

Series 2b: Character of God – Our command to: “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Read:

I am going to eat once a week, and just one small meal at that, and I am going to do this for several years, and then I am going to sign up for the military, but not just the military, but the elite forces, and take on the most powerful nations in the world and be on the continual guard, attack and defense – how long am I going to last! I would not even make it past a day or two of the rigors of boot camp, or if they skipped me past that, how would I even carry my own equipment as we marched, never mind fight?

- What are we doing in the most important area of our life – our spiritual life? Are we doing a one hour a week feeding, or maybe we consider ourselves better spiritually than others, as we inwardly feel self-righteous, as we may do a few minutes of prayer in a day with a few verses read as well, and if we make it thru a week of this...we feel we truly are godly.

- SHAME on all of us! Our Christianity is to be our “way of life” and not a part of our life!

* Do you realize we are bought, slaves to Christ, not our own! Do you realize that when you read the word “servant” in the Bible – almost every single time it appears, 124 times, the Greek word is “Doulos” and its true meaning is slave. The KJV only translates it once as slave, as even back then the translators knew people would not like the idea of being a slave. Shame on them, as this has helped facilitate towards the lack of commitment and right understanding for many Christians of who they are in Christ.

Example: Matt. 6:24 – Actual Greek = no one can be a **slave** to two **masters**. What does your translation say, “no one can **serve** two masters. There are approx. 24 English translations – only 1 correctly translates every time this Greek word as it should be = **slave** – the Goodspeed Translation. (Familiar verse correctly translated: “well done good and faithful ~~servant~~ → **Slave**.”)(This is not an endorsement stating that the Goodspeed translation is a good overall translation of the Bible, just making this point)

A servant is hired (paid and could quit) – A slave is owned!

I would like for you to listen to some verses from the Lord regarding our duty and position before our God:

****Our premise for this week (or study on the “Character of God”), crossing over from where we ended last week (study), is God’s command for us to be holy - 1 Pet 1:16 reads “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” - I really like the power of the New American Standard and Amplified translations: “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” - it is an emphatic command. Also, Heb. 12:14, “without holiness no man shall see God.”**

Colossians 3:12-13 reads, “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”

2 Corinthians 7:1 says, “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Ephesians 4:22-24 states, “that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

1 Thess. 4:7 we are told, “For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.”

MESSAGE:

You are a product of your thinking because it says in the Bible as clearly as possible, “As a man thinks in his heart so is he...” (Prov. 23:7). YOU are a product of your thoughts.

What is frightening about this is that thinking is not that important in our day. We are not so concerned about thinking as we are about two other things: let’s call them EMOTION and PRAGMETISM. We are concerned about FEELING and we are concerned about SUCCESS. We are NOT so concerned about thinking.

In other words, people are most often not asking “IS IT TRUE” and “IS IT RIGHT,” They ask these questions” “DOES IT WORK” and “HOW WILL IT MAKE ME FEEL?”

Bill Hull, in a book entitled “Right Thinking,” written in 1985 writes, “ What scares me is the anti-intellectual, anti-critical thinking philosophy that has spilled over into the church. This philosophy tends to romanticize the faith, making the local church into an experience centre. Their concept of church is that they are “spiritual consumers” and that the church’s job is to meet their felt needs.”

And what is happening in the church is, that people are going to church “not to think,” “not to reason about the truth,” “not like the noble Bereans to search the Scriptures to see what is true,” but they are going there **to get a weekly spiritual fix**. A weekly spiritual high – so that they can feel that God is still with them. They are SPIRITUALLY UNSTABLE because they live on feeling rather than on thinking.

John Stott has written in his helpful little book, “Your Mind Matters,” this, “Indeed sin has more dangerous effects on our faculty of feeling than on our faculty of thinking. Because our opinions are more easily checked and regulated by revealed truth than our experiences.” Explain.

All thru the Bible God has told us to **reason** (not just feeling)!

- God did not give us a movie
- Not a series of music videos
- Not even any built-in background music when you read the Bible.

