

December 12

As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Proverbs 23:7

IT...behooves the Lords consecrated people...to carefully strain out the impurities, and see that they do not enter into our hearts, our thoughts, realizing that with them in, the result will be to work to our

WHAT IS THE HEART? IT IS THE WILL

(Dan 1:8 KJV) "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself..."

(Psa 57:7 KJV) "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed..."

R2890 "The will, in Scripture called the "heart," is therefore continually appealed to by the Lord, as he now seeks amongst men for his "peculiar people." The message is, "My son, give me thine heart"-- thy will."

OUR TEXT

OV315 "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he..." This Scripture...signifies that the mental determination or will represents the real man, from the Divine standpoint..."

SM339 "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." This is not to be understood as meaning that whatever a man thinks is true. That is a false definition; the correct thought respecting this statement is that what a man may seem to be outwardly is not necessarily a correct view of his real character—his heart, his will, his intention, the real man as God sees him..."

The Apostle illustrated this, saying, "If any man seem to be religious and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain." (Jas. 1:26.) Outwardly he might have seeming piety, might be a church attendant, etc., but so surely as his heart is changed, so surely as he is begotten of the Holy Spirit, so surely as the Spirit of love dwelleth in his heart and more and more abounds richly, it will affect not only his actions but also his looks and his words. He will seek to bridle his tongue, to bridle all of his passions, to be emptied of his former ambitions and desires, and to be filled with the noblest, purest and best which come to us from the fountain of grace and truth in God's Word."

R4615 "It is the will which controls the brain and seeks to regulate the thoughts and intentions of the heart, and, so far as possible, all the actions of the daily life."

IT (OUR HEART) INCLUDES OUR AFFECTIONS

Deu 6:5 KJV Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart..."

R4293 "How carefully we should heed the words, "Keep thy heart with all diligence (thy will, thy affections), for out of it are the issues of life"--life eternal or death eternal.-- Prov. 4:23."

THE WILL SETS THE AFFECTIONS

(Col 3:2 KJV) "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

CR5 "Some one may say, "Brother Russell, I have set my affections on things above,

defilement, to a greater or less degree. Whoever maintains purity of thought will have comparatively little effort in maintaining purity of word and of action. Whether the impurity come from one direction or another-- from the world or the flesh or the devil--its attack must first of all be upon the mind; and if repelled there the victory is

and some how or other they slip off again." ...That is just the same as it is with other people. They set their affections on things above and then they slip off and get down to the earthly things... So keep setting your affections, and if they slip off a thousand times a day, set them back a thousand times, and by and by they will begin to stick to the heavenly things."

R2480 "Some will set their affections upon a wife or a husband, or upon parents or children, or upon a good name before the public, to such an extent that when testings come as to whether or not they love these more than they love the Lord, their conduct proves that they have given to these *earthly good things* a degree of love beyond that they accorded to the Lord.

Frequently the Lord's people do not at the time realize that this is the case. They love the Lord, and they love their families and friends, and a good name, which is to be preferred to great riches; and they do not realize that they love the Lord less than they love these other things. The Lord, however, will test everyone whom he will receive to the high calling along just these lines; he declares in advance that whoever loves father, mother, children or any other thing more than him is not worthy of him--not worthy to be counted as a member of the body of the Christ in glory, --the overcoming Church. The overcomers must all be proven to be such as would sacrifice every other thing for the Lord; such as would sacrifice the love and fellowship and approval, if necessary, of every other being, in order to retain the love and favor of the Lord."

Mat 6:19-21 KJV "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: (20) But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: (21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

R874 "In proportion as we are...rendering our sacrifices, denying self and following the Master's steps, we come to realize the heavenly treasure more and more clearly, and our hearts are set more and more upon it. On the contrary the more we handle and spend time and attention upon earthly things, the more they get to fill our hearts and so would crowd out the heavenly. "Set your affections on things above." Where your treasure is your heart will be, and what you sacrifice most for, *becomes* your treasure. That which costs us most and which we give most for, we love most, and thus it is proved to be our treasure"

THE HEART -- GOD'S CHOICE AS A SYMBOL CARRIES A POWERFUL MESSAGE

(Pro 4:23 KJV) "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life."

won; if not repelled we cannot know what the consequences might be, as the Apostle James declares: "Lust [selfish desire of any kind], when it has conceived [in the mind] bringeth forth sin [develops sinful words or deeds], and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." Z. '01-325 R2891:5

(Lev 17:11 KJV) "For the life of the flesh is in the blood..."

