

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Scripture Memory		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	133		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Philippians 4:8; Romans 12:2; Colossians 3:1, 2		
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### WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? (Part 1)

“Christianity,” observed Thomas C. Reeves, “has always absorbed elements of the culture of its adherents, and it is important to consider how extensively the classic faith has been altered by a modern, literate, prosperous, technologically-driven society undeniably absorbed with obtaining prosperity, security, and pleasure. In short, what is the content of our Christianity?”<sup>1</sup> This is a critically important question. How we answer this question will determine, to a large degree, what kind of Christianity we will embrace. This in turn underscores the importance of *teaching theology*. Our Lord declared, “Go and make disciples [clearly, those brought to Christ are to be grounded in the Christian faith primarily through teaching] of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and [note this emphasis] *teaching* them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). In light of this, we need to heed the words of J. R. W. Stott, “Nothing is more necessary for the building up of God’s church in every age than an ample supply of God-gifted teachers. . . . It is teaching which builds up the church. It is teachers who are needed most.”<sup>2</sup> Recently Erwin Lutzer, pastor emeritus of Moody Church in Chicago, declared, “My heart is for the church, and I see the church submitting to the culture. Instead of allowing Scripture to stand alone, we interpret it in a way that is consistent with the culture. I want to challenge Christians: Will we interpret the culture through the lens of Scripture? Or will we interpret Scripture through the lens of culture?” He goes on to add, “the Church is being shamed into silence because we don’t know what to say . . . we fear that we will be misunderstood and vilified. But so many things have changed in America that we can no longer take for granted all the freedoms that we generally enjoyed. We are in a new day.”<sup>3</sup> Lutzer specifically mentions the Woke threat and Critical Race Theory (CRT). In 1 Timothy 4 the Apostle Paul warned young Timothy about the danger of apostasy and of false doctrine and deceiving spirits. What is Timothy to do? 2 Timothy 4:2 states: Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” Likewise, 1 Timothy 4:6 declares: “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained (*parakolouthēō* – to follow beside. The word combines the thoughts of “understanding” with that of “practicing preserving”).” 1 Tim. 4:13 reads, devote yourself (*proseche*, present tense imperative (!), the word implies previous preparation in private) to reading, to exhortation, to *doctrine*. A couple of verses later, Paul instructs Timothy to “Be diligent.” (*meleta*, lit. to take care, to practice, to take pains with) upon these things; give thyself wholly (*isthi*, present tense imperative, lit. be in them) to these matters. Paul’s language here, observes Guthrie, “Is a construction expressing absorption in anything. The mind is to be as immersed in these pursuits as the body in the air it breathes.”<sup>4</sup> The saints must have their minds, their thinking habits, renewed in the knowledge of the Word of God (Rom. 12:1ff; Eph. 4:23). Once that occurs, behavior and practice follow suit, and maturity develops. Teachers are given this responsibility, and it is to consume them (*note* the warning in James 3:1). In Ephesians 4, the same Apostle urges his readers to protect the Church from false doctrine. Who is it that gets tossed around here and there by bad doctrine? “Infants,” *nepios*, baby, immature; this word refers to the immaturity of children in opposition to the adult status of the perfect man. Children, as every parent knows, are not discerning. They do not know what is best for them. They will gladly eat popcorn, peanuts, cotton candy and the like all day, and cry and throw a fit if they can’t have it! Note also that the Apostle declares that “children” are easily attracted and carried away by “sleight of men (*kubeia*, lit. dice playing, wicked dice playing – it refers

to intentional fraud) and cunning craftiness (*methodeia* – following after, deceit, scheming; cf. Eph. 6:11) by which they lie in wait to deceive.” Note Paul’s words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-32). In Romans 12:1-3, Paul underscores the need for sanctified minds. In Philippians 4:8, the same apostle underscores the same theme – a sanctified mind. Motyer notes, “Just as a carnal mind is the surest passport to the downward path, so a mind drilled in the things of which God approves is the steadiest way into practical holiness. If, in a difficult relationship, we allow our minds and judgment to be clouded by half-truth, or if we allow frivolous and damaging thoughts about the other person to simmer in our minds, we are hardly being like Christ. We should rather determine to think only the truth about the other person, to value what is attractive and praiseworthy about him. This will prove to be the way of peace.”<sup>5</sup>