* There is nothing to touch your emotions EXCEPT the contemplation of TRUTH. NO stimulus other than Truth - which requires thought.

So Scriptures assume that the first priority is to think because it is a book.

Now, when it comes to thinking about this matter of the mind the Bible has a lot to say.

Here is a little theology of thinking...it is coming fast, so here we go:

- What about before we are saved – what does it say about your mind?
 - First of all “your mind is depraved” Rom 1:28
 - Depraved, debauched, wicked, evil - that's what that means.
 - Secondly, “it is blind” 2 Cor. 4:4
 - Thirdly, it is “Futile, vain, worthless, useless” Eph. 4:17
 - Fourthly, “it is ignorant” Eph. 4:18
 - Finally, “it is Foolish” 1 Cor. 2:14

So depraved: it does not choose what is good.

So blind: it does not know what is good.

So useless: it does not perform what is good.

So ignorant: it does not even know it is doing all of this.

** And you are left with the only alternative – Everything is Foolish. That's the MIND of Fallen Man.

- The gospel then penetrates, right.

What about the mind at salvation – is the Bible concerned about the mind at salvation? – you can be absolutely sure about that.

** Peter says “you must be able to give to every man who asks you a ‘REASON’ for the hope that is in you.” 1 Pet. 3:15

- We must be able to explain: Why do you believe this?

In Matthew chapter 13:19 Jesus said sometimes the seed falls on the hard ground, and the seed is the word, and the hard ground is the heart that does not “understand” it.

- It demands reason and it demands understanding.
- An element of salvation, an element of it, is occurring within the mind as a person is coming to a proper comprehension of truth.
- Truth about himself – truth about his sin – truth about God – truth about Christ – truth about the work of Christ – truth about the future eternity.

* That all comes into the mind – that is why it says in Romans chapter 10 that, “Faith comes by hearing” a message about Christ.

- This is not some esoteric thing – faith comes thru the mind.
- Through the reason – “Come now let us REASON together...,” says Isaiah 1:18.

The gospel hits the MIND. That’s what made those Bereans so noble – they searched the Scripture – they THOUGHT it through (Acts 17:10-12).

** And in Luke 10:27 it says that, “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all YOUR MIND...”

** You see, salvation is an intelligent response to God’s self revelation in Scripture prompted by the Holy Spirit.

- True faith is not an irrational leap.
- True faith is not some “contact with the ground of being,” as Paul Tillic used to say.
- True faith is not some “EXPLOSION” into some non-quantifiable event.
- True faith is not some mysterious, irreproducible unspeakable encounter.

* True faith is a “Reasonable Trust in the Revealed Truth about the True God.” It is a process of thinking. Salvation is impossible WITHOUT THINKING.

Remember the story in Matt. Chapter 6:25-34 where Jesus is trying to get His disciples to THINK and trust God and Not to worry.

What does He tell them:

- Vs. 26: Look at the birds – THINK on how they are provided for.
- Vs. 28-30: Look at the grass of the field – THINK.
- DO NOT worry – worry is NOT too much thinking – it is the ABSENSE of thinking. If you are truly thinking about God and THINKING about His promises, and THINKING about his purposes and THINKING about His plans – you will not worry. Think about that when you worry.

**** Faith is NOT optimism – Faith is NOT psychological hypnosis – Faith is NOT wishful thinking – FAITH IS A REASONED RESPONSE TO REVEALED TRUTH.**

Heb. 11:1, “Faith is the substance (realization) of the things hoped for, the evidence (confidence) of the things not seen.” (Analogy and question: do we believe in air?)

Now, we talked about what your mind was like before salvation – we talked about how God moves with your mind at salvation – WHAT ABOUT AFTER salvation?

