

## Is God In All Our Thoughts?

Our Walk Reflects Our Mind and Character

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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The English poet William Wordsworth wrote that, in 1807, "The world is too much with us." That is the opening line to a poem by the same name—"The World Is Too Much With Us".

The poem itself speaks about the hustle and bustle of life having made us lose our appreciation for nature—the natural world and all of its wonders.

Wordsworth was part of a naturalist movement that had gone away from looking at life from a godly point of view, and had become more romantic. They romanticized the way of nature. Even at this time of 1807, he felt that the world had become just way too complicated, and way too frenetic. So, he writes this poem trying to get people to slow down, look at the new industrial society they were creating, and see how it was destroying nature. He wanted everyone to just take a breather and get back to the more natural life. This was almost 200 years ago!

What is it like today compared to what it was like in 1807?

We, in the church, have a slightly different problem with the world. The world that is too much with us crowds out God as well as nature!

We don't idolize nature the way romantics seem to have done. We, of course, worship God. God wants us to have Him on our minds all the time.

But we live in a rapid-paced world, just as was predicted in Daniel 12:4. Daniel 12:4 is a scripture that most of us know—maybe not by citation—but we know what it says. The angel tells Daniel to, "Go your way, and seal the book until the time of the end." At that time, he says, "People will run to and fro and knowledge shall increase." Mr. Armstrong used that scripture quite a bit in his programs when he spoke about prophecy and the time of the end.

Time is going at a maddening speed. There is almost the same type of maddening displacement of people. Things are just going constantly and we're dealing with information overload which has not been helped at all by the internet, worldwide media, radio, and television; we're just constantly being hammered by information.

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There is intense and rapid-fire progress to the extent that most of the average "Joes" in America (and around the world) can't keep up. There are so many things happening. Whether it is bioengineering, or computer science, or anything else—things are moving forward because knowledge is being exponentially multiplied, and there are so many people with the intelligence and abilities to move progress ever onward.

It is to the point, though, that for most of us—if we try to keep up, if we try to go at the pace that the rest of the world seems to be going—life is a burnout. It seems to be so quickly over.

And God's people—the saints (who are coming out of this world, trying to live a life that is different from the way this world lives)—are caught in the middle of it. We're caught in the middle of the stream. We want to get out of the stream if we can, but we can't because our natural environment is in the stream! And so we're almost forced in many cases to move at the same pace as the rest of the world.

We heard about America's overwhelming economic edge at this current time, not only over Europe, but also over the remainder of the world. Nobody seems to be able to keep up with us. My father (in his last sermon) attributed it, in large part, to the American work ethic, or ability to produce. We are out there producing, let's say, another 25% on top of the rest of the world. We spend so many hours at work.

But, do we really have a work ethic here? Or is it that we are just merely trying to keep up?

A work ethic is fine and good, but in this country you must be a worker just to get by. You have to go out there and put in at least your 8 hours. And many people have to put in many more hours.

So, the average American "Joe" works not out a sense of patriotic duty, or high moral character, but to put bread on the table, clothes on his kid's back, and maybe put a little away in savings for a vacation, or maybe for his short retirement years. These days a lot of people can't retire at the normal age of 62, or 65, they have to work until 68 or 70 just to be able to live those few years of retirement comfortably.

So we work 9 or 10 hours a day (counting our commute). How much time does that leave us? Think about it. Counting the sleep that we must have which is nearly a third of our lives, meals that we eat, our daily routines in the shower, shaving, and whatnot; exercises that we're told we have to do—20 or 30 minutes, three times a week—housework, yard work, and all the other little things that we do (hobbies and

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whatnot)—that doesn't leave us very much time! None at all!

In the small amount of time we seem to have left, we're to pray and study, and meditate on God and His way of life.

So, I ask the question: How much time is there for God in our lives—going at this pace and trying to keep up physically, and monetarily just with the pace of knowledge and technology?

At least we have the Sabbath day, right?

That's a good thing. But, even so, the world is too much with us. Even our activities on the Sabbath day can sometimes get into this rush mode.

This brings me to my question for today. I've been hinting at it all along. "Is God in all of our thoughts?"

