

“Think On These Things”

Back when I preached in Mooresville, Indiana, there was quite a debate raging over pornography. It started when the District Attorney in Hendricks County stated that all video stores which rent adult movies would be prosecuted if they did not remove them from their shelves. Many people wrote in to voice their discontent with the action. The local paper could have probably filled two or three issues with all letters to the editor that were written by concerned citizens. As usual, they cited their First Amendment right to view this type of material, whether they actually wanted to or not. There is no telling how many emails are sent every day promoting adult websites. A lot of people justify the viewing of this type of material as merely satisfying a “healthy curiosity” and that indulging in this type of material is perfectly within each person’s rights.

A lot of psychologists say that pornography has a definite impact in the way people think and act. Many who regularly view pornography are more given to violent crimes, especially towards women. A few years ago, I saw a news broadcast that related the story of how a man killed a prostitute and modeled the death after a scene in a pornographic magazine.

The people who fight so vigorously for the pornography industry seem to disregard its effects. But these effects have been documented. Everyone is so fanatical over their rights, they fail to see what is right in front of them that is dangerous or harmful. But for the sake of “personal freedom,” they defend the very thing that can bring about their destruction.

Society seems to have gone wild over the pornographic industry. It is now a multi-billion dollar business. Every year, it captures thousands of young and old alike. The effects of pornography really scare me. Something that may seem just a “healthy curiosity” twists and perverts the minds of those who view it. Jesus said, *“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”* Pornography can clearly cause someone to be condemned. Moreover, Ted Bundy gave an interview to Dr. James Dobson and explained to him how pornography had influenced his life and sparked the violent crimes that he committed against women.

Now, the whole point of the article is not to explore the depths of the pornographic industry. Rather, it is to examine the way worldly influences affect us. Pornography is just one example of the influences that can corrupt and defile the mind. Paul said in Philippians 4:8-9, *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever*

things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." In order to have good actions, one must have a good mind.

Paul knew the importance of good meditation or having good thoughts. I do not know how many times I have heard it said, "You are what you think." The reason parents are so upset about the incidences of violence on television is the risk of increased violent behavior in their children. This correlation has shown us that we really are affected by what we see and by what we take into our minds. We must be careful! It does not take long to see that this has a significant impact on our spiritual well-being.

A Christian who constantly has their mind on things of the world has so many problems focusing on proper things. That is why Paul said, "*Think on these things.*" He knew how important it is for us. One of our worst weaknesses is that we sometimes cannot see the effects of our thoughts. Casual thoughts of a non-edifying nature over a prolonged period of time can lead to spiritual dullness and even the possibility of falling away from God. Focusing in on the proper perspective and training yourself to meditate on spiritual thoughts can give you the greatest boost in your Christian life because it allows you to draw closer to God and farther away from the "*roaring lion*" who seeks to devour all of God's children (1 Peter 5:8).

But what can we let our minds dwell on? God has His idea of what man should dwell on when He told Joshua in 1:8, "*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*"

David's prayer in Psalm 19:14 reflects what I think all Christians feel when he said, "*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.*" Psalm 1:2 gives a picture of a wise man whose "*delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night.*" God wants us to meditate on His word. He wants us to meditate on it because it is the thing that will bring us into obedience and righteous living. This kind of meditation brings us away from the world and toward God.

Maybe the reason we have so many problems is that we just do not spend the kind of time thinking of things lovely, pure, right, true, honorable, etc. We fill our minds with whatever is available, and what we end up with is a

big, stinking garbage heap. Psalm 119:59-60 says, *"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments."* Oh, how I wish that we could be more diligent in doing this! Sometimes I consider my own ways and I do not turn to God like I should. That is sinful and puts me in danger of losing my soul.

It is incredibly important to turn ourselves to God's testimonies instead of the testimonies of the world. What does the world tell us? It tells us that it is okay to do all the things we have ever wanted to do. It tells us to do the things which are condemned by God. It tells us that we can enjoy any lifestyle that we want to and not be condemned. That is what the world tells us. Living according to the testimonies of the world gets us into serious trouble. We would do well to stick with God.

When Paul gave the Philippians the assurance that the God of peace would be with them, it was a great comfort for them. God has always assured His people that He would be near. In Isaiah 43:2, God promised His people that He would bring them out of Egypt by saying, *"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."* In Hebrews 13:5, God again reassures His people by saying, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* These are wonderful words of comfort.

Jesus stated He would be in the midst of His apostles. Matthew 18:20 says, *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* In Matthew 28:20, Jesus instructed His disciples to go out and preach to the world and He assured them of His presence by saying, *"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*

Ask yourself what happens when you dwell on evil thoughts or on things of the world. I think you will find that the answer is nothing! These kind of thoughts cannot give us anything of worthwhile value. They drive us away from the one that wants us so close: God. On the other hand, if we do dwell on the *"things above,"* we have the assurance of God's promises. However, we need to remember that God's promises are conditional. That means if we obey and follow God, He will bless us with the *"peace which passeth all understanding."* But if we disobey and walk by our own ways and thoughts, we have nothing to look forward to but eternal condemnation.

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