R5246 "THE HEART is one of the most important organs of our body. If it ceases to work, death is sure to follow. The blood that flows through the heart constitutes the life, the energy of the body. If the blood current is interrupted for a little while, a clot is formed. This is so much of a preparation for death. There must be a continual stream of blood circulating through our bodies to keep life there.

In view of this important function of our natural hearts, the Bible very properly uses the heart, the center of life, as a symbol of the center of our affections, including the will. Our will has to do with everything we do. Whoever of the Lord's people wills to seek more and more to purify himself becomes more and more alive. If we are pure in heart, we resolve to live righteously and soberly in the present life."

R5747 "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life... As the heart is perhaps the most important organ of the human body, so the word "heart" is here used in a figurative way to represent the center of the affections of the human mind..."

"For out of it [the heart] are the issues of life," declared Solomon. From this organ--the heart--the blood is pumped out to all parts of the body. The body is thus dependent upon the heart for its strength, its vitality, its very life. The body would be dead if the heart did not continually propel the blood through the system. So the issues of our bodily life are going forth from the heart every day, yea, every moment. It is either issuing little life or much life each day. So it is with the seat of our affections--so it is with our will."

A PURE HEART -- MORE THAN MERELY GOOD INTENTIONS

R5755 "THE ULTIMATE DESIGN OF THE LAW OF GOD "*The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience and an undissembled faith.*" -- 1 Timothy 1:5..."

A pure-hearted person is not merely one who starts out in the Christian life with a good intention. *All* who start in the Christian life do so with a good intention; but they must be instructed and educated. They must develop to perfection this purity of heart. Hence the experiences of the Christian are for the very purpose of bringing his heart into this condition of pure, unselfish love.

At the beginning of the Christian way our hearts are pure in the sense of being sincere, truthful. We mean what we say, what we profess. We are not merely drawing near to God with our lips and not with our hearts. But love out of a pure heart, this purity of love referred to in our text, is attained by the putting off more and more of the things of selfishness and the putting on

more fully of the Lord's Spirit... "Put off all these--anger, malice, envy, hatred, strife," works of the flesh and of the Devil... Put on all these-- meekness, self-control, patience, faith, longsuffering, gentleness, brotherly-kindness, love. As we do these things, our hearts will be in the attitude the Apostle mentions. We shall have attained that which God purposes, designs; namely, "love out of a pure heart."

[Hymn 198]

O for a heart more like my God,
From imperfection free;
A heart conformed unto thy Word,
And pleasing, Lord, to thee

R5746 "BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART" *"Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unfaithful is nothing pure; but both their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to have known God, but by their works they renounce Him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work worthless."* "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." —Titus 1:15,16; Proverbs 4:23...

The language seems to imply that these were fault-finders. They could find fault with everything—nobody could do anything just right, no doctrines were right... People who see nothing pure, nothing good, anywhere, and who are denouncing others all the time...

The Apostle's statement is very strong, very forceful—"Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unfaithful is nothing pure."... They have permitted ill-natured thoughts to enter the mind and lodge there—suspicions, evil surmisings...

Gradually, if they yield to this wrong heart attitude, their consciences become corrupt and hardened... "They profess to have known God," says the Apostle—knowing something in an intellectual way about His Plan and Word—"but by their works they deny Him." Their works are contrary to God's Word, which instructs that all should seek to do all the good they can, to see all the good they can, and to give generous judgment to others...

So far as any *good work* is concerned they will defile it, injure it... They have allowed the bitter spirit to work in them until everything takes on the color of their own minds. They do not recognize to what an extent they are unjust, unrighteous, in their thoughts, their words, their conduct. They are injurious to every good work.