**** Your mind has been transformed – you have a new mind. You have whole new thought patterns. To show you this, look at Romans chapter 8. This draws it as simply and clearly as any passage. Verse 5 of Romans 8 says, “for those who live according to the flesh (that is unregenerate people; non-Christian people) set their MINDS on the things of the flesh (To put it simply: unsaved people have an unsaved mindset. Fleshly people think about fleshly things), (to continue) but those who live according to the Spirit (those born again), the things of the Spirit.”**

You have a NEW MIND: Vs. 6 “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is LIFE and PEACE.”

You have a whole new mind – this is incredible! The Greek word here “Froneema” means “mindset.” A whole NEW way of THINKING is what it means. Not a new brain, but a new way of thinking.

As Christians we now have the Holy Spirit and think on the Spiritual level and not the fleshly level.

Look at 1 Cor. 1:30 – you may have overlooked this one. “But of him who are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God...” Look at this – all of a sudden it says we have the wisdom of God! And the Psalmist says in Psa. 92:5, “...thy thoughts are very deep.” Now, all of a sudden we can plunge the deep thoughts of eternal God. We think in ways we never thought before. We are able to think receiving God’s thoughts.

- Go to Chapter 2:11-12, “Read”
- So we have the wisdom of Christ, and we have the knowledge of God granted to us by the Holy Spirit.
- Look at vs. 15 – Read – then vs. 16 → We have the MIND of Christ – Isn’t that amazing!
- We are NOT like the natural man in vs. 14 – it is all foolishness to him.
- We now have the mind of Christ – we now understand the wisdom of God – the Spirit of God brings us wisdom about God that we would otherwise never ever have.

DO YOU KNOW as a Christian – you HAVE that! That is how we are to think, and live accordingly! Consistent of the wisdom of God granted us in Christ.

- It says in **Colossians 3:10**, “that the new self is renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created it.”
- In other words, we have been given a new mind.
- Have you ever strained something through a strainer? We have the ability to strain ALL the data in the world and purify it – we have the MIND of Christ – the MIND of God.

So, as Christians what are we supposed to do with our new mind? Are we to continue to keep filling it with the things of the world we used to do? Are we to allow the thoughts and desires and visions and lusts of the world to still be a part of our lives?

God forbid, as Paul would say! Romans 12:1-2 says, We are to continue to be transformed by the renewing of our MIND. The Greek word used here for “transformed” is “Metamorphoo” which is the word in English we get “metamorphous,” and we all understand the process of a caterpillar – it goes into a cocoon as one creature and is transformed into a different spectacular creature. In 2 Cor. 3:18 Paul tells us how our relationship with God here on earth is supposed to be a continual renewing and transforming process into the image of the glorious Christ. ** This is what we as Christians are supposed to be doing with our minds, but how can we do this? Can we continue to fill the things of this world into our minds and expect this transformation to happen?

We are to be “**continually**” renewing our minds: Eph 4:23 Paul says, “be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” 1 Thess. 5:21 says, “Examine everything carefully, hold fast to what is good.”

- Learn to think – refresh your mind – clean your mind.
- It gets dirty in the world.
- Peter in 1 Pet. 1:13 says, “Prepare your minds for action...” or the New Living Translation says, “So think clearly, and exercise self-control...”

** Take care of your mind is what he is saying. That is what Paul is saying, what Peter is saying, and what Jesus is saying – take care of your mind! (Examine your thoughts. Guard your heart).

Colossians 3:2 says, “Set your mind on the things above, not on things on the earth.”

Paul often says in His Epistles – “I would not have you to be ignorant...”

** The Christian mind – TRAGICALLY – has succumbed to the secular drift – we have a Christianity today that does NOT think. It is really tragic – people are asking – “How does it make me feel” and “How does it work.” INSTEAD of “Is it True” and “Is it Right.”