If we're so busy all the time, distracted by work, play, media, trying to keep up with all this knowledge that we're receiving, and commuting times, how much time, *really*, do we have for God? How high a priority have we placed on God?

Now we know that He is supposed to be first. But there are times in our day that God doesn't take first priority when maybe he should.

Are we letting this world and all of its demands and distractions crowd God out? Is He enough in our thoughts that our lives give evidence of godliness? This is where I'm headed.

Do our lives give evidence that our thoughts are on Him? Our lives will certainly reflect our thoughts.

We're going to begin reading in Psalm 10:1-4. This is where the idea for this sermon began. This Psalm is generally about the wicked man, and the way that he looks at God. He thinks that he can sin with impunity. He doesn't see God. God is not here as a physical presence so that he could look up when he's about to do something and say, "Oh! I shouldn't do this! God wouldn't approve!" Because he sees God there saying, "No, no, no!"

Without seeing God, without really understanding that God is with us—that God is sovereign, looking over His creation, looking over all men, able to see what we're

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doing—the wicked man thinks that he can get away with whatever, even murder!

As it says in Ecclesiastes 8:13, "Because sentence is not executed against an evil work..." the wicked person goes right on ahead and does all these things thinking there is never going to be any judgment. And in a sense, that's what comes out here in Psalm 10.

**Psalm 10:1-4** Why do You [God] stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised. For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire; He blesses the greedy and renounces the LORD. The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.

Remember I just said that this is about the wicked man. This whole Psalm is about the wicked man. But, don't let the overall subject distract you from the principle that's found here in verse 4, because to an extent we are all "the wicked."

**Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Paul had just spent about 13 verses in chapter 3 talking about how sinful man is. "The poison of asps is under their tongues" I think is in there.

What he is showing is that we all have the need for justification before God. We all have need for Christ's sacrifice, and God's forgiveness.

What we have here in Psalm 10:4 is a similar way of looking at this subject. In a sense for those who sin—anybody who sins—God is not in their thoughts. If God were in their thoughts, they wouldn't sin!

This principle here of God not being in their thoughts underlies just about all sin.

If we really think about God—I'm not thinking only of thought that involves *thinking* about Him but also includes *caring* about what He thinks about what we're doing. It is not just a matter of intellectual thought, but also a matter of understanding what God wants us to do, and being willing then to do it, and to put it into practice; caring what God thinks about us.

It is not just simple thought. It is the whole process of really thinking through what God

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desires of us.

Let's look at verses 3 and 4 a little more closely. Verse 3 begins the thought with the underlying, fundamental sin involved in all of this, and that is pride. The wicked boasts of his heart's desire.

And then it goes on as verse 4 starts, "The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God." This is a very interesting word picture.

The Hebrew for "In his proud countenance..." is, "*In the height of his nose.*"

Some of the more literal translations have it as, "*In the height of his face.*" But, you can see something in this word picture. You can see a proud person looking down upon everyone else from the lofty heights of his nose! He looks at everybody down the length of his nose! That's where all this sin begins. From this very high self esteem.

And then, it goes on that such a person who looks down the length of his nose at everybody, and everything, does not seek God. The word God has been added here, but the thought is correct. In fact, the word God doesn't necessarily need to be there, because this person looking down the length of his nose does not need anything, he thinks. Does it remind you of that place in Revelation 3, where the Laodicean needs nothing?

It is a picture of self-sufficiency linked with pride. The person who thinks so much of himself—so much of his way of life, so much of what he wants to do—that he won't seek anything else (whether it is counsel from other people, whether it is understanding from books, or whatever it may happen to be). Especially, he won't seek counsel from God, because he is going to do what he wants to do.

In effect since he doesn't need God, he doesn't need anybody else. He doesn't need book learning, he doesn't need whatever it happens to be—even the kindly word of advice from someone who's already gone through the situation. He doesn't need it because he is his own god. He has made an idol out of himself.

And then comes the explanation for why this is so. It says here in the New King James that God is in none of his thoughts. The Amplified Bible has it turned around saying that, "all of his thoughts are that there is no God."

