

## Dealing With Dark Thoughts

- I. Our thoughts are to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. **2CO 10:5.**
  - A. The government of our thoughts is what determines our actions and character, good or bad. **PRO 23:6-7; ROM 12:3.**
  - B. The thought of foolishness is sin. **PRO 24:9; MAT 5:28.**
  - C. It behooves us to guard against allowing temptation to take root in our thoughts. **JAM 1:14-15.**
  - D. Mind that evil thoughts proceed from the heart, not the brain. There is a moral dimension to thought beyond the cognitive, analytical aspect. **MAT 15:19 c/w HEB 4:12.**
  - E. Blanking out God leads to *vain imaginations* and further darkening of the heart unto uncleanness and a *reprobate mind* under Satanic control. **ROM 1:21-28.**
    1. Scripture warns about sinning away the voice of conscience. **EPH 4:17-19.**
    2. Scripture warns of a seared conscience under the power of a seducing spirit which forbids one from enjoyment of lawful things. **1TI 4:1-4.**
    3. Learning of Christ and implementing the same delivers one from such unprofitable thoughts. **MAT 11:28-30; EPH 4:20-24.**
  - F. Have you ever asked yourself after a failure against better knowledge, “What was I thinking of?” Letting thoughts run amok is a real problem.
- II. Circumstances even when striving to please God can sometimes be overwhelming.
  - A. Paul at times suffered from lack of rest in spirit and flesh. **2CO 2:13; 7:5.**
    1. Paul was at times *pressed out of measure* to desperation. **2CO 1:8.**
    2. His stabilization came from faith that his God was greater than conditions. **2CO 1:9-10 c/w 1JO 4:4.**
  - B. David had done well and was hated for it. **PSA 38:19-20.**
    1. Though faithfully serving Saul, he feared for his life. **1SAM 20:3.**
    2. The pressure seems to have made him distrust Samuel who had promised him the kingdom. **PSA 116:11 c/w 1SAM 27:1.**
    3. His stabilization was through prayer and deliverance *out of* trouble, not from trouble. **PSA 116:1-10 c/w PSA 34:19; 2TI 3:11.**
    4. He realized that God really does care for His own. **PSA 116:12-15 c/w 1PE 5:7.**
  - C. Oppression can undo our rational capacity to process life in a godly manner. **ECC 7:7 c/w PSA 73:1-3, 13-14.**
    1. Under intense pressure, even our Lord Jesus was struggling to keep His thoughts. **MAR 14:33; LUK 22:44.**
      - a. amazement: *orig.* Loss of one's wits or of self-possession through any cause whatever. 1. The condition of being mentally paralyzed, mental stupefaction, frenzy. *Obs.*
      - b. agony: Anguish of mind, sore trouble or distress, a paroxysm of grief.
    2. He had to embrace a reality that we never have to deal with: the Father's abandonment. **MAR 15:34 c/w HEB 13:5.**
    3. If the one pure mind of perfect faith could be thus troubled, we of impure minds and doubts shall not be insulated against such.
    4. Christ's salvation was His strong resolve and faith, a lesson for us. **HEB 12:2-4.**
  - D. We are not Christ. We are broken people burdened with weaknesses, made of various character qualities (inherited and conditioned) and all expected to do the best we can according to the grace given us in the warfare of life, laying claim to God's promises. **1CO 10:13; PHIL 4:13.**

1. We are enabled by a new birth/spirit/man, have the mind of Christ to guide us (**1CO 2:16; PHIL 2:5**) and the secure hope of a better future to keep us in the fight. **1PE 1:3-7.**
2. Our God not only rules us but relates to us as children, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities. **HEB 4:15; PSA 103:13-14.**
3. He takes into consideration that not all are rams; some are lambs that occasionally need to be carried. **MAT 11:12 c/w LUK 15:4-7; ISA 40:11.**
4. He recognizes the diverse make-up of men's tempers while not excusing their unwillingness to try. **DEU 20:8 c/w MAT 25:24-29; ROM 14:1; 15:1.**
5. Our God is *for us*, and proved it ultimately by giving His Son for us. **ROM 8:31-32.**
6. No matter our circumstance or inadequacy, He is with us to help us. **ISA 41:9-13; ACT 18:9-10.**
7. Let us not think that being sometimes *cast down* means we are destroyed, and so abandon faith and hope. **2CO 4:9; 7:6 c/w PSA 43.**

