

THINK ON THESE THINGS

March 3, 2019

Philippians 4:1-23

“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

The Scriptures rightly emphasize the importance of our thoughts. Thoughts determine what we say, and our speech is addressed pointedly in Scripture: “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell” (James 3:2-6).

Not only speech, but actions also are determined by our thoughts. Christ emphasized the seriousness of this: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23).

The church in Philippi included some who placed themselves at the center of their thinking. Does this sound strange or unusual? In fact, it is the natural, usual and universal characteristic of mankind. And it plays a significant role in every interpersonal conflict. “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” (James 4:1).

The Apostle Paul addressed this evil from several angles in the book of Philippians. He admonished the reader: “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (2:2-5). Upon this instructional foundation, he then instructed: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,” then detailed Christ’s astonishing, willful humiliation unto death by crucifixion.

Paul chided two in Philippi for bad thoughts when he wrote, “I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord” (4:2). He continued to address the entire church’s thoughts as he wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every

thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (4:4-7).

Upon this body of instruction Paul makes a final appeal in 4:8. Our thoughts, being so vital to our speech and actions, and proceeding from a heart that “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9), must be redirected continually to right thinking. Upon that which is true, venerable, just, chaste, promoting goodwill, commendable, virtuous and praiseworthy, our thoughts dwell and meditate.