There are lessons of warning here for all of us, lest we should be led astray by the spirit of the Wicked One...

NECESSITY FOR GUARDING THE HEART

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," exhorts the Wise Man. The thought embodied in this exhortation is of the utmost importance. Truly these are words of wisdom! As the heart is perhaps the most important organ of the human body, so the word "heart" is here used in a figurative way to represent the center of the affections of the human mind. The implication is that the heart needs keeping. There are many things to distract, to draw away, to lead astray. Not only the burden of business, but also the trend of the world in general and of our fallen flesh, tend to lead the heart away from righteousness,

from the service of God, from purity, love and kindness toward others.

The great Adversary also gives his assistance in attempts to thus mislead. The heart—the will, the affections—of every human being should be loyal to God and to righteousness. It was made so originally. As the magnetic needle turns to the pole, so the human heart should turn to the Lord. Anything to the contrary represents a sinful, distorted, perverted condition. But as a matter of fact, sin has become firmly implanted in the fallen human nature. During these long centuries of sin many people have striven to keep their hearts right with God. But after *getting right*, the majority fail to *abide* in that condition."

THE WILL CAN DECIDE WHAT THOUGHTS TO KEEP OR REJECT

R2890 "Thoughts can be controlled just as words and actions can be controlled: the will is at the helm, and must decide which thoughts and sentiments it will entertain."

R5246 "THE TRANSFORMING INFLUENCE OF THOUGHT" *"As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."* (Proverbs 23:7.) "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."--Proverbs 4:23...

The Church, having accepted God's terms, have made a consecration of their lives to Him. They have engaged to fight a good fight against the world, the flesh and the Devil. They are under special obligations as New Creatures. Their hopes and ambitions are separate from those of the world. They are therefore doubly responsible in respect to their hearts, which represent their inmost sentiments.

According to a man's innermost sentiment, so is he. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is his real character. What is your real will? What are your real sentiments? Not, What *words* do you use? not, What are your *actions*? but, What is the *motive* underlying all these?

The New Creature is to be God-like, spiritual, eventually of the spirit nature in glory--perfect. But before it attains that perfection, the heart of the New Creature is required to prove its loyalty. Some will be overcomers in a higher sense than others, but none will be overcomers except those who are true, loyal, pure. If, therefore, we have made a consecration to God, it would be our endeavor that our hearts, our desires, our motives be perfect. The only proper attitude is to confess our imperfections, if we are wrong. God expects us to be loyal of *heart*. And that loyalty of heart should reach out and control the whole life.

If our thoughts are not according to our ideals, we should endeavor to make them so. We should put away anger, malice, hatred, strife, and all such works of the flesh and the Devil. With some people, in some conditions, these thoughts go very deep. It is not the transitory thoughts of the mind--the passing thoughts--that are meant in our text...

IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT THINKING

In reality a man is not always what on the surface he seems to be. His real character is deep down below--the purpose of his life. These are not the mere transitory thoughts, but the deep fissures of thought, if we may so designate those which involve

the whole life. The Scriptures bring to our attention the fact that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds--by having them made over.--Rom. 12:2.

The Apostle, speaking of some very vicious traits of character, says, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11.) This cleansing, this sanctifying, comes not merely through the reading of the Truth, or the *mental* application of the Truth, but through the *heart*--thinking on the Truth. This heart-thinking, these deep resolutions, are ours as Christians, and are to be guided by certain principles. These have to do with the real man whom God is considering--not the old creature, more or less blemished, according to the degree of depravity. God looks at the New Creature.

These deep heart convictions and purposes constitute a transformation of character. This is the man's *real* condition, and so is *he*. If he have some transitory emotion of anger or of malice, it would not be his *real* thought, his *real* intention. Therefore it would not be *he*, but his old *nature*, temporarily asserting itself. As a New Creature, he is to watch his words, his thoughts, his actions. If a transitory, wrong thought should pass through his mind, it would not be the thought of his heart. And he as a New Creature, should stop it, put it away, so that it may not take root in his heart, and choke out better sentiments.

