

Sins of Thoughts

2 Corinthians 10:5

2 Corinthians 10:5 ⁵*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ.*

Story on a 'loose cable'

A story was told about a person named Herbert Jackson, a new missionary. He was assigned a car that would not start without a push. After pondering his problem, he devised a plan. He went to the school near his home, got permission to take some children out of class, and had them push his car off. As he made his rounds, he could either park on a hill or leave the engine running. He used this ingenious procedure for two full years. Ill health forced Jackson's family to leave, and a new missionary came to that station.

When Jackson proudly began to explain his arrangement for getting the car started, the new man looked under the hood. Before the explanation was complete, the new missionary interrupted, "Why, Dr. Jackson, I believe the only trouble is this loose cable." He gave the cable a twist, stepped into the car, pushed the switch, and to Jackson's astonishment, the engine roared to life.

For two years needless trouble had become routine. The power was there all the time. Only a loose connection kept Jackson from putting that power to work. Ephesians 1:19-20 says "How tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God." When I make a firm connection with God, his life and power flow through me. I have the power through Christ to overcome anything the devil may throw my way.

It is no accident that Satan frequently targets our minds with inappropriate, sinful thoughts. The devil knows if he can develop strongholds in our thinking he will easily lead us into sin and separation from God's power. Where are our 'loose cables'?

As we begin to think about spiritual cleansing and renewal, we must first be sure of our salvation. Then, we must first be sure of the **purpose of our salvation**, new life in Christ. Matthew 7:22,23 - *In the day of judgment, many who **think** they are saved will discover they do not know God.*

John 17:3 – *True salvation consists of knowing Christ in a **life-changing personal** relationship.*

Romans 8:16: - *People who are genuinely saved can have **assurance of their salvation**.*

God wants us to be certain of our salvation. We can be grateful that our eternal security is not dependent on our goodness, but on Jesus' righteousness. Our part is faith, repentance, and commitment to Christ. (1 John 5:13.)

New Life in Christ – Romans 6:3-4 (*WHY baptized?*) "**Romans 6**³*Or don't you know that all of us who were **baptized into** Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore **buried with him** through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may **live a new life**.* Paul declared the duty of every Christian to reject sin and do what is right, such as being baptized, as baptism marks this experience of new life received in Christ.

No one can read the New Testament without being confronted with the need for baptism. The first appearance of Jesus in his public ministry took place at a baptism. His first public act was to be baptized. The first sermon by Peter on the day of Pentecost in the early church ended with a baptism. **Acts 2** ⁴¹*Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.* Baptism is the initial way that a sinner identifies himself or herself as a believer. When I admit my sin, repent of it and turn to Christ for salvation, I need to publicly acknowledge what has taken place in my life. Baptism is a way of 'going public' with this newfound faith and saying to the entire world, "I have become a Christ-follower. I have taken Jesus as my Lord and my Savior." In a way, baptism separates those who have committed their lives to Christ from those who are still considering doing so. It is a "do you really mean it?" kind of event. Just as a wedding ring identifies a married person and a

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diploma identifies graduates, baptism identifies believers. It is an open, public confession of our faith in Christ.

Therefore, there should not be any believer that is not baptized. In another words, **the term of an 'unbaptized believer' is an oxymoron**. Jesus said clearly in, "**Mark 16¹⁶** *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*". Jesus linked both belief and baptism together in the promise of salvation, showing that both are necessary. If we say baptism is not necessary, we amend the Lord's statement to say, "*Whoever believes and is (not) baptized will be saved.*" Jesus did not discuss the situation of one who "believed" but refused baptism, for that is a contradiction in terms. He knew that if someone did not believe he would not be baptized or that if he were baptized, his baptism without belief would be worthless. He knew a true believer would be **baptized upon belief**.

Discuss three general kinds of thoughts: (1) Christ-centered thoughts, (2) thoughts related to our earthly lives, and (3) evil thoughts.

(1) Christ-centered thoughts, studying and meditating on Scripture; reading Christian inspirational books and magazines; choosing and implementing plans for ministry and service through the church; thoughts of adoration and praise to God; thoughts of gratitude to God for His creation and blessings.

What are some things that will help us achieve the goal of putting God first? Allow time for responses from group participants. The following ideas should be brought out:

(a) Daily prayer – Should include praise, and expressions of gratitude to God, confession and repentance of sin, right motivation in making requests of God for ourselves and others, and commit ourselves to God's will as we seek His help and guidance.