The way that it is in *The Amplified* is very close to being correct. It isn't quite that wordy in the Hebrew. It is only a word or two, like, "God is not all his thoughts." "*All his thoughts*

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*are that there is no God."*

This does not mean that he does not believe that God exists. He probably does believe that God exists, or he might. It is just like in Psalm 14:1,

**Psalm 14:1** The fool has said in his heart, "*There is no God.*"

It is not that he thinks God doesn't exist, but that he lives his life as if God didn't exist. The wicked man functions as if God will not notice, and will not punish his sin. That's what we'll see in verse 13 of Psalm 10. This is a companion scripture to verse 4 in the way that the Psalm is set up. Verse 13 and 4 are very similar.

**Psalm 10:13** Why do the wicked renounce God?

See? It is not a matter of them thinking God does not exist, but that they are denying Him. They just don't want to believe that He is there.

**Psalm 10:13** He has said in his heart, "You will not require *an account.*"

So what he has done is that he has denied God by denying or renouncing what God says about Himself. God says very plainly, in many scriptures, that He is going to judge for sin. That's what all the 10 Commandments are about—so He can define sin for us. Then we will know what is good and what is not good and then we can come into judgment before Him. One of the reasons Christ came was to qualify to be that Judge. He will judge at the last day. But for us, we're going through a judgment right now.

The wicked man has fooled himself into believing that God is not going to require an accounting for sin. God won't pass judgment, and will just let it slide.

It sounds just like modern Protestantism if you ask me! That's really in effect what he's talking about. The Psalmist here is talking about an Israelite—a normal, everyday Israelite—who would supposedly know God. He was part of the covenant. He had been circumcised. He should know better. But, he has decided to ignore what God has said. And so he lives his life as a practicing atheist. He's not really an atheist, because he believes there is a God, but he lives his life as if there is no God.

So, the wicked man here could be somebody who professes Christ—a professing

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Christian—but his lifestyle betrays his conclusion that there is no God.

If we would go through the last five verses (verses 14 through 18), we would see that God says, "Oh no you don't! That's not the way it works out."

**Psalm 10:16** The LOORD *is* King forever and ever;

And then we go down to verse 18 and we see what He is going to do.

**Psalm 10:18** To do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, That the man of the earth may oppress no more.

There is an accounting coming. And the wicked man has fooled himself into a terrible future.

In the New King James this section in Titus 1 is titled, "*The Elder's task*." We can see from this that it is a section having to do with instructing the ministry in their jobs to protect the church from false teachers. You can't see all that just from the title. But, once you get into it, you can see what was on Paul's mind.

He talks about that famous verse in Titus 1:12 where it says, "Cretans are always liars." And then he talks about those people who are preaching Jewish fables, and trying to teach them the commandments of men.

What Paul is doing here is giving some general guidelines to Titus (the pastor on Crete), to help him to read the people in the congregation—the people who were affecting the congregation—read their motives; to read their fruit you might say.

Doesn't scripture say, "You will know them by their fruit?" That's one of Christ's prime teachings in His Sermon on the Mount so that we would know those wolves that come among the flock. Paul was doing this same thing with Titus except putting it into different words.

He is telling the ministry that they in a sense have to get inside the heads of the people. He's got to be able to sense the type of people that they are. They have to be able to read their minds in a way by observing what comes out of them in word and deed.

This is not a Gestapo type of thing; this is to protect the flock. The primary job of a

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minister is to make sure that there are not those that have come into the flock who don't belong there, and to usher them out if need be to protect the rest of flock.

Oftentimes, goats come in among the flock, and those goats need to be ushered out because of their contrary influence on the sheep. And you know what it says, there in Matthew 25 about where the sheep end up, and where the goats end up.

Paul is telling Titus how to do his job; how to protect the flock in which he was made leader.

**Titus 1:15-16** To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled [literally "stained"] and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

The first part of verse 15 basically says we should be able to tell when a person is speaking or living out of a pure heart. The pure are hard to offend, and easily forgive. That's very obvious. They do not hold grudges. They don't retaliate. They take it in stride. They look out for other people. They are the ones out there helping without desire for reward, or ever needing to be paid back.

