

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 18:9**.
 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**.

III. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul particularly was warring evangelistically against the long-standing idolatry which defined the nations, a deceptive bondage to lies.

1CO 12:1-2; GAL 4:8-10.

- A. The casting down of their imaginations of deity was critical to his mission. What they thought about the invisible God was invented and irrational, leading them to ridiculous

conclusions. **ACT 14:8-18; 17:24-29.**

1. They looked to the creation, to nature to formulate their thoughts about deities. **ROM 1:24-25.**
 2. But the creation is under the bondage of corruption and cannot accurately proclaim God: it is a broken book that provides inaccurate and incomplete answers that then facilitate vain imaginations. **ROM 8:20-21.**
 3. Their customs were therefore accordingly vain, ugly and deadly. **DEU 12:30-31; JER 10:1-4.**
 4. It is this very thing that God chiefly forbade Israel to do, for the consequences of it not only distorted the Godhead but also how men should live. **EXO 20:1-4; DEU 4:16-19.**
 5. Whatever man holds as his supreme authority becomes his director. Therefore if his perception of the supreme authority is faulty, the directions of that supreme authority must also be faulty and compliance with those directions fraught with vain consequences.
 6. As such, it is manifest that man must have an accurate perception of God.
 7. NOTE: Perception (the apprehension of the mind) of something may be accurate or inaccurate but either way becomes the basis of thought and action. A faulty perception can be as powerful as a correct perception but it can be dangerous.
- B. A distorted perception of God misrepresents Him and His order for man, and this is a major source of bondage: bondage to a lie, which is bondage to Satan. **JOH 8:44.**
1. We may deceive ourselves into thinking that God is as us and thinks like us and in this case our efforts to follow God are actually little more than following our own natural instincts which are corrupted by sin. **EPH 2:1; ROM 7:18.**
 - a. In so doing we are little different from the idolater who is in bondage to his own deception. **ISA 44:13, 20.**
 - b. Whereas man is made in the image of God (**GEN 1:26; 1CO 11:7; JAM 3:9**), man has no right to assume that God is just like him and that He thinks like him. **PSA 50:16-21; ISA 55:8.**
 2. Depending on our ignorance, gullibility or reaction to circumstances, Satan may con us into perceiving God as being a tyrant, a pushover, unfair, unapproachable, unknowable, disinterested, etc.
 - a. Satan will try to wrest Scripture or distract us from Scripture so as to distort our perceptions of God. **PSA 77; LAM 3:1-26.**
 - b. This should remind us of how important it is to learn of Jesus Christ by Whom God is made known to us. **JOH 1:18; 1JO 5:20.**
 - c. This should also remind us how important it is to increase our knowledge in the Scriptures which expressly testify of Christ. **JOH 5:39; 2PE 3:18.**
 - d. The more we understand of Jesus Christ by searching His testimony (**REV 19:10**), the better will be our perception of God.
- C. Much theological error (which produces improper conclusions) is the false worship of the notorious god, Shirley/Surely. This is wrong-thinking about God fleshed out in creed and conduct.
1. "Surely God doesn't care about my apparel or hair-length."
 2. "Surely God honors all forms of religion."
 3. "Surely God would approve of invented festivals and customs to honor Him."
 4. "Surely God isn't taking notice of my secret sins that nobody else sees."
 5. "Surely God is approving of me because I have been successful in material life."
 6. "Surely God begat an Eternal Son in His deity."

7. “Surely God didn’t mean that humans are sexually binary.”
 8. “Surely God still condones polygamous marriage.”
 9. “Surely God cannot save sinners without sinners’ cooperation.”
 10. “Surely God loves all mankind without exception.”
 11. Over against this nonsense, “Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it” (**JOB 35:13**).
- D. God made man in His own image but sinful man makes a god in his own image, and also has the tendency of raising children after his own image instead of the image of Christ (as God intends for His people). **ROM 8:29**.
- E. In bringing our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ (**2CO 10:5**), we are not bringing our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of only a man like Moses.
1. This captivity is unto *God manifest in the flesh*. **1TI 3:16**.
 2. In rendering obedience to Christ, we are rendering obedience to God Himself.
 3. Of all men, Jesus Christ showed us that the path to fulness is full obedience to God the Father. THIS mind is to be in us. **PHIL 2:5-8**.
 4. We can have complete assurance that submission to Jesus Christ is the best and only way to please God Who invested Him with all power in heaven and earth and with all judgment. **JOH 14:6; MAT 28:18; ACT 17:30-31**.
- IV. The government of our thoughts is what determines our actions and character, good or bad. **PRO 23:6-7; ROM 12:3**.
- A. The thought of foolishness is sin. **PRO 24:9; MAT 5:28**.
- B. It behooves us to guard against allowing temptation to take root in our thoughts. **JAM 1:14-15**.
- C. 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**.
- D. As noted already, 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**.
- E. Have you ever asked yourself after a failure against better knowledge, “What was I thinking of?” Letting ungoverned thoughts run our lives is a real problem.