I. **THE MIND IN SCRIPTURE.** There are four primary Greek words used in the New Testament for the act of thinking.

- A. *Noeō* and its intensive *katanoēō*. Its primary meaning is “to perceive,” as in Romans 1:20, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being *perceived* through what has been made.” The intensive form *katanoēō* points to the process of perception – to consider, as in Hebrews 3:1, “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, *consider* (give serious reflection) Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.”
- B. *Logizomai*. This word looks at thinking in the sense of reckoning it out or calculating, getting all the implications clear. The Apostle Paul uses this word thirty-four times, as in Philippians 3:13, where he says, “Looking carefully at my past life, I cannot *soberly calculate* that I have any grounds for boasting.” Moulton, who’s work I have used frequently, writes: “But the surprising thing about this word for careful calculation is how often it is used in connection with *Faith*, the one sphere where we should expect to be out of the realm of debit and credit. One third of Paul’s uses come in Rom. 4, in connection with the faith of Abraham: *Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness* (4:3). God does reckon – more carefully than we ever can – but not on the plus and minus basis that is usually the height of our achievement. He calculates, not on the pros and cons of man’s character and actions, but first and chiefly on man’s trust in Him. If that is there, we need not try to add up the sum of good deeds required for salvation. The one all-inclusive reckoning is made. Good works will spring out of faith. They must. If they do not, any claim to faith is hood-winking oneself. But faith alone *counts* – and that means **Nothing** in my hand I bring. Not even faith saves us – only grace. But when faith is there, the way is open for God to do that reckoning which brings us home to Him.”<sup>6</sup>
- C. *Nomizo* means “to suppose.” Moulton points out the interesting thing about this word for thinking is that in most cases it means *wrong* thinking, or if not, at any rate *doubt*.<sup>7</sup> In Acts 16:27, the Philippian jailer *supposed* that the prisoners had escaped.
- D. *Phroneō*. This is the word which brings us to our very inmost thoughts. It comes from the noun which it designates your *middle* or a little higher up, your heart. This kind of thinking is not just the remote pure intellect, but that which affects the whole being, warming your heart or making it go pit-a-pat, satisfying you or perturbing you in the pit of your stomach. It is the kind that we mean when we speak of *the thoughts of our hearts*.<sup>8</sup>

II. **THE MIND OF THE FLESH.** In Romans 8:5, the Apostle Paul declared, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.” Likewise, in Philippians 3:19, he says, “Their end is destruction, their god is their belly and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.” Jeremiah Burroughs (1590-1646) one of the great Puritan writers, wrote: “A man cannot know what is in his heart as much by words and actions as by the thoughts, because the thoughts immediately spring from the heart. For example, I can tell what the water is in such a fountain better from that which bubbles up immediately from the fountainhead than I can tell by the water that runs in the stream a mile or two off that never came from the fountainhead. That which

immediately bubbles from the fountainhead reveals the nature of the fountain. The thoughts are, as it were, the firstborn of the heart and, therefore, the heart may be known by the thoughts. The Holy Ghost said in Proverbs 23:7, *As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he*. That which is here spoken in particular may be applied in general. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he; as his thoughts are, so is he.”<sup>9</sup> People with this mindset live only for the present. Their only goal is to gratify their desires.

**CONCLSION:** Thomas Manton (1620-1677), another of the great Puritans, noted the important difference between the two types of mindset, “What is regeneration on God’s part is repentance on ours. Now there are certain effects proper to this change, and that is the grave, just, temperate, and holy living. And certainly where those effects are not, there the cause itself is wanting; for how can we evidence that our conversion and repentance is real and sound, unless we bring forth fruits answerable? What evidence can we have of the new nature but by newness of conversation? Or of a change of. Mind, but by a change of life? We judge of others by their external works, for the tree is known by its fruits; and we judge of ourselves by the internal and external works together. If within there be a love of God, faith in Christ, hatred of evil, delight in that which is good, a deep sense of the world to come; and all this discovered in an holy, sober, and grave conversation, this completeth the evidence, and maketh it more satisfying.”<sup>10</sup> (to be continued)

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas C. Reeves, *The Empty Church: Does Organized Religion Matter Anymore?* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 61. He later adds, “Christianity in modern America is, in large part, innocuous. It tends to be easy, upbeat, convenient, and compatible. It does not require self-sacrifice, discipline, humility, an other-worldly outlook, a zeal for souls, a fear as well as love of God. There is little guilt and no punishment, and the payoff in heaven is virtually certain. The faith has been overwhelmed by the culture, producing what may be called cultural Christianity. This is not a question of mere influence; acculturation takes place at all times and in all places. Christianity becomes cultural Christianity when the faith is dominated by a culture to the point that it loses much or most of its authenticity.” (p. 67).

<sup>2</sup> J. R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (IVP, 1979), p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> cf. His *We Will Not Be Silenced: Responding Courageously to Our Culture’s Assault on Christianity* (Moody, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Eerdmans, 1974), p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians: The Bible Speaks Today* (IVP, 1984), p. 212.

<sup>6</sup> H. K. Moulton, *The Challenge of The Concordance: Some New Testament Words Studied in Depth* (Bagster & Sons LTD., 1977), p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, *A Treatise on Earthly-Mindedness* (rpt. Soli Deo Gloria Publication, 1991), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton XVIII* (rpt. Maranatha Publications, 1977), p. 102.