

The Importance of Thoughts

If you are concerned about your character, your conduct, your life and your destiny, THEN BE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR THOUGHTS. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). The heart is the mind, and the mind is the center of thoughts. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). A man may not be what he appears to be, but he is what he thinks.

What goes **into** your mind, then, is extremely important. Be careful about the interests you acquire, the tastes you cultivate, the desires you develop. They shape what goes into your mind. The conversations you listen to, the scenes you observe, the movies you view, the TV programs you tune into, the newspapers, magazines and books you read, the songs by which you are entertained, the jokes you laugh at, the things you are taught all have a part in feeding information into your mind.

You evaluate and monitor all that you hear and see. Your standard for evaluation and your conscience are vital and play their roles. You may seek out or receive what is vulgar or distorted, or you may reject and refuse it. You may pursue and embrace what is wholesome and true, or you may have no interest in it and neglect it. Be cautious, particular and selective about what goes into your mind. If you allow garbage to go in, then garbage will come out in the form of words and deeds.

What goes on **in** your mind is also extremely important. Be careful about your thoughts, meditations, desires, ambitions, daydreams and fantasies. You determine what goes on in your mind. You are the master of it because you have control over it. It is your own little secret world -- except that God knows all about it, and will one day bring it to light when you have to answer for it in the judgment (Eccl. 12:14; Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 2:16; 2 Cor. 5:10). And sooner or later it will find expression in your life and make itself known.

We cannot be like God without thinking the thoughts of God. We cannot know the thoughts of God apart from the revelation of the things of God in the word of God (I Cor. 2:11-13). We cannot have the thoughts of God in our hearts apart from reverent study of and meditation upon the word of God, coupled with a sincere desire to do the will of God (Jn. 7:17).

- by **Bill Crews**

"I Study My Bible Like I Plow My Field"

A farmer explained: "I study my Bible like I plow my field. Oftentimes when I'm plowing or breaking new ground, my plow will get hung under a root, and if I'm going at a pretty good clip it will really jar me. But I don't get mad and beat my mule and burn my plow. No, I just back up a little, ease over the root and get on with my plowing. Next time around I'll probably hit that root again and it still shakes me up, but I don't quit farming. I just back up, ease over the root and keep on working. Pretty soon I have hit that root so many times that it's loose and the first thing you know I plow right through it and don't even notice it. I've got it shook loose. That's the way I study the Bible. When I come upon a hard passage, it might shake me up a little bit, but I don't throw away my Bible and quit the Lord on that account. I just ease over it and keep on studying. The next time I read that passage I jar it a little bit more. I keep on doing this until finally, because of information that I have gathered from other parts of the Bible I am able to jar the passage loose. I understand it."

- **selected**

An Anecdote from 'Raccoon' John Smith

While passing a Methodist camp meeting one day, pioneer preacher 'Raccoon' John Smith stopped to watch a young Methodist preacher baptize a howling, rebellious infant by sprinkling water on the squirming body. When the service was concluded, he stepped to the front of the crowd and, identifying himself, took the preacher firmly by the arm and attempted to lead him toward the creek a few yards away.

“What are you trying to do, Brother Smith?” the young preacher protested. “Are you out of your mind?”

“What am I trying to do?” John affected deep surprise. “Why, sir, I am going to baptize you by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his commandment.”

“But I have no desire for such baptism. I know of you; you are called ‘The Dipper.’ But you are not going to dip me. I’m a Methodist; let me go!”

John tightened his hold on the man’s arm while the crowd watched, some in apprehension, others in amusement. “That is a scoffer’s blasphemy of a holy ordinance,” John said sternly. “Are you a believer?”

“Of course I’m a believer,” the preacher said indignantly. “But I’m not willing to be immersed. It would do no good for you to baptize me against my will. It would be wrong!”

“I don’t understand,” John said. “Only a few minutes ago you baptized a helpless baby against its will, although it screamed and kicked. Did you get its consent first? Come along, sir, we will have no more of this foolishness.”

The crowd broke into open laughter, and John gave the young preacher a quick pull toward the creek, and then as suddenly released him.

- by **Louis Cochran**

Is The Preacher Over-Confident? Closed-Minded?

Paul told Timothy to “*preach the word; be instant in season, out of season*” (2 Tim. 4:2). It has been suggested that this phrase literally means to preach when folks like it and when they don’t. In another place the apostles prayed for “*boldness*” in their preaching (Acts 4:29). So, preachers are to boldly proclaim a message that will sometimes be unpopular.

In the process of doing this work, a preacher is in a precarious situation. This boldness may cause his hearers to think that he is over-confident. Some may imagine that he is closed-minded. There may be the impression that he is not open to other points-of-view, or that he wants to stifle what others have to say. Sadly, in some cases and with some preachers, these accusations are true.

However, no preacher ‘worth his salt’ wants to discourage open discussion of issues. And, while he may speak forcefully on a given topic, he acknowledges his own limitations and the possibility that he can err in understanding the Scriptures. If he is obedient to the Word, he knows that he (like all others) must continue to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet. 3:18).

In this age of “political correctness” it has become increasingly unpopular to tell people that they are wrong about anything. But, of course, that is a significant part of what preachers do. Those who are doing their best to “*reprove, rebuke and exhort*” (2 Tim. 4:2) will inevitably touch some areas that are ‘close to home.’ When this happens, we urge you to seriously consider what has been said. Honestly examine yourself to see if you need to apply the lesson. Be willing to re-think your previous position. And, finally, do not hesitate to share your thoughts and concerns with the preacher. If he is the kind of man he ought to be, he will gladly discuss any issue with you. Give him the chance to do so!

- by **Greg Gwin**