

## As A Man Thinks

### Bringing Every Thought Into Captivity

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Greetings to everyone. As always, it is nice to be here to see your smiling faces.

Before I begin, I want to tell you a real short story. Well, actually not a story, it is a dream I had last night. I dreamed that it was right before church, and I had forgotten my notes. I was all the way up here, and I did not have any notes. So I run up to Martin and I said, "Martin! I, I forgot my notes! And Martin just smiled at me, and patted me on the shoulder, and said, "It'll be all right, just wing it!" I said, "Just wing it?" So, I am sitting there in my chair, and I am all nervous, and I am getting anxiety, and I cannot remember what my sermonette is even about. And finally Martin walks by right before they are fixing to call me up, and he is smiling at me. He got his Bible in his hand, he says, "I just happened to have a sermonette ready, so I'll take care of it." He laughed and went on. And then I woke up. It was like having a nightmare.

Someone once said, "You are what you eat." As a matter of fact, my wife said this to me just a few weeks ago when she asked me what I had for lunch, and I told her what I had, she looked up at me and said, "You are what you eat, you know." But this is not entirely so. Turn with me, please, to Mark 7 and we will see what Jesus had to say about this.

**Mark 7:14** When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand.

This is not a deep dark saying or parable that the people work to understand. He said, "Hear Me and understand."

**Mark 7:15-23** "There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him

hear!" When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

So we see that we are not necessarily what we eat, but *we are what we think*.

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

Now, even though we are what we think, sometimes we are not what we think we are. Turn with me now to Romans 12, and we will see what Paul says about this.

**Romans 12:3** For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Now Paul says we are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but we should not think too lowly of ourselves either. After all, we are ambassadors for Christ. We are a part of God's nobility. However, we have an old sinful nature. Therefore, Paul tells us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We cannot allow ourselves to be puffed up, or arrogant, because of some position, ability, gifts, or even authority that God has given us.

So we see that one of the most important things that we do is think. Our thinking can be profitable, or futile. We are the master of our thoughts; we think by choice. We can think good, or we can think evil. The choice is ours. But we cannot think both good and evil simultaneously any more than you can travel east and west at the same time.

We have to choose what we think. We can choose to think righteous or unrighteous; clean or unclean; moral or immoral; honest or dishonest; pure or impure; true or untrue; just or unjust; good or bad; and so on. The list goes on.

In Psalm 119:11 the psalmist says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” So like a treasure, God's Word should be hidden in our hearts—in our minds—so that we do not sin against Him in thought, word, or deed, because we always sin in thought before we sin in word or deed. Remember, we are what we think.

Turn to Isaiah 55.

**Isaiah 55:7** Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Forsake means to leave; to let go, or refuse. So, we need to leave, let go of, or refuse to think unrighteous thoughts, because unrighteous thoughts will lead to unrighteous or wicked ways.

There are really only two ways to think—the righteous way, and the unrighteous way. You cannot live a righteous life and think unrighteous thoughts. Jesus said, “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit” (Matthew 7:18). A person who thinks good thoughts cannot live a bad life. James said that no spring yields both salt water and fresh (James 3:12). No one can live a righteous and unrighteous life at the same time.

You can, however, forsake or let go of your unrighteous thoughts, and return unto the Eternal, and He will abundantly pardon. A thief is a thief because he thinks like a thief. A liar is a liar because he thinks like a liar. An adulterer is an adulterer because he thinks like an adulterer—for as he thinks in his heart, so is he.

**Isaiah 55:8-9** "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher

than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Now *thoughts* mean purpose or intentions. When we think unrighteous thoughts, our purpose and intentions are not the same as God's because He never thinks unrighteous thoughts.

The word *ways* means direction. When we think unrighteous thoughts, they will lead us in the wrong direction, which is the opposite of God's direction.

God said that David was a man after his own heart, meaning that David wanted to think just like God. He wanted his purpose and his intentions to be like God's. And he wanted to go in the same direction that God was going in. We should want God to say that about us—that we are a people after His own heart. So we have to strive to think like He thinks.

**Psalm 119:97** Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

Now, if David wrote this song, which is very possibly so, he did not sit around all day with his legs crossed, with his hands on his knees and his eyes closed, meditating. He was a king, and he had a busy day every day. He had to make many decisions, solve many problems, and make crucial judgments every day. What this means is that he thought about God's law and applied it to all his decision making, problem solving, and judgments he made all the day.

I read an article once about a martial arts instructor, who wanted to teach his students how to meditate. So the first thing he tells them is that they need to empty their mind of all their thoughts. When he said this, there was a group of students, maybe a half dozen or so, I do not remember, who were Protestant Christians, politely removed themselves from the class, and they told him that they were not going to empty their minds of all their thoughts, because this would open them up to demon possession.

I think they both misunderstood what meditation is.

What is meditation? Meditation is thinking. It is focusing or concentrating on a certain thing or thought. It would be nice if we could just send all our unrighteous thoughts to a recycle bin like we have on our computers and then open up our minds and like a little valve, and get them all out. But it does not work that way.

The way to get rid of unrighteous thoughts is to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ. And that takes meditating or thinking on God's Word and applying it to our life all the day. Remember, we are what we think.

Now turn with me to a final scripture in Philippians 4.

**Philippians 4:8** Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

What Paul is saying here is that we have two ways to think—the righteous way, or the unrighteous way. Just like God said when he laid before us life and death, He says choose life. Paul is saying, “Choose to think righteously, because we are what we think.”

Remember, for as he thinks in his heart, so is he.