,” but how does he come at other times?
2. What effect might spiritual leaders have on those they should be helping if their behavior is careless and frivolous?
3. Why is it important that the companions of spiritual leaders be sober and faithful also?
4. How easy is it for young people to “undo” life-altering decisions made in thoughtless haste?
5. When we have “sound speech, that cannot be condemned,” how might some be helped that may not be helped otherwise?
6. Who watches our lives, and what effect do we have on them?
7. What benefits do I reap when I am mindful to be sober and vigilant?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Children love to have fun. Our grandchildren are no exception. While it's good for children to enjoy themselves, it can come with a price if they are having such a good time they fail to listen to words of warning at a critical time.

A few years ago, one of our grandsons was playing in his front yard. All of a sudden, he darted toward the street. His mother was near enough to see him running toward the street. She also heard a fast-moving vehicle coming. Knowing her son could not see the oncoming traffic because of their own parked car blocking the view, she screamed for him to stop. Thankfully, our grandson stopped just as the vehicle whizzed by. The driver was completely oblivious of the tragedy so narrowly avoided.

My wife and I experienced something similar a few weeks ago while watching two of our grandsons. We were at a play area at a little hamburger establishment. After enjoying the miniature train ride, a nice meal, and delicious ice cream, it was time to go home. One of our grandsons decided to run ahead to our car parked across the street in the parking lot. My wife noticed our grandson's actions and heard the sound of a car coming on the street. She screamed for the little runner to stop. Thankfully, he did. Our idyllic afternoon could have ended so much differently.

Our Heavenly Father sees everything, both good and bad. He longs to warn us of hidden dangers to help us avoid the pitfalls satan lays for our feet. If we are having such a good time that we "do not have time to listen," we could end up in real trouble. It is good to laugh, enjoy ourselves, and forget some of the cares of life. May the Lord help us, though, lest we forget the dangers that are still present.

*"Dear God, help me to be sober and vigilant. I cannot see what you see, and do not comprehend all of the dangers you long to spare me from. Help me listen to your still, small voice. Amen."*

## REFLECTIONS

The most precious, priceless possession that each of us has and is responsible for in life is our never-dying souls. As we are reminded in the lesson, we have an adversary that uses any and every means

possible in an attempt to destroy every one of us. He came to steal, kill and to destroy (John 10:10). He is always lurking around; we can never let our guard down, particularly during times of relaxation and when everything is “going well.” Does that mean we have to walk around with a grim face all the time? No, I believe God wants us to smile and laugh. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” We should be balanced.

How aware are you of your surroundings in daily life, especially in unfamiliar places? I tend to be more conscious of my environment when in areas I have never been before. May God help us to have even a greater awareness for our souls. Verse one of song number 302 in our songbook says: My soul, be on thy guard, ten thousand foes arise, and host of sin are pressing hard to draw thee from the skies. By maintaining a close, consistent relationship with God we can be well-equipped to be more than conquerors. Having a mind and spirit of prayer day by day will keep us in harmony with our heavenly father.

—Bro. Tavis Browne

**DECEMBER 15, 2024**

### **I WILL SET NO WICKED THING BEFORE MINE EYES**

**Psalms 101:1** A Psalm of David. I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.

**Psalms 119:37** Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

**Job 31:1** I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

**Genesis 6:1** And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

**2 Samuel 11:1** And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

3 And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

**Proverbs 4:25** Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

**Proverbs 23:31** Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

**Matthew 5:27** Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

—Genesis 3:6

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Our eyes have always been a means of introducing temptation. We are affected greatly by visual information. Our minds tend to dwell on what we have seen, especially if it is not wholesome and edifying. Many have fallen into sin and destruction through the avenue of their eyes. The eyes see first, the mind then starts thinking about it, and a decision has to be made quickly whether to reject or accept what was seen. That which is not rejected by God’s grace quickly grows to fill the mind with all manner of ill thoughts. Only God can truly help us win the war of the eyes and mind.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Ps 101:3 **“Wicked”**: without profit, worthless, destructive.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Eve struggled with the beautiful fruit hanging from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The devil then filled her mind with questions and doubts after seeing the fruit. Ultimately, Eve made the decision to follow the path of what her eyes saw, and what her mind thought was best—“I will be wise, and be like God!”

