



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Godly Thinking in the Capitol

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

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What we think about and how we think greatly determines our attitudes, actions, and character. A.W. Tozer, a well known preacher and author who once pastored a church in Nutter Fort, WV once said: **“Whatever a person thinks about, when they are free to think about what they will, that is what they are or will soon become.”** Whenever a person trusts Christ, their lives are changed. The Bible says they become a “new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Perhaps the greatest change comes in the mind and how we think about God, sin, ourselves, our priorities, other people, and every area of life. It is this change in our minds and in our thinking of which Paul writes in Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

Here Paul gives a list of positive qualities and encourages believers to **“dwell on these things”**. In the KJV it is translated **“think on these things”**. The term literally means to reckon, compute, or calculate. In biblical use it means to think deeply about, exercise careful reflection, to count up or weigh the reasons, to deliberate, or to evaluate. It is a command by Paul to carefully weigh and think about everything – every area of life in light of the virtues he has listed.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GODLY THINKING

The importance of the mind and the way a citizen of heaven thinks is mentioned several times in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. In exhorting the believers to maintain unity with each other, Paul exhorts them to be of **“one mind”** (1:27), to have the **“same mind”** (2:2), and to have **“humility of mind”** (2:3). He urges them to have the **“attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus”** (2:5). In essence, he is telling them that if they individually will develop right thinking, then they will indeed have unity and treat each other as they should. He goes on to speak of how people’s thinking will impact their spiritual lives. In 3:4 he writes of how the self-righteous will have a mind to **“put confidence in the flesh”**. In 3:19 he describes how the wicked **“set their minds on earthly things”**. In our previous study we

saw how prayer and faith in God will allow His peace to **“guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”** (4:7) In the letter of Philippians alone we see the importance of the mind and one’s way of thinking. We see this same emphasis throughout Paul’s writing and the rest of scripture:

*“Come now, and **let us reason together.**”*

*Says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. **Isaiah 1:18***

*...And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and **with all your mind**, and with all your strength. **Mark 12:30***

*⁵For those who are according to the flesh **set their minds** on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace...*

Romans 8:5-6

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

Romans 12:2

*⁵We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are **taking every thought captive** to the obedience of Christ... **2 Corinthians 10:5***

*²¹... If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be **renewed in the spirit of your mind**, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. **Ephesians 4:21-24***

*¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²**Set your mind on the things above**, not on the things that are on earth. **Colossians 3:1-2***

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL INTERIM BIBLE STUDY TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

**8:00 A.M. – HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM (M 252 NEAR MINORITY OFFICES)
12:00 NOON – TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54 IN BASEMENT OF EAST WING)**

Godly Thinking in the Capitol

Throughout scripture we see the importance of the mind and of how we think. As we look a little more closely at Philippians 4:8, we learn from Paul how the Christian can change their way of thinking, growing to think and live more like a citizen of heaven.

THE QUALITIES OF GODLY THINKING

Paul shares a list of six qualities or virtues that should guide how we think and about what we think. They are really self explanatory but we can comment briefly on each.

True reminds us that the only source of real truth is found in Christ and His Word. Christ described Himself as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6) **Honorable** means worthy of respect, noble, and dignified. **Right** refers to what is righteous or in keeping with the eternal divine standards of a Holy God as they are revealed in scripture. **Pure** describes that which is morally clean or undefiled. **Lovely** characterizes that which is winsome, pleasing, or attractive. **Good repute** exemplifies that which is well thought of or highly regarded. He summarizes by saying if there is anything **excellent and worthy of praise** to dwell on or think about these things.

HOW TO DEVELOP GODLY THINKING

Paul gives a simple command for the above virtues to govern what we think about and how we think. As we meditate on the message of this verse, it points us to some ways we can develop such godly thinking.

Develop a Discipline of Denial – We can infer from Paul’s exhortation that if we are to think on things that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, and excellent and worthy of praise, we are **NOT** to think about things that are untrue, dishonorable, unjust, impure, unlovely, uncommendable, not morally excellent, or that which is unworthy of praise. We need to guard our minds against that which goes against the virtues described in this verse and the other qualities laid out for the believer in God’s Word. This means we should carefully consider what we read, watch, and listen to. However, there is no way we can isolate ourselves from every worldly influence, which points to our next point.

Develop a Discipline of Discernment – We constantly face challenges to keep our thinking focused on God and on the virtues described by Paul. Consider how much modern media, education, philosophy, etc. put forth things that are antithetical to the virtues presented here. We must develop the discipline and

skill to evaluate everything we see, hear, or read in light of the character of God and the truth of His word. Some things are obvious such as the immorality portrayed in media or the internet. Some may be more subtle such as philosophies or false religious claims. This is an important skill for you to develop as you serve in the capitol since you must deal with so many important issues and questions related to legislation you must consider. Developing this skill demands time and effort and directs us to our last point.

Develop a Discipline of Studying and Meditating on Christ and His Word

– If it is said that people who handle money are taught to identify counterfeits by becoming thoroughly familiar with the real thing. The same principle applies to determining spiritual truth and the things about which we should think. Our focus on our minds and way of thinking brings us to another important biblical thought – that of meditation. You may recall from our studies in Psalm 119 how often the writer spoke of meditating on the Word of God (see Ps. 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148). Meditation simply refers to taking the time to read the Bible, perhaps memorize it, and to think about how it applies to our lives. This is the main reason we seek to provide Bible studies here at the statehouse – to help you study God’s Word and consider how it might apply to your lives and your work in the capitol. If you are concerned about developing godly thinking, you should seek to develop the discipline of constantly studying God’s Word and thinking about how it applies to your life. As you do so, and you deny the influences of worldly, ungodly thinking, you develop the ability to discern what you see, hear, and experience in light of the godly virtues described by Paul.

CONCLUSION

There is nothing more true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute and more excellent and worthy of praise than the person of Jesus Christ and the message of the gospel. We focus on the fact that we are all sinners against a holy God and under His wrath. We consider the truth that Jesus came and lived a perfect life of obedience and suffered and died in our place so that we might have our sins forgiven. When we understand this and repent and trust Him, then it indeed changes our thinking about everything.

Perhaps an apt closing is the prayer found in the old hymn by Kate Wilkinson:

May the mind of Christ, my Savior,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.