

Articles by Ben Tuininga

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What Do You Think?

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Ben Tuininga

A philosopher has said, "What you think, you are!" It agrees with Prov. 23:7 where it is written about man, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." The unregenerate man does not have God in his thoughts, that is, he himself, not God, is the center of his thinking. The backslider forgets about God, and has turned his thoughts to things and self. How do you think? What governs your thinking? Have you ever thought what the Bible has to say regarding the mind? Some words used in the Bible regarding the mental function are "thoughts," "mind," "think," "remember," "reason," "understand," "judge," "know," and many other related words and derivatives.

A step toward real learning is that of recall. There is much in God's Word about remembrance. We are told to remember Lot's wife (Lk. 13:32) whose tragic end resulted from her mental attachment to her stuff in the city of Sodom. She should have remembered the Lord's Word which was not to look behind. Throughout the Old Testament Israel was urged to remember the loving and faithful as well as the righteous acts of Jehovah. Believers are to remember the poor in their giving (Gal. 2:10); they are to remember rulers and leaders in prayer and respect and esteem (Heb. 13:7); they are to remember the Lord who gave Himself for them, as He requested in 1 Cor. 11; they are to correct any wrong done toward a fellow believer that comes to mind as they go to worship the Lord (Mt. 5:23); they are to

remember their former unsaved estate lest they should become ungrateful, proud, and negligent (Eph. 2:11). Such remembrance or recollection can only become practical experience if there is first a teaching process. The mind of the young believer must therefore read and hear God's Word. The Spirit of God must teach, and the believer must learn that Word. Then such recollection and remembrance can be translated into a practical experience. This is the first simple and loving response the believer can render to the Lord who has taught him. It is elementary, but it reveals the spirituality of the mind.

Then there is a mental function one would call constructive thinking or reasoning. Our Lord reasoned with the friends and enemies. So did the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:2-3), and also Apollos (Acts 18:26-28). The Apostle used rational terminology such as "we conclude," "count," "reckon," "impute," etc. in Romans frequently. Reason is necessary to reason, for faith introduces into reason. "Through faith we understand that the world (ages) were framed by the Word of God" (Heb. 11:3). Faith leads to knowledge. We have believed, and are now in the process of finding out. We believe God's Word, and we are discovering the depths and the wonders of its truth daily. Nothing in true science and history contradicts the Word. The entire universe corroborates God's Word. Therefore we can freely think; reasoning from faith in God and His Word can but lead to worship of Him who knows everything. At best now we only know in part, and all our thinking must be spiritual not carnal (Rom. 8:6, 7, 27). What pleasures come to those who think of nature, astronomy, geology and all the sciences when such thinking is done

in the light and love of God's Word! How great and purposeful is our Creator!

But there are dangers in thinking. Those dangers lie in ourselves. Therefore we read that we are to cast down imaginations and all that asserts itself against God's knowledge, and we are to bring the thoughts of our minds as though captured for Christ in loving obedience to Him (2 Cor. 10:5). The human mind can so easily run wild. We day dream, think evil thoughts, criticize, hate, plot against others, justify ourselves, gossip, etc., etc. It is little wonder the Lord said that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," (Mk. 7:21). Thinking is the core of man, and through thoughts he expresses himself. Carnality is simply thinking away from God and His Word (Rom. 8:5). The rich fool of Lk. 12 is an example. He thought of self, the present, things, and ease, but forgot God, eternity, others, and loss. The mind can be corrupted from that "purity that is toward Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3 R.V.) It seems to be a special Satanic scheme ever since Adam and Eve's day. A thousand things press upon the mind to disturb, to tempt, and to change! The unregenerate have "blinded minds" (2 Cor. 4:4). There is no appeal, no interest, no thinking about God and Christ. The word "devices" in 2 Cor. 2:11, used to describe Satan's tactics, is the very same word elsewhere given as "minds." Satan's entire scheme is the presentation of a delusion to the mind. He preys upon the mind; he counter attacks with a false thinking; he attacks from the sides and from behind. Those things which detract from truth are his "devices." He is the subtle tempter who guides the thinking into the shadows and away from reality. It is the reality we need.

For this reality we need corrective thinking or positive helps toward self-control over our minds. It is recorded in Mk. 5 that when the Lord had healed the demoniac, that he was in his right mind. Rebirth brings to the soul that proper mental attitude toward God and all truth. Not until one comes to the Lord Jesus Christ as a sinner coming to the only Saviour can one really think rightly. So the first corrective in thinking is faith in Christ and God's Word.

For the believer there are definite exhortations because God knows our weaknesses and Satan's subtle ways. God presents Himself as an all-sufficient helper for those who need Him. He tells us not to be anxious, but to pray at anytime about anything. Definite prayer to God brings the pledge that He will guard our hearts and thoughts (Phil. 4:6-7). In Phil. 2:2, 5 the apostle had enjoined the believers to be "like minded" and to have the "mind" of Christ which was unselfish, unpretentious, sacrificial, pure and loving devotion to God without fear of consequences. In Col. 3:2 we are urged to set our affection (or mind) on things above where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God. Love is a mental attitude. People do what they think and generally love it! Think about an object long enough and you may want it and if it doesn't meet the requirement of your thinking your love for it may turn to hatred. All this is frustrating to the soul, therefore "Think soberly" (Rom. 12); "reckon" or "reason" or "count" yourself to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:11). Think Christ and you'll become like Him! True Christianity is to have Christ live in you, through you, for you, with you, and over you! Instead of "vain imaginations" (Rom. 1:21), there will be desires and a

sense of responsibility to think things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Phil. 4:8). Such thoughts are virtuous and praiseworthy! And in a coming Day such thinking with its actions will receive a “Well done” from our Lord when every thought and work will be revealed.

Would it not be well for us to check the subject material and the direction of our thinking? Is it Godward? Is it worldward? Is it the mind of the Spirit? To what extent does the newspaper, the picture magazine, the television, the sexy side of life draw any attention and govern our thinking? Should we not lay aside many childish thoughts and think as men (1 Cor. 13:11)? Does the love of Christ so constrain us “that love thinketh no evil?” May the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, “teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance,” whatever He has said to you as the result of your reading and thinking in His Word (John 14:26). Our thoughts must not be worth only a penny, but be worthy of our Lord Jesus Christ.