Baalam taught Balak to tempt the men of Israel with the beauty of their young women. Israel could not be defeated in normal warfare or by a curse, but could be conquered if the men of Israel did not allow God to help them with what they saw.

Years later, David saw a beautiful young woman and did not turn away his eyes. This act ultimately led to sin upon sin, with the after effects troubling generations to come.

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. How important is it to “walk within my house with a perfect heart?”
2. While it is possible to see many things in public, what can we now see in private in our homes?
3. What are some of the “wicked things” we can set before our eyes today?
4. How can these “wicked things” affect our thinking?

5. What does it mean to “hate the work of them that turn aside”?
6. How important is it to pray, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity”?
7. Job made a covenant with his eyes. How did this covenant benefit him and others?
8. We read in Genesis 6 where men “saw the daughters of men that they were fair.” How does this apply to today?
9. What would have been the best thing for David to do when he was first tempted with Bathsheba?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Generally speaking, people remember 10 percent of what they read, 20 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see, 50 percent of what they see and hear, 70 percent of what they say and write, and 90 percent of what they do. ([www.strath.ac.uk](http://www.strath.ac.uk)) Another study categorizes the memory retention pyramid as follows: 5 percent lecture, 10 percent reading, 20 percent audio/visual, 30 percent demonstration, 50 percent discussion, 75 percent practice/ doing, and 90 percent teaching others. (<https://deepread.com/the-learning-pyramid-2/>) A common theme with all of the different variations of “learning and retention pyramids” is there is a progression of retention that starts with visual or audio only and progresses to the final levels of doing / teaching. The visual with audio is somewhere in the middle.

The important point to consider is that by the time a person engages in visual/audio, there is usually enough interest in the subject to progress to the next levels, such as discussion, practicing what is learned, and teaching. The subject matter soon becomes a part of a person’s daily life and character, ultimately affecting the eternal destiny of the soul.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, help me with what I see, hear, and think about. Please help me to heed the quiet checks of your Holy Spirit. Amen.”*

### REFLECTIONS

It has been said that you can never really unsee what you have gazed upon, that it will always be a part of your memories even if



buried deeply away. I think of my grandfather and the memories he had from serving in WW II as a combat medic. Sometimes he talked about his experiences and, if we grandchildren were spending the night, grandma would have us all sleep with her in the spare bedroom because grandpa would most likely suffer flashbacks and nightmares once he fell asleep. He made a comment to me once when I was a teenager that, “I wanted to see it all and boy did I.” He said that with a tone of regret for what he chose to set before his eyes, as those visions haunted him the rest of his life.

It’s not just the traumatic and disturbing things we need to beware of, but also things that tempt and snare us. I can remember as a child being told to not nip of the goodies and delicious foods seemingly overflowing the table at Christmas dinner. Seeing all the fudges, candies, cookies, hams and turkeys, roasts and mashed potatoes and gravies, and cake and pies—all beckoning of their wonderful tastes to be so delightfully enjoyed. Invariably if I continued to hang around the table I would be drawn closer and closer, as I kept glancing until I would give in and nip, often immediately getting in trouble. My mother would often say that if I couldn’t resist then I should go outside and play instead of hanging around the table allowing myself to be tempted.

We need to be very careful what we allow in our minds as often these things influence and impact us far more that we think or expect.

—Bro. Eric Doolittle

**DECEMBER 22, 2024**

**FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND**

**Philippians 3:12** Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

**Luke 9:57** And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

**1 Corinthians 9:24** Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. —Hebrews 12:1

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** We all have a past, present, and a future. If we allow it, our past will hinder our present frame of mind, which ultimately affects our future. The Apostle Paul learned to put the past under the blood of Jesus so he might gain a home in heaven and be better equipped to help others gain heaven. Jesus admonished those who would follow him that, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Phi 13:13 **“Forget”**: to lose out of mind, to neglect (*Strong’s*); to no longer care for, to give over to oblivion (*Thayer*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The Apostle Paul used the analogy of what it took to run a race successfully. The first Olympic foot race, called the Stadion, was run in Greece in 776 B.C. By Paul’s time, the Romans had continued the tradition of holding Olympic contests every four years. Paul referenced running a race five different times in his epistles. Everyone who read the epistles could readily identify with the analogy of running a race and knew the importance of “running all, running to win, running with certainty, running with patience, and running well.”