They are quick to help and serve. They are more likely to admit that they are wrong in certain situations or conflicts that come up, rather than blame the other person. They understand that Jesus said that oftentimes when we judge other people, we are guilty of the same thing. These people are very willing to admit that they are wrong, and step back from the situation and work it out.

We could go on and on about it. Paul did in I Corinthians 13 where he talked about all the traits of love. These are the things that the pure do. Love suffers long. The pure are willing to sacrifice and "take it on the chin" if they need to in order to keep the peace and show love.

I think that those of us who are in the church with God's Holy Spirit recognize a pure person because it is so rare.

Paul says to Titus, "You need to look out for that, and be able to read that so you can compare that to these people with whom nothing is pure—that are defiled, and unbelieving. Those who are impure behave exactly the opposite way. Paul says for them: "Nothing is pure!"

They teach us in writing classes that you are not suppose to use "Always," and "Never," unless you really mean it. They are very strong words, and very easily misunderstood. Especially if we say something always happens, or never happens, when we mean only most of the time, or almost never. But, Paul is very quick to use the words here, "All things are pure," and then later on, "Nothing is pure."

You are seeing him here setting up this tremendous contrast between the sheep and the goats; all things versus nothing. "You shall know them by their fruits," and "Even their mind and conscience are defiled." This goes all the way into their intellect, which is what the word "mind" means here. And "conscience" is what we would call their "moral sense."

So, their intellect—their reasoning, the way they think, the way they try to work things out—is defiled and they don't have a grasp of the basics of right and wrong. This is easy to see out in the world.

We were talking on the way over here today about the movie that gathering a great deal of praise for the upcoming Academy Awards, "The Hours." It is all about homosexuality and self destruction. It is **against** family and **for** suicide—ruining your life with illicit and perverted behavior. I haven't seen the movie. I have no desire to. I know what I know from reading reviews.

That kind of thing is easy to see in the world. It might be tougher to see in a wolf that has infiltrated the church. But, from what Paul tells Titus here, it will happen.

The major thing I want us to get out of these verses here is that we are given information about how to judge these things. And what he leads us to (as we get into verse 16) is that we can see this problem—a very deep problem—with the mind and conscience in their works—in their fruit.

As we begin to read again, notice that he starts off with the church member.

**Titus 1:16** They profess to know God...

You know Paul is not talking about the people out in the world. He is talking about people who come into the church and profess that Christ is their Savior, and that God is their Sovereign. They profess to know Him. They profess to have a relationship with Him. And then comes one of the biggest little words, "but." **But** that's not true. That's only what they say.

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**Titus 1:16** ...but in works they deny Him...

Just like we saw back there in Psalm 10. In works they deny Him. And, notice the language that Paul uses here to describe these works. These folks are supposedly Christian.

**Titus 1:16** ...being abominable...

That is the same word they use for child sacrifice, unclean food, and for many other things (idolatry and such) of the Old Testament. They are abominations. Paul says that the works of these people are abominations.

This word in a more modern translation might be "abhorrent, disgusting, offensive, and detestable." These are pretty strong words! These are works that they are supposedly doing out of a "Christian heart."

But, Paul says that the effects of these awful things are abhorrent, abominable, disgusting, offensive, and detestable. And then he says, these same works are

**Titus 1:16** ...disobedient...

This word means, "void of judgment." It is very obvious that their works must be void of judgment because it said in the previous verse, "their intellect and their moral sense" are stained, and defiled. They can't help but produce works that are void of judgment, and disobedient to God. They don't have the proper foundation to produce something that would actually please God. That would be a sweet savor to Him. They might be able to fake it for awhile, but in the end that is what it comes down to.

**Titus 1:16** ...and disqualified for every good work.

This word has to do with proving metal. If you make something out of metal and then you try to test it and it shatters, then obviously it is disqualified. It is unapproved. Or, disapproved. It means "deficient." It also means "unfit." And so it becomes useless.

Their works, when all is said and done, are disgusting, void of judgment, and unfit for

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use.

While these people may say they have a relationship with God, what they do exposes the lie. What they do screams, "There is no God!" "God will not judge my sins!" Which is exactly what we saw back there in Psalm 10. And as I mentioned before, even though they try to get away with this (try to masquerade as Christians), in the end God considers everything they do abhorrent, and unqualified.