How are we to “you shall be Holy, for I am Holy” as God commands? (1 Pet 1:16). Well, certainly a good place to start is Phil. 4:8. “Finally, brethren, whatever things are True”

- Now if you want to know what is true – where are you going to go? THE BIBLE. So if I am to think on what is true I am going to dwell on the word of God first of all. And on anything else that is true.
- Secondly, he says whatever is “Honourable.” That means worthy of respect. Whatever is dignified. Whatever is reverent. Whatever is lofty. Not trashy, mundane, common. The word really comes from a word meaning to WORSHIP. Whatever is worthy of awe. Whatever is worthy of adoration.
- Thirdly, he says whatever is “Right,” and the word is “righteous” here. Whatever is in perfect harmony with the eternal, unchanging divine standard of a Holy God revealed in Scripture.

** I am going to think on what is True. I am going to think on whatever is worthy of worship. I am going to think on whatever is absolutely consistent with “THE HOLINESS OF GOD.”

- Then Paul continues in Phil. 4:8 and says, ‘Whatever is pure.’ Greek word is “Hagnos,” means holy → set apart from common things for special use (aka meaning morally clean). Undefined. Whatever is morally pure or morally clean I will think on these things – NOT that other junk.
- Then he says “Whatever is lovely.” That means winsome, pleasing, attractive, amiable. It is one of those words that is only found here in the N.T. It means whatever is sweet or gracious or generous.
- And then he says, “Whatever is of Good Repute.” Which means “well thought of.” Whatever is highly regarded. THAT’s where I put my thoughts!

** You know what that does – that really confines me doesn’t it! If I look at the world am I going to find the truth? If I look around at the things the world has to offer (TV, movies, books, magazines, entertainment, etc.), am I going to find what is Honourable, what is Right, what is Pure, what is Lovely, what is of Good Report? When I turn on the TV is that what I am going to see? When I go to the Theatre is that what I am going to see? When I open a book or a magazine is that what I am going to see or read? When I have a conversation with a friend is that what I am going to experience? THE POINT IS → you have to PROTECT YOUR MIND, because it is what determines what you WANT and what you DESIRE and determines how you REACT to the stimuli of life.

- And then he says, “If there is any Excellence and anything worthy of Praise – let your mind DWELL on these things.” And these are statements which WE CAN READ as: “Since there is excellence and since there are some things worthy of Praise – PLEASE focus and DWELL on these things!

* YOUR MIND IS THE GREATEST TREASURE YOU HAVE in terms of those gifts of human life! AND now as a believer your mind works in concert with the SPIRIT of GOD – you MUST protect that mind!

- The Way you protect it is the way you think – you MUST protect its INFLUENCES.
- You MUST avoid those INFLUENCES that negatively affect your thinking.

- There is No quick fix to this.

- There is no easy formula to spiritual stability that you can get in four counseling sessions.

- You cannot put this in a bottle and tell someone to take a dose of it a day.

Spiritual Stability is:

- A product of cultivating Peace in the fellowship.
- Maintaining a spirit of Joy.
- Learning to accept less than you do.
- Resting in a confident trust and faith in the Lord.
- Reacting to problems with thankful prayer.

** AND ALL OF THAT flows out of focusing on godly virtues that begin to DOMINATE your thinking patterns and THAT is what produces the Peace, the Joy, the Humility; the Faith; the Gratitude that make your life STABILIZED.

** Now, the remaining issue here, and Paul knows it, is to say LOOK: “If you want an example of all of this – look at me.”

VERSE 9: “The things you have Learned, and Received, and Heard, and Seen in ME – PRACTICE THESE THINGS! AND the God of Peace shall be with you.” You will not only have the “Peace of God” vs. 7 – you will have the “God of Peace.” Vs. 9

People – “As a man thinks in his heart – so is he” (Prov. 23:7). We MUST learn to guard our MINDS! You cannot expect the fullness of Joy and usefulness unless you desire and meditate on the right things BECAUSE that is what moves your behaviour. AND your desires are a direct reflection of your influences.

**Remember one of our key verses we read near the start of this message (study): an important verse for our command to be holy - 1 Pet 1:16 the KJV reads “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” - Or, as translated in the New American Standard and Amplified translations: “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” - It is an emphatic command!

** So brethren – THINK ON THESE THINGS!!