III. The truth of the gospel accords with soundness of mind. **2TI 1:7; ACT 26:25.**

- A. Paul was saved from irrational, dark thoughts about decent people. **ACT 8:3; 9:1; 26:11.**
  1. He was ignorantly zealous, a dangerous premise he later denounced. **ROM 10:1-3.**
  2. His pre-conversion problem was a false belief about acceptance with God.
  3. History is filled with examples of God-fearing people struck down by people with a faulty soteriology. Consider the wrath against those who refused infant baptism which was falsely assumed to be necessary for eternal life.
  4. "There is nothing more terrifying than ignorance in action." (Goethe)
  5. Contrast Paul's former disposition with the way he conversed with the ignorant philosophers on Mars' hill. **ACT 17:22-23.**
  6. "In reasoning with others, we should use soft words and hard arguments." (Matthew Henry)
  7. Being delivered from a lie was the salvation of others from the ugly implications of the lie.
- B. The gospel levels men and topples the false idols of the sinner's righteousness.
  1. It declares all under sin and the power of Satan by nature. **ROM 3:9-10; EPH 2:3.**
  2. It denies the notion of works righteousness (the reward of God as a matter of debt to the sinner). **ROM 4:4.**
  3. It denies the notion of the sinner's self-righteousness by any means. **JOB 14:4; ISA 64:6; MAT 3:9; GAL 5:3; PSA 49:6-9.**
  4. This is important since the self-righteous will have dark thoughts about others. **LUK 18:9.**
- C. The gospel denounces pride, self-love and self-exaltation. **1CO 13:4-5; 1PE 5:5-6.**
  1. Those who make much of themselves will have dark thoughts about others. **2TI 3:1-4.**
  2. The prodigal who was full of self was out of his mind until repentance. **LUK 15:11-18.**
- D. How important it is that we deliver ourselves by the gospel from the negative influence of our perverse generation. **ACT 2:40; PHIL 2:12-16.**
  1. The converts in **ACT 2:41** had come to realize that the forces of political corruption and their own ignorant baseness had led them to have dark thoughts about the one pure Man in their midst. **ACT 2:36-37.**
  2. Our culture is being torn apart by irrational hatred of our fellow-men that is being

driven by godless fear, self-centeredness, and hopelessness. We may not be able to save the culture but we do need to save ourselves from it. In so doing, our hope can inspire questions for which we should be able to give answers. **1PE 3:13-17.**

3. Consider the relevance of **ROM 12:17-21.**

IV. Deal with sin properly by recognition, repentance, confession and accepting the judgment of God against yourself. **PSA 51:1-4; EZR 9:13.**

- A. Begin by being honest about what you are, what you have done, and how you will never be able to argue your defective virtue to a holy God. **ISA 6:5.**
  1. Much of our life consists of image-polishing to convince ourselves and others that we are superior examples of humanity or Christianity.
  2. But God sees through the polish. **HEB 4:12-13.**
  3. Accept that you deserve no good thing from God and any personal value or improvement of your worthless estate is owing to His gifts and grace. **1CO 15:9-10; 4:6-7.**
  4. This will guard against the “holier than thou” attitude that rules self-righteous sinners. **ISA 65:5 c/w MAT 9:10-12.**
  5. The recognition of being polished dung was the turnaround in Saul of Tarsus’ life. **ROM 7:8-9 c/w PHIL 3:8.**
- B. Consider Cain who slew his brother, Abel. **1JO 3:11-12.**
  1. Cain’s unscriptural religion was rejected. **GEN 4:3-5.**
  2. Instead of humbling himself and repenting, he turned glum in spite of a promise of dominance. **vs. 6-7.**
  3. Since he couldn’t fight God, he slew Abel. **v. 8.**
  4. He couldn’t stand that his brother had “shown him up.” This is the dangerously dark thought path of envy that drives one to hate rather than reform. **PRO 27:4 c/w MAR 15:10.**
  5. Do not be deceived about this base power of human nature. **JAM 4:5.**
- C. King Saul followed a similar path.
  1. He should have reformed his ways after the first rebuke. **1SAM 13:13-14.**
  2. But he didn’t, and was told that there was somebody better than himself whom God would prefer. **1SAM 15:28.**
  3. Saul’s thoughts went downhill from envy to fear, suspicion, paranoia, hatred, murder, the occult and suicide --- anything but humility and repentance.
  4. Beware the attitude, “It is not my misery that most distresses me; it is another man’s happiness.”
- D. Watch out for the fragility of highmindedness. **ROM 11:20; 12:3.**
  1. This is one of the worst self-deceptions. **GAL 6:3.**
  2. Consider again **LUK 18:11; 1CO 4:7.**
  3. Absalom promoted himself as the answer to everyone’s problems but was a manipulating moral degenerate who craved power. **2SAM 15:2-6; 16:21-22.**
  4. His counsellor, Ahithophel, was so full of himself that he committed suicide when his advice was not followed. **2SAM 16:23; 17:23.**
  5. Nobody, save Jesus Christ, is irreplaceable. **1TI 6:14-15.**