Let's see what Jesus Christ Himself had to say about things like this. Let's read Matthew 7:21-23. It is a well-known part of the Sermon on the Mount. He had just gotten finished talking about knowing them by their fruits.

**Matthew 7:21-22** Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does [notice **does**, not professes] the will of My Father in heaven. "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

See? They are professing His name. They're taking it for themselves and doing these so-called works in which they preach or prophesy—where they seem to do good works like casting out demons, and doing wonders. And what does Jesus say?

**Matthew 7:23** And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you;

What did they profess? They professed to have a relationship with God. They profess to know Him. But, He says, "*I never knew you, because really you never knew Me.*" How does He know that?

**Matthew 7:23** ...depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

What is lawlessness? Sin! They lack obedience. They may have the knowledge, but they lack putting this knowledge into practice. They think they know, and may even believe that they know God's will, but they don't do it. And failing to practice God's will, Jesus said, is sin. Why is that? Why is failing to practice God's law sin? Because, if we are not doing God's will, we are certainly doing something else! What is not of God is sin!

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We have not hit the mark. That is one of the definitions of sin—missing the mark. Obviously their problems originate in the way they think. If their thoughts were godly, they would behave in a godly manner. But since they don't behave in a godly manner, their thoughts must not really be godly.

Let's go back to the writings of the Apostle Paul—II Corinthians 10:3-4. This is where Paul gets to the heart of the problem.

**II Corinthians 10:3-4** For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [fleshly] but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

Yes we do walk in the flesh—meaning we have fleshly bodies. God has made us physical. But, we are not really supposed to walk according to the flesh. "We walk by faith, not by sight."

We live in physical bodies. We have physical lives. We have our physical problems. That's true. But, the battle we wage is not physical at all! The battle is fought in the realm of belief, ideas, philosophies, teachings, words, principles, and laws. To sum it up, you could say, "We fight the battle in our minds."

That is where it is—in our minds. Or as the Bible often says—within our hearts, our emotions, our personalities, our developing character.

Why is that where the battle lies?

**Proverbs 23:7** For as he thinks in his heart, so *is* he.

As a man thinks (what goes through his mind, what he allows himself to do, all those decisions that he makes), so is he. This is one of those physical/spiritual things again.

We say, "We are what we eat." We know that what we put into our mouth goes into our bodies, and supplies our bodies' needs as energy, or raw materials for building and maintenance. We know that our bodies over time replace all the cells that we have! That's the way that God has made us. Our food is the raw material—fuel—that makes us what we are physically.

Well, spiritually it is the same thing. We are what we think! We are what we allow into

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our minds.

Renee Descartes said, "I think. Therefore, I am."

He was pretty much right. It is essentially a true statement because it is our thoughts, and the character that our thoughts have helped to form, that will pass through the grave. Our essential being beyond our physical flesh and blood is what is going to be preserved by God.

**Job 32:8** But there is a spirit in man,...

**Ecclesiastes 12:7** Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

He does whatever He does with it! What is recorded on there? The person's thoughts, his memory, his beliefs, his desires, his habits, and his character traits!

God doesn't work through however many years of our lives just to throw away what He accomplished in us through His Spirit.

When we die, He takes what He has made, and He stores it for the resurrection, so He can pop it back into us in a spirit body that will live for eternity with Him. But, it is what goes on in our minds with the human spirit coming into alignment with God's Spirit—what we think, what we believe, all our experiences we've gone through, the habits that we have formed, and the character traits that God, by His Spirit, has created. Those are the things that pass through the grave.

And so, those traits become essential in our fight to become like Christ—to be formed into the image of God (as you will see Paul says).

Let's read II Corinthians 10:4-6. This is where the battleground is. What, then, is our job as Christians? Paul puts it quite simply here and he does it in martial language. Most of us are familiar with soldiering in one sort or another if simply by having read about it, or having gone through wars ourselves—either in the army, or as a civilian watching what has gone on. We seem to have a pretty good idea of what happens in war. So, Paul puts it in this language.