There is more than one account of a runner falling during a race, getting back up, and winning the race. One of the most recent examples of this happening was at this year’s Olympic hurdle races. Sixteen-year-old Maia Heward-Mills hit one of the hurdles, fell on her face, and lost a shoe, but she got back up and ran with all her might—and still won the race! (<https://www.runnersworld.com/news/a60849230/hurdler-loses-shoe-and-still-wins/>)

## DISCUSSION:

1. What is likely to happen if we stop running our spiritual race before we are finished?
2. How can failures affect us if we allow them?
3. Who can have a failure or fall during a race?
4. What does it really mean to “forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before”?
5. How can looking back to the past hinder our present progress?
6. The Apostle Paul said that runners must be temperate in all things. How does this relate spiritually?
7. Why did Paul believe it was possible to lose his own soul, even after he had preached to others?
8. What did Paul determine to do so that he might win his Heavenly crown?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Racehorses often wear blinkers, sometimes known as blinders, during a race. The blinkers are customized for each horse in order to help them focus on the race ahead. Some horses are distracted too much by what is beside them, so the cups at the eye holes in their racing hoods come up toward the front enough to keep them from seeing what is beside them. Other horses are not distracted as much by what is beside them, but only by what is behind them. In these cases, the blinker cup blocks only the rearward view. There are even instances where the side view is blocked, but the rear view is opened up a little—but only enough to allow the horse to see what they must see behind them to compete their best.

The owners of the racehorses must notify race officials before each race if their horse is “blinkers on, or blinkers off.” This information is necessary to keep those betting on the races informed, because the use of blinkers can affect the outcome of a race. [Betting and gambling have caused many to lose their homes, jobs, marriages, etc., but that is another subject for another time.] The physical ability of a horse is not the only factor in a race. What the horse sees—or does not see—also has a great impact on the finish line.

*(California Thoroughbred Racing Club YouTube video, Jay C. Jehf, July 2, 2021)*

Our Heavenly Father knows best how to “customize our blinkers” to help us run our spiritual race successfully. If our spiritual focus is hindered too much by what is behind us, He will help us minimize how much we concentrate on the past. If we are bothered too much by what is going on beside us, He will help us with that. When we do need to be reminded of our past to help spur us on, He will make sure we remember just enough to keep us motivated properly. A good example is the song, “Remind Me Dear Lord.”

God has many methods of “customizing our blinkers” to get each one of us to Heaven. None of us deal with the same thing at the same time, because our individual spiritual situations are as unique as we are. Our Heavenly Father lovingly crafts our challenges and problems to help us to run our race to the end—and win against sin and self.

*“Dear Lord, fit me with the blinkers that will help me run my Christian race with the greatest success. Help me make Heaven, and help me take as many others with me as possible. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

The Apostle Paul (*while he was still called Saul*) finally realized that he was guilty of a serious failing in his life—he had persecuted God’s church! He earnestly sought the Lord and found forgiveness; he was able to forgive himself. He could have stayed so ashamed of himself that he might have retreated into isolation, but he didn’t let his past cripple him. He understood that God still had a plan for him, so he trusted God for that and followed on. Aren’t we glad that Paul persevered and was able to leave us many good examples and instructions?

The reality is that we ALL have regrets in life, and we cannot erase our past. But the good news is that we can all receive forgiveness for our past wrongs. Tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes. The important thing is that we go forward and don’t let our past mistakes continue to trouble or hinder us. “Forgetting” our past mistakes is not good if we just ignore them. Instead, we are to learn from them in a constructive way that enables us to avoid repeating them. Romans 8:28 tells us that “all things work together for good.” Can “all things” include mistakes? Could learning from and taking caution after a “small” mistake” help us avoid making a potentially “bigger” mistake in the same area later on? I believe so – IF we seek God’s help in it.

