

Thinking God's Love

By Santiago Lange

In Philippians 4:8 we read: **“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, 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”.**



The thought life is one of the great battlegrounds of the Christian life. The average brain weighs about 3 pounds and contains up to 100 billion neurons, which are connected with more than one quintillion synapses. The potential of the mind is phenomenal. One scientist said, "The human brain is the most complex arrangement of matter in the universe." Yet the battle for the mind is not just because it is the most complex mechanism in the world, but because it is the most influential organ of your body.

Fifteen prominent college professors took this challenge: "If all the books on the art of moving human beings into action were condensed into one brief statement, what would that statement be?" The result of their deliberations was:

*What the mind attends to,
it considers;
What the minds does not attend to,
it dismisses.
What the mind attends to continually,
it believes.
What the mind believes,
it eventually does.*

Simply put; whatever we think about is what we become and do. Solomon said in Proverbs 23:7 **“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he”.**

Whatever dwells in the minds will eventually be displayed in the life. Attitudes become actions. There is nothing no one has ever done that first the decision was not made in the mind. What we do in life is the sum total of our thoughts. The feeding of the mind produces the fruit of the life. If we put garbage in our minds that is what is going to come out in how we live and behave. If a person thinks right they are more prone to live and do right. But if a person dwells in wrong thoughts they will tend to live and do wrong.

Our thought life is to consist of that which is virtuous and worthy of praise. The word "virtue" speaks of that which is excellent. The word "praise" speaks of that which is praiseworthy. The apostle Paul is describing a proper thought life. A good way to judge what we think about is to ask: "Is what I am thinking about marked by excellence or is it something cheap and not worth thinking about? Is this something that is praiseworthy? Is this something that is positive and beneficial?"

The Christian should desire and develop a proper thought life. In order to accomplish this, we need to keep submitting ourselves to the lead of the Holy Spirit. One should reflect on good things and refrain from bad thoughts. The word "think" speaks of careful reflection. It speaks of thinking in the sense of "to calculate". It is to think logically and carefully. It is translated "account, reckon, reason, and conclude." It means to take account of things with a view of committing yourself to them.

We are to turn what we think about into practical deeds. It is to turn our thoughts into actions, our sentiments into commitments, our words into deeds. Paul not only tells us how to think but gives us a list of items that we ought to think about. He is saying that instead of thinking about the wrong things, there are some good things we ought to dwell on. He lists 6 things we ought to think about. The first 3 things that are mentioned seem to be personal and involve one's inner character. These are things that if one thinks about, they will guard the inner life and personal character from being defiled.

First Paul tells us to think on things that are "true." These are things that are true in character, things that are real in contrast to that which is false and deceitful. Secondly, we are to think on things that are "honest." These are things that are worthy and respectable. Thirdly we are to think on things that are "just." These are things that are righteous and godly. Again, what we think about influences our life. As we think on things that are true, honest, and just, we become more true, honest, and just in our lives. Thinking on such things develops inner character. The real test of character is what a person will do when he is alone and when he knows that no one would ever find out or know.

The next 3 things Paul mentions seem to apply to our public life and how our life relates to others. First, we are to think on things that are "pure." This speaks of not only a purity from sin but of motives as well. What we do is important, but equally important is why we do it. Secondly, we are to think on things that are "lovely." The word speaks of that which promotes brotherly love and creates agreement. Finally, we are to think on things that are of "good report." This speaks of that which is winsome and attractive. These are all things that positively influence our relationship with others. If one is always thinking in terms of revenge, getting even, dealing with ulterior motives, they will behave that way toward people. But we are not to think that way nor behave that way. If in the Spirit we rightly discipline ourselves to think positively it will be revealed in our private character and our public conduct. That is why Paul said, "Think on these things."

May our thoughts increasingly become a reflection of the love of God in our hearts! □