**II Corinthians 10:4-6** For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and

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every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Each of us is, we may say, a soldier fighting a war. Maybe it would be better to say that we are a general fighting this war—a general officer. Paul puts it in military language.

Our objective is to lay siege to and destroy the fortifications we have, in our carnality, built up against God and His law, and His way of life in our minds.

What has happened here is that other information has been gathered by our minds, maybe before we were converted, or even during our conversion, and our minds have worked on it, and thought about it. We've lived our lives, and we've built up walls—very strong walls—in our minds that hold God's way out, because there is some cherished belief (some habit that we don't want to break) that is behind this wall. We're guarding it with just about everything that we have. It has become fortified—a bastion against God and His Holy Spirit.

Our job as this general officer, a Christian soldier is to go and batter that wall down as quickly as we can. And, not just to batter the wall down, but to destroy it totally! Don't just leave it in pieces, but totally obliterate it. We're to throw down and destroy all the pride. Paul uses the term "every high thing." That's a proud, exalted thing.

And what is it proud against? **God.**

In a way, we could say, we're to throw down and destroy everything that tries to claim our first priority from God, and the things of God. As I mentioned in the introduction, our job can be one of these things that we're proud of. We're very proud of the work that we do. And we allow it to become first in our lives. It exalts itself then against God—against the knowledge of God—and Paul says that we, as a general officer, are supposed to go in and cast it down.

It is like you are standing up there on a wall, and you have found the thing that has exalted itself against God, and you lift it over your head, and throw it down headlong over the wall, smashing it on the rocks down below. Those things we are allowed to destroy. We're supposed to destroy them. We're supposed to have our righteous indignation and totally annihilate these sorts of things.

These arguments here in verse 5 are false reasonings—things that have come into our

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lives and have been accepted. We maybe even reasoned them through, but on a foundation that was shaky.

Remember Mr. Armstrong always used to talk about the foundation? ***If it was not square, the rest of the building is not going to be square.*** Well, the same thing happens with thoughts and reasonings.

If we start with a very shaky premise, one that is really not true, anything that we conclude from that is not going to be true either.

So Paul says that we need to examine out thinking and to find the false reasonings. We do that through the study of God's Word, which provides the base for sound reasoning. Then we can arrive at true, spiritual, Godly conclusions and bring every thought into captivity.

You know these are not even complete thoughts he is talking about? It doesn't have to be. What he is talking about is "an intent of the mind." It doesn't even have to be something that is necessarily thought all the way through. It can just be an intention to do something. It doesn't matter what it is—we're to bring that thought into captivity.

We are to enslave our own mind. What do we enslave it to? We enslave it to the mind of Christ. That's what we're trying to build here with God's help—the mind of Christ—the image of the Son.

So, we're to take total control of our mind—every thought—so that it conforms to what we understand of the mind of God. And then in verse 6, he says, "being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled."

Once we have shown our loyalty to Christ, we are then ready to deal with the disobedience. Paul had a specific thing he was referring to here in the Corinthian church, and he wanted to let them know that they were not ready to do any judging and passing sentence on people within the congregation until they had gotten their own minds turned around from their carnality.

Remember I Corinthians 3, he told the whole congregation that they were still carnal! And so Paul says, "get your own mind in order."

Once you are one of "the strong," then you can bear with the scruples of the weak. Then you could help in ministering to the church. So he tells everybody to get his own house in order first.

So the question I have is, "**How are we doing?**"

How are we ruling our own mind? How much have we pulled down, lately? Have we pulled down all the pockets of resistance to God?

I know I haven't. There are things I like to do that I know are not right and I need to work on them. We all have these things—whether it is eating too much, driving too fast or whatever. There are just so many things that we need to get a grip on as part of our Christian lives.

Have we cast down all the false and pretentious reasoning that keep us from fulfilling God's will—keep us from obeying Him—thinking that we know better, or that these are modern times and we have progressed beyond what may be a very clear law or principle in God's word? Do we have full control over our thoughts so that they reflect godliness, righteousness, and holiness?

If we are asked to make a decision on anything, would somebody looking objectively be able to say, "That's what God would have decided to do"?

