

Thoughts– 25/08/2019

“Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”Col.3:2

Beloved in the Lord,

One of the greatest and most beautiful gifts God has given to us at creation, is our mind. The ability to think, to imagine, to dream is a wonderful gift. Our brain is very powerful, and it basically controls every part of our body. Not only is our brain a controller for our body, it is so much more.

Just think about it for a moment. Everything that has ever been invented or made by man, began as a thought, an idea. Someone thought about something and pondered it until it became reality.

The youth of today cannot even envisage life before the mobile phone, but those of us who are over a certain age, well remember the days before the mobile. Most of our homes had a single wired telephone, usually positioned in the corridor. There was often a little bench which you could sit on that had a shelf that held the phone. In fact, we still have one of those benches at home. One day someone had an idea that wouldn't it be good if you didn't have to be connected to a socket in the wall and you could move around the house speaking on the telephone in whichever room you happen to be in. Along came the cordless telephone and no longer were you forced to sit on the little bench, you could talk on the phone even out in the garden.

In 1973 the first ever mobile phone call was made by Martin Cooper, an employee at the Motorola company. He was standing on a corner in New York and called a laboratory in New Jersey. Since that day mobile phones have come a long way and are basically minicomputers that are part of most of our lives. The mobile phone is only one of countless examples of what man can do with an idea.

This year we saw the 50th anniversary of man walking on the moon. This was made possible by people having an idea that it could be done one day. Our minds, our thoughts are very powerful and can be used for great good, but sadly also for great evil.

Whatever we do begins with a thought. Because our natural human tendency is toward evil, and not good, it is of vital importance that we begin each day ordering our thoughts in the right direction. Paul tells us:

“Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

These words can be understood on several levels. Firstly, on a general level we should begin each day by setting our mind on God. We should look up in the morning and thank God for a new day. His grace is new every morning and His faithfulness is great. We should begin each day with a prayer like this one which David wrote:

“Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults.

¹³ Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins;

Let them not rule over me;

Then I will be blameless,

And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in Your sight,

O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer. Psalm 19:12-14

This is a prayer that sets our mind and heart on the right course for the day that lies ahead. I find that some days I may pray this prayer more than once. I find that my thoughts drift away from God very quickly and easily if I am not careful. My mind entertains thoughts that are not pleasing and honouring to God and which do not fit who I am as a child of God.

I once heard a pastor say that our mind is like a control tower at an airport. The control tower dictates what planes can land and take off, when and where. An airplane cannot land or take off without clearance from the control tower.

Our mind has many thoughts that are seeking permission to land. Some are good and some are bad. Some are neutral, neither good nor bad. Some thoughts will lead us closer to God, some will pull us away from Him. There are thoughts that inspire us, that motivate us, and there are thoughts that depress us and stop us from being productive. There are thoughts that lead to good deeds and thoughts that lead to bad ones. There are thoughts that bring peace and joy, and thoughts that bring stress and anxiety and fear. We have control over which one's land and which ones are to be denied permission to land.

There are times when a thought may sneak in under the radar that you didn't allow, but once discovered it should be ordered to leave. Don't entertain it, send it away.

We have an enemy, Satan, who relentlessly fires arrows at our mind. We need to learn how to repel them. We don't have to accept his thoughts. It is not always easy; it is a battle. It is in fact a spiritual battle that is always raging. Paul writes to the Corinthians:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

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, ⁶and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete." 2 Cor.10:3-6

Paul clearly tells us that this is a spiritual battle. This battle rages in our mind. As I already mentioned, everything begins with a thought, either good or bad.

Satan caused the fall of mankind, by planting a thought in Eve's mind. He put a doubt in her and consequently Adam's mind about whether God would really do what He had said. He didn't make her eat of the tree; it was her choice. He just put the thought in her mind. We can never use the defence "the Devil made me do it." The choice is always ours.

When our mind detects the presence of an evil thought or idea, we must reject it. Deny permission to land. Tell it I don't want you and you have no place in my mind. Go away. Understand that when we do this, we have God coming to our aid. He has told us through James:

“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” James 4:7-8a

Two things that we need to do: submit to God and resist the devil. If we do these two things, we have victory. We cannot get anywhere under our own steam, but with God’s help we have the victory.

That is why Paul wrote:

“Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”Col.3:2

Again, this is something that we need to do consciously and regularly. A better translation would be “Continue to set your mind on the things above....”

The fact of the matter is that we have two natures that are constantly warring with each other and fighting for dominance. The first is our inborn fallen nature that is bad and the second is the new nature we receive in Christ, when we are His, which is good. We should hate the first and love the second. The one that we feed will grow stronger and will eventually dominate how we think and act.

This is beautifully expressed in a little poem:

“Two natures beat within my breast
The one is foul, the other blest (blessed)
The one I love, The one I hate
The one I feed will dominate.

The nature is fed through our mind. If we fill our mind with good thoughts, thoughts that are Godly and wholesome, then the good nature will dominate. On the other hand, if we fill our mind with worldly and corrupt things then we are feeding the old sinful nature.

Please understand that I am not saying that we need to walk around thinking about God and reciting Psalms and singing Hymns all day long. That is not what Paul is teaching us. The lesson is to submit all to God.

Paul wrote:

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. Col.3:17;23-24

So, what this really is saying is that if behind everything you do in thoughts and deeds there is Christ the Lord and it honours Him, and you are at peace with Him, all is well.

If we are thinking thoughts or doing things that would cause us unease in His presence, then it is a good guideline that we are off the path and we shouldn’t be doing that.

May we strive to always set our mind on things above and so our life will be blessed and a blessing to others.

Amen. ***Pastor Colvin MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney. All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.***