(b) Consistent Bible study – May include a planned daily Bible study, note taking and meditation on Scripture, and memorizing key passages.

(c) Worship – avoid making worship merely ritualistic; put a special effort to prepare your heart for worship as you show reverence and honor to God; allow the music and the message to speak to you in a true worship experience. When your church observes the Lord's Supper, ask yourself, is my participation a time of self-examination and renewed commitment to God?

Ultimate example is worship – but not everybody understand the meaning and purpose of worship. Review Day 8 of Purpose Driven Life – key **Worship is not for your benefit**.

Romans 11:33-36 "Ro 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Ro 11:34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" Ro 11:35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" Ro 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

(2) Thoughts related to earthly lives - of thoughts relating to everyday life: jobs, children, schools, retirement, health, community interests, leisure time activities) We should give appropriate thought to making our daily lives the best they can be, and should seek God's guidance and help. What are some hindrances to living successful, productive lives? A sister was in need and I counseled her for over an hour on marriage. She expressed concern and possibility of divorce. Husband go to church, but not any more since several months past. (He was a lot better in treating her when he did go to church). Does he belong to a small group Bible studies? Answer was no. Who decides which church to go to? Son's programs and mom's fulfillment. Dad's spiritual need goes down to toilet. What the church has to offer? It is the same God! What differentiate is which church can I give through to enjoy the full blessing? Mark 10:45 says "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" Dr. Frizzell said it well on page 19, that 'we constantly give Him

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our list of wants, but have little thought of what we can give to Him.” Leading such busy lives one may tend to leave God out; failure to seek God’s guidance may result in making poor choices, setting wrong Priorities, and acting from wrong motives.

(3) Evil thoughts - What kind of thoughts are contrary to God’s commands?

(Impure thoughts, thoughts of fear, worry, resentment, unbridled anger, pride, prejudice, hate.) prejudice –Scripture tells us that sin begins in the heart and mind. Jesus said in Matthew 15:19, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, **false testimony, slander**”

Robbing God to Protest People – When some members withhold tithes because of a particular church decision or circumstance, it is blatant disobedience to the God who commands us to bring all the tithes into the storehouse. He did not command the tithe unless you don’t happen to like some church decision. Failure to tithe is plain robbery and a direct affront to God. (Malachi 3:8-10) Just because we disagree with a particular decision, we have no right to rob God. If a situation is truly that serious, then parties should go find a church they can support. On the other hand, if it really isn’t a vital issue and they leave simply because they’re angry, God’s Spirit is seriously grieved in their lives. No matter where they may go, they go without the blessing and favor of God. For the most part, withholding the tithe is a sinful way some try to punish others for not doing things their way. The tithe should be viewed as holy and not a tool for hurting someone we do not like. Robbing God is no way to protest our disagreement with the decisions or shortcomings of people! In fact, God warns of severe consequences to those who rob Him regardless of the reason.

Philippians 4:7*And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--**think** about such things.* In verse 7 Paul had just counseled his readers to “be anxious for nothing, but make their requests known to God, and his peace would guard their hearts and minds. Verse 8 reinforces the truth that if we focus our thoughts on what is right and good, God will bless us immeasurably with His peace and His presence.

Thinking about such things require consistent choice – get scripture into your daily thoughts, form a habit of reading and studying God’s word daily, meditate on these. Write down key verses that speak to special needs in your life (Prayer Journal is for this purpose). Basic to this pursuit is changing our thought patterns to meet God’s approval. Suggest that, if they have not done so, group participants might like to **record in their journal or notebook** any changes they think God would have them make in their thinking and made it a matter of prayer this week.

Invitation:

- (1) Assurance of faith - Although we know we will live on this earth only a short time, most people live their lives as though we will be here forever. We should spend more time thinking of and preparing for kingdom citizenship. We want to look at some practical ways to make the things of God the primary focus of our lives. on becoming aware of a wrong thought, confess it to God and ask His forgiveness.
- (2) Believers truly want to put God first, but in our human frailty, we fail to do so again and again. Replace a sinful thought with a more Christ-centered one. Memorize key Scriptures that can be brought to mind when needed.
- (3) Psalm 37:4 Let me assure you that if you desire God, he will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4).