In short, as mentioned before, the question is, "do we have the mind of Christ?"

Is our trajectory on that goal? Or by not being in control, has it been skewed toward some other mind?

Let's look at one area that we can ponder back in the book of Matthew chapter 12. This is a section where Jesus talks about fruit.

**Matthew 12:33-37** Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit. "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Pretty strong statement from our Savior! The fundamental question is: "How Christ-like is our speech?"

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This is just one small area out of the whole of our behavior. Actually, it is a pretty big area because Christ just said that we're going to be judged for every word, even the idle ones that we may just toss off in a time of weakness, or when joking around with friends. That's a pretty strict judgment.

Jesus speaks here in quite black-and-white terms. The tree (meaning the person) is either good—producing good fruit—or he is bad, and produces bad fruit.

So, which are we? Which tree are we—the good tree or the bad tree?

And then in the next verse He reiterates the whole gist of this sermon. "Out of the abundance of the heart we speak, and act."

Remember Jesus said in chapter 15 of Matthew that it is not what goes into a man what defiles him, but what comes out of him. And what comes out of him is either going to be good things, like service, love, kindness, and other fruits of the spirit, or they are bad things, the works of the flesh which He also names there.

So what is it going to be? What is the abundance of our heart?

The picture here if you can imagine it is the heart is a kind of vessel—a bowl—and things are poured into the heart, and at a certain point, once you pour in enough, it will overflow. There is going to be an abundance that comes out of it.

Now what comes out of the heart—this bowl, this vessel—will give the characteristics of the heart.

So, what this means is that when we pour information into our minds, we process it. It, for a while, stays in the bowl, as it were, and it gets mixed up with what has been there before. And, our heart, our mind works on it for a while. It begins to gel into certain things, and then once it is full, it breaks out of that vessel.

What breaks out from our heart? You have to answer that yourself.

Evil thoughts within, evil works or speech without. Or, we can put it the other way around—godly, kind, Christ-like thoughts within, godly, kind, Christ-like works or speech without.

Do we have profane minds that spew out profane speech? Or... "on our tongue is the law of kindness" because behind that tongue is a pure and kind heart?

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This is really important. By those thoughts, we will either be justified, or condemned. The thoughts are just precursors to the speech and the action.

So, where do we sit? Where do we stand on this line that Jesus Christ our Savior, our High Priest, and Judge has drawn? Are we the good tree, or the bad tree?

**Galatians 6:1** Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

This is to people who are probably stronger than the Corinthians. He is telling the stronger ones in the congregation how to react to somebody who has not come up to their level quite yet of Christ-like behavior.

**Galatians 6:2** Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Notice: He does not say to come on them like a ton of bricks. He says restore. He uses the word "gentleness," considering your own state, and bearing with them.

**Galatians 6:3-5** For if anyone thinks himself to be something [this is why] when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load.

You are going to be judged according to what you do, not according to what another person does. So, what load are you carrying around? Are you carrying the light burden of Jesus Christ? Or are you dragging around the Satanic, worldly, abominable burden of the evil tree?

**Galatians 6:6-7** Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Again, this is another reiteration of the theme of this sermon. We won't deceive God by having outward actions that seem godly to others, yet inside we are profane. That won't turn God's head at all. He knows. You can't pull the wool over God's eyes. He says here

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that if you sow profanity, you will reap profanity, basically ungodliness.

**Galatians 6:8** For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

We can't get away with it with God. He will see right through us.

**II Corinthians 13:5-6** Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test [prove] yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? [Meaning, don't you want to have a clean house for Him to live in—one of faith, one of purity?] unless indeed you are disqualified [There is that word again; unapproved; the metal that did not make the cut, useless.]. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

We have 38 days until the Passover. And it is in this period that we have traditionally intensified our self-examination so that we have a better understanding of what we have overcome—the good parts; the challenges that we have met and overcome—and what we need to continue to work on. We need to look at both things.

We need to know which fortifications we have pulled down, and which ones still exist for us to war against.

God wants to see growth. He wants to see character development. He wants us to cooperate with Him in putting on the new man—the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So, as we work our way through this period, ask yourself, "***Is God in all my thoughts?***"