V. Gird up the loins of your mind (**1PE 1:13**) against the toxin of futility. **MAL 3:14.**

- A. It may seem that conformity to God’s righteousness and expectations is futile when you are only looking at the immediate picture. **PSA 73:13-18.**
- B. It may seem that your dedication to principle and promise is not yielding the results you

expected in the time and manner you expected. But faith in principle and promise must be partnered with patience. **HEB 6:12.**

1. This was where Abraham drifted. **GEN 16:1-4.**
  2. This is where Saul forfeited his honor and preferment. **1SAM 13:8-14.**
  3. The Jews grew impatient of the promise of Messiah and missed Him when He came. **ACT 13:27.**
  4. “How long...” is a common cry of the elect. **REV 6:9-11.**
  5. “Futile” is the cry of Esau. **GEN 25:32.**
  6. The prophets had spent plenty of time and effort upon Manasseh to no end, but he was not beyond God’s power to reform. **2CH 33:10-13.**
  7. It is our duty to sow and wait. It is God’s business to give increase in His time, in due season. **JAM 5:7 c/w 1CO 3:6-7; ECC 11:1; PSA 126:5-6; GAL 6:9.**
    - a. It is for such reasons that believing parents train up children in the way they should go. **PRO 22:6.**
    - b. The seed is sown. The germination and growth is of the Lord and some earth is hard clod. **MAR 4:26-29 c/w ISA 28:24.**
    - c. Believing parents have particular hope in God’s promise. **ACT 2:38-39.**
- C. Doing good and doing right in faith towards God will pay off. It is not futile. **ECC 7:17-18; 8:12; ISA 3:10-11.**
1. Beware the attitude that God owes us for our service. **LUK 17:10.**
  2. Virtue is its own reward in that the will of God should be our delight and such bears the promise of eternal life. **PSA 40:8; 1JO 2:17; ROM 2:6-7.**
  3. Never underestimate the contentment and strength that comes from a life that is wellpleasing to God. **COL 1:9-11; ROM 14:17-18.**
  4. Let Paul’s closing thoughts be ours. **2TI 4:7-8.**

VI. Gird up the loins of your mind (**1PE 1:13**) against the notion of “I’m all alone” and so lose hope.

- A. Jeremiah had spent himself for God to a hardnecked people who would not reform. We have no record of converts to his ministry.
1. He let the derision of his fellows confound his hope as he complained of God’s order for his ministry. **LAM 3:14-20.**
  2. He arrested his depression with the recall of God’s tender mercies. **LAM 3:22-36.**
  3. He actually had a “silent partner” who saved him. **JER 38:7-13.**
  4. He was alone in a positive sense: he was the only prophet to whom was delivered the tidings of the new covenant. **JER 31:31-34.**
- B. Elijah thought he was all alone but he wasn’t. **ROM 11:2-4.**
- C. Believers are never truly all alone, even in the darkest valleys. **PSA 23:4-5; 27:10; 2TI 4:16-17.**
- D. The world will mock those who thus trust in God (**MAT 27:43**) but the fact is that such believers cope with and overcome this world. **1JO 5:4.**

VII. Where is your treasure? **MAT 6:20-21.**

- A. Much sorrow of heart and dark thought is owing to a supervaluation of ephemeral things, some lawful, some not.
1. The unlawful things like the lusts of the flesh must be mortified or they will not only rule you, they will destroy you. **COL 3:5-6.**
  2. Lawful things must be governed lest they become inordinate affections. **1CO 6:12.**
    - a. This includes everyday needs and desires, including relationships. David’s love for his rebel son, Absalom, still controlled him after his death.

**2SAM 19:1-4.**

- b. NOTE: the greater our emotional investment in anything or anyone, the more power that thing or person has over us.
- B. There is peace and joy that believers cannot have stolen from them. They can only lose it by forfeiture. **JOH 14:27; 16:22.**
  - 1. No joy means no strength (**NEH 8:10**) and girding requires strength.
  - 2. Excess care wars against the peace of God which keeps our emotions and thoughts healthy. **PHIL 4:6-7.**
  - 3. Contentment is attainable regardless of gain or loss. **PHIL 4:10-13.**