The example of a toddler learning to walk has some good lessons for us. Each toddler WILL fall as they learn, and they WILL get bumps and bruises; but, they don’t let their failures keep them from trying again—and again. They don’t keep looking back and worrying about their past; they continue to look forward. Toddlers have a goal that they are pursuing, and it is important for them to reach it. It is worth all the effort, including the missteps and pains along the way. They CAN learn how to walk if they don’t quit.

—Bro. Ron Cole

DECEMBER 29, 2024

**BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND**

**Romans 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

**Ezekiel 36:26** A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

**Ephesians 1:18** The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

**2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

**Ephesians 4:23** And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

**Colossians 3:9** Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

**Acts 19:2** He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

**Titus 3:4** But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

**MEMORY VERSE:** Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. —Psalm 51:10

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** We can, and must, be transformed by the renewing of our mind to be able to enjoy living life the way God planned. The Lord wants to take away our old stony heart and give us a new heart of flesh – one that is no longer stubborn, hard, selfish, and unbelieving.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Rom 12:2 “**Transform**”: to change into another form; to transfigure, as in when Christ’s appearance was changed on the mount of transfiguration (*Thayer*).

Rom 12:2 “**Renew**”: renovation; complete change for the better.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God pled with his people to “cast away your transgressions, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die?” (Ezekiel 18:31 paraphrased) God knew, however, that mankind could not make themselves new hearts and new spirits, but He had a plan. He told them in Ezekiel 36:26-28 that He would *give* them a new heart, and *put* a new spirit within them so that they might walk in His statutes and keep His judgments. The wonderful means for our salvation and transformation of our mind was formulated from the very beginning, as is revealed in the prophecy when God told satan in the Garden of Eden the offspring of Eve would bruise his head.

### DISCUSSION:

1. What happens to the thinking of those who conform to the world?
2. Why is it necessary to first “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” before we can be transformed by the renewing of our mind?
3. How does Romans 12:1-2, Acts 19:2 and Titus 3:5 support the doctrine of the transformation and renewal of our minds when

- we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit?
4. Describe some of the benefits of God’s Holy Spirit transforming our minds.
  5. Ponder on what has been your personal experience of added power and grace since the indwelling of the Spirit.

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

When Solomon built the temple, the building, along with all its furnishings, was consecrated for God’s exclusive use as a type and shadow of sanctification. Years later, the temple went through cycles of disrepair and neglect. Enemies stole much of its wealth and carried the sacred vessels to the temples of their idols. Sadly, the first temple was finally destroyed. God eventually allowed the temple to be rebuilt. It was refurnished with new, consecrated vessels and furniture. The Lord did not allow imperfect, unclean, unconsecrated furnishings and vessels to occupy His sacred dwelling place the second time, either.

The purified and consecrated temple furnishings and vessels are much like our minds and thinking. What good would it do to have a cleaned-up life, given to us through the saving blood of Jesus Christ, then allow our old thinking to remain? Salvation cleans us up inside and out, and saves us from all past sins. Only then are we qualified to go on to sanctification, so the Holy Spirit can renew our minds continually with the furnishings of His graces and thoughts and plans for our lives – not our own works, thoughts and plans.

Our Heavenly Father not only redeems and saves us from our past by the blood of His Son, but He also desires to fill us with all of the good things His Holy Spirit has to offer, including power to live an overcoming life!

*“Dear Heavenly Father, I invite your Holy Spirit to completely fill my spiritual house. No rooms or closets are barred from your searching eye. I give your Holy Spirit free reign to transform and renew my mind daily. Amen.”*

### **REFLECTIONS**

Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.” We live in



an age of many mental distractions. Often, I am keenly aware that the individual who has asked me a question or the one who initiated the conversation is either not listening or is filtering what I am saying through something else that is going on in their head. When I see this is happening, I can stop mid-sentence in what I'm saying and the other person either is oblivious of me stopping or immediately begins to say what is going on in their mind. This happens without acknowledging that I have stopped mid-thought in what I was saying. To me this [action] says that they were not really listening to what I was saying.

The hope in the gospel message is that our minds and hearts can be changed to be congruent with Christ's mind. The lessons in this quarter have given us good, beneficial things to think upon. We can either ask God to transform our thinking to the proper things, or we can be distracted by all of the clatter going on around us. Ultimately "...as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

—Bro. Dan Adams

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