

Bringing Thoughts Into Captivity (2 Corinthians 10:5)

- I. Preamble.
- A. Wrong thinking distorts perception of God, man and man's environment.
 - B. Wrong thinking impairs personal development.
 - C. Wrong thinking impairs relationships with God and man.
 - D. Wrong thinking produces conduct and conclusions based on unproven assumptions.
 - E. Wrong thinking produces wrong emotions which facilitate more wrong thinking.
 - F. Wrong thinking produces confusion and chaos.
 - G. Right thinking produces order, soundness, peace, right emotions and right conclusions.
 - H. God is truth. God is right. Anything that contradicts Him is wrong.
- II. Paul wrote of "...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2CO 10:5).
- A. In context, he is focusing on his method of evangelizing and his gospel authority. **2CO 10:1-11.**
 - B. In v. 5, he uses the language of political and military conquest that was typical of Israel of old when they fought against idolatry and heathen.
 - 1. Idols and religious images were to be eliminated, even *cast down*.
EXO 23:24; JDG 6:30.
 - a. The casting down of idols justly accords with *casting down imaginations*.
 - b. imagination: The action of imagining, or forming a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses (cf. sense 3); the result of this process, a mental image or idea (often with implication that the conception does not correspond to the reality of things, hence freq. **vain (false, etc.) imagination**). 2. The mental consideration of actions or events not yet in existence. **a.** Scheming or devising; a device, contrivance, plan, scheme, plot; a fanciful project. *Obs.* exc. as a biblical archaism.
 - c. Rejecting the obvious knowledge of God opened the door for *vain imaginations* which became the basis of idolatry that accommodated lusts. **ROM 1:21-25.**
 - 2. Enemy survivors of nations which were not slated for complete annihilation could be taken captive. **DEU 21:10-11.**
 - a. Such became subject to the laws of Israel which applied to Jews and strangers which dwelt among them. **NUM 15:15-16.**
 - b. Israel's laws forbidding idols and idol customs (**DEU 12:29-32**) would have been imposed upon them.
 - c. If Israel fell away from true religion, God would suffer the stranger among them to dominate them. **DEU 28:43-44.**
 - 3. Thus, that which was taken captive was not annihilated and could be serviceable, but, without godly personal supervision, could gain dominance in the land.
 - a. This has a relevance to Paul's words about bringing thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ Who preached deliverance to those held captive by Satan's lies. **LUK 4:18 c/w JOH 8:31-36.**
 - b. That every vain thought is not annihilated does not mean that it can't be held captive, and in fact demands that it should be held captive.
 - c. In our Christian experience, we will have to contend with the foolish thoughts of our Adamic nature, including errant thoughts of God, religious errors of our past or those still rooted in "methinks," as well as the thoughts

- we have about our desires of both unlawful and lawful things.
- d. Our thinking needs continual personal government or, like the stranger in Israel, those thoughts foreign to Christ will lead us astray or even into spiritual destruction.
4. Consider how much of our Lord Jesus Christ's earthly ministry was devoted to correcting or refining men's thinking. Examples:
 - a. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (**MAT 5:17**).
 - b. "Ye have heard..." (**MAT 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43**).
 - c. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (**MAT 10:34**).
 - d. "...Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?" (**LUK 13:2**).
 5. It was owing to the people's *imagining vain things* about Messiah, the kingdom of God, and even about Moses' Law that they called for Christ's death. **ACT 4:24-28**.
- C. Consider Paul's contrast of Old Testament conquests by force of arms and New Testament conquests by the force of good arguments in **2CO 10:1-5**.
1. Paul himself, in his pre-conversion antichrist days, thought it proper and necessary to stamp out "wrong-think" and wrong-thinkers by political, legal and physical force. **ACT 22:3-5; 26:9**.
 2. Paul was one who actually thought he was doing God a good service. **JOH 16:1-3**.
 3. "There is nothing more terrifying than ignorance in action." (J. W. Von Goethe)
 4. Paul's transition from arms to arguments was owing to his thoughts about Jesus Christ and about his own sinfulness being brought into captivity: he could not erase the former thoughts but, being delivered from them, could reign over them and actually use them to instruct others.
 5. Grace had given him "...the mind of Christ" to receive instruction from God rather than presume to instruct God. **1CO 2:16 c/w ROM 11:33-36**.
- D. The truth of the gospel accords with soundness of mind. **2TI 1:7; ACT 26:25**.
1. Paul was saved from irrational thoughts about good people. **ACT 8:3; 9:1; 26:11**.
 2. He was ignorantly zealous, a dangerous premise he later denounced. **ROM 10:1-3**.
 3. His pre-conversion problem was a false belief about acceptance with God: his self-righteousness impaired his personal development and facilitated his unhealthy view of others different from himself, per **LUK 18:5**.
 4. Conversion to Christ changed Paul for the better in every way. Contrast Paul's former disposition with the way he conversed with the ignorant philosophers on Mars' hill. **ACT 17:22-23**.
 5. Being delivered from a lie was not only his personal salvation but also the salvation of others from the implications of the lie.
 6. Paul could still claim to be a Pharisee but the errant thinking of Pharisaism was held in captivity as being nothing more than dung buried outside the camp of his mind. Only the valid aspects of a Pharisee were worthwhile. **ACT 23:6 c/w PHIL 3:4-9 c/w DEU 23:12-13**.