**VIII. Beware of placing too much value on men's opinion of yourself (or of others). 1CO 4:3.**

- A. It is this very error that is causing such spiritual, emotional and psychological trouble among social mediaholics, particularly younger people. Dark thoughts overtake them.
- B. It is one of the ironies of life that the person who is striving to do well and doesn't worry much about his own popularity is likely to end up the more respected and better rounded.
- C. The value system of corrupt and ignorant men is a poor measure. **LUK 16:15; PSA 12:8; PRO 28:4.**
- D. We do well to strive to have a good report in this world, especially in the opinion of people of good faith and character. **ACT 16:1-2; 1TI 3:7; 3JO 1:12.**
- E. A life of service to the rule and model of Jesus Christ gains heavenly and earthly approval. **ROM 14:17-19; ACT 24:16.**
- F. A godly life may seem futile or even generate false accusation and a lack of popularity.
  - 1. God will vindicate it in due time. **PSA 37:5-6; ISA 66:5.**
  - 2. In the meantime, pray for your troublers. **MAT 5:44.**
- G. Beware also of the value of your own opinion of yourself.
  - 1. One could because of an unbalanced perspective or a faulty standard be given over to the control of pride (**3JO 1:9-10**) or of a false burden that forbids his fullness. **COL 2:16-17.**
  - 2. We ought not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. **ROM 12:3; PSA 131:3.**
  - 3. If you have to commend yourself, is it because God or men aren't seeing you as you would like to be seen? **2CO 10:18.**
  - 4. Every good gift, talent or promotion comes from God Who can take it away to humble us (and then we must learn to process the humbling without resorting to dark thoughts). **JAM 1:17; 1CO 4:7; PSA 75:4-7.**
  - 5. The best Christians need occasional humbling. **2CO 12:7.**
- H. (**GAL 5:26**) Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

**IX. As Christians, we have a Spirit and directives to be defined by such things as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, etc. GAL 5:22-23.**

- A. We are to be "...wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (**MAT 10:16**).
- B. We are to model our Savior's meekness and gentleness. **MAT 11:29; 2CO 10:1.**
- C. We are to be in control of our passions, emotions. **PRO 16:32; 25:28.**
- D. We are to respect authority. **ROM 13:1.**
- E. It is because of such things that we sometimes struggle under oppression where boundaries are not being respected but we don't want to react in ungodly ways.
  - 1. In all relationships, personal or work, there are necessary boundaries that should be respected and, if continually disregarded, some pushback is warranted.

2. Authority, for example, is to be wielded for the building up, not the destruction of others. **2CO 10:8.**
- F. Consider the benefits of justified anger, hatred and fighting. They have their times. **ECC 3:7-8.**
1. Whereas we are to love others, we are to hate evil (**ROM 12:9**) and this presupposes that there are times when it must be resisted (always in our own hearts, occasionally when it is being brought against us).
    - a. Minor issues can be absorbed and doing so is Christian. **MAT 5:39.**
    - b. But what about where one's life or livelihood is at stake and the ability to supply for one's household in jeopardy? In this current era of "mandates," this issue is very relevant.
  2. Whereas we are not to give in to the negative passion of fear (**HEB 13:6**), we do have license to exercise the negative passion of anger (with qualifications).
    - a. Justified wrath is an attribute of God. **PSA 2:4-5.**
    - b. Our Lord Jesus Christ flexed His muscles against the wicked corruption of the house of God. **JOH 2:13-17.**
    - c. Christ was sometimes angry with hypocrites (**MAR 3:5**) and even His disciples. **MAR 16:14; LUK 24:25 c/w MAT 5:22.**
    - d. We are to be angry without sin. **EPH 4:26.**
    - e. Whereas we are to be "...slow to wrath..." (**JAM 1:19-20**), nor *wrathful* (full of wrath, **PRO 15:18**), we are not at fault to use it responsibly when it is justified.
    - f. I say with caution that there is a time to curse a fig tree by faith. **MAT 21:19.**
    - g. Better to resist oppression and wickedness by justified anger than condone it by fear. Are you on the side of righteousness in a matter? Then stand your ground.
    - h. Just remember that hanging on to anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other guy to die.
  3. By such means boundaries are established and friction sharpens. **PRO 27:17.**
- X. Closing pointers.
- A. Be not given to evil surmising about others. Get the other side of the story before assuming fault. **1TI 6:4; JOH 7:51.**
  - B. Give people the benefit of the doubt where you can. Be wary of rapid generalizations. **PSA 116:11.**
  - C. Choose the high road. Deal with frustration, disappointment, etc. by looking first at self. **PSA 73:22.**
    1. Ask yourself whether you could have done, or could yet do something to improve your life or circumstances.
    2. Don't default to blaming God or others for your status when you bear some blame yourself.
    3. **GAL 6:4-5.**
  - D. Stop filling your mind with negatives and focus rather on all the good that God represents and the blessings that are still available under the bondage of corruption. **1CO 15:33; PHIL 4:8.**