This right thinking of the heart has very much to do with the whole life. The Apostle says that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, to know what is the perfect will of God. This is the Christian's standpoint. How glad we are that our Heavenly Father is judging us from this standpoint! How glad we are that He is able to read the heart, that He knows our hearts, that He knows our inmost thoughts!

At one time we might have thought that we were doing God service when we were not. We show our loyalty to God by giving attention to His Word, that we may know what is His will. The more we study God's Word, the more we receive the spirit of the Truth, and the more we appreciate it. And in proportion as we understand God's regulations and desire to be guided by them, our hearts will become purified. Then the more care shall we take of our hands, what they shall do; and of our tongues, what they shall say. Thus we shall keep our hearts--submit our wills to the will of God.

The will is a part of our heart, just as the rudder is a part of the ship. The new will is the rudder to steer us this way or that way. The more we understand the Word of the Lord, the better we understand how to guide our lives. Therefore we are to keep our hearts and purify them by the *knowledge* of God's Truth, the *study* of God's Truth. To do this, the will must ever be on the alert, watching with prayer and thanksgiving."

R5854 "From the beginning our heart, our intention, must be wholly loyal, and day by day this heart intention must become more and more crystallized, fixed, in the way of righteousness."

R2446 "The overcoming...will be not in the *perfecting of the flesh*, but in the *perfecting of the heart*,--the will, the intentions. As for the blemishes of the flesh, some of them,

undoubtedly, despite every effort on our part to eradicate them, will continue with us

so long as we are in the flesh. The perfection which is to be hoped for, and aimed at

and expected and gained by the overcomers, is the perfection of the will..."

R2890 (From Harvest Truth Database V8.0 2013)

FINISHING TOUCHES OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things."--Phil. 4:8.

MANKIND in general does too little thinking, and what it does do is more or less along improper lines, and built upon false bases or premises. Nevertheless, all will agree as respects human welfare, there is a power in thought second to no other power in the universe. Few, perhaps, realize to what extent this is true,--to what extent their own happiness and well-being is dependent upon right thinking,--to what extent whole communities and nations owe their happiness or misery to their right or wrong thinking upon the important problems of life. Words are a power in the world, but only in proportion as they awaken thoughts and lead to actions; words, thoughts, deeds, is the order. Truly did the wise man say, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." (Prov. 23:7.) If he thinks justly, he will speak and act justly; if his thoughts are selfish and ignoble, his words will be deceitful and his conduct dishonest.

It is because the power of thought is to a considerable extent recognized that it is appealed to on every hand. The teacher appeals to it; the preacher appeals to it; the politician appeals to it; the financier appeals to it; the sociologist appeals to it; the thousands of pamphlets, books, newspapers and magazines published in every land and in every tongue are all appealing to *thought*. Thought, indeed, may be said to be the great engine which is moving the whole world in its every department. The difficulty is that few are of logical and discerning mind, the fall having affected every member of the human family has disordered our reasoning faculties; and charlatans and demagogues and self-seekers very frequently take advantage of the weak mental state of humanity to delude with sophistry, and thus to hinder and obscure correct thinking and reasoning. Against the great force and weight of selfishness in its every member does humanity thus labor, as well as against the wiles of Satan; and it is not surprising that generally it is misled and deceived, because added to its incubus of false premises it must struggle also against its own inertia, sluggishness and inaptitude.

The Lord, also appeals to the power of the mind through his Word, and urges upon his people that they be "transformed by the renewing of their *minds*." (Rom. 12:2.) Indeed, it may be said that the cultivation of the power of thought began with God's people, and that so far as religious matters are concerned it has in no particular degree gone from them. While heathen religions seek to restrain the intellect and appeal chiefly to the passions, prejudices and fears, the Lord, to the contrary, calls to his people, saying, "Come, let us reason together." (Isa. 1:18.) We are willing to admit that nominal Christendom has not heeded the Lord's invitation to any great extent--that very largely nominal Christians avoid thought on religious subjects, and especially avoid reasoning; but we hold that to the extent they thus violate the divine arrangement they have not their "senses exercised by reason of use," and are to be esteemed, at very best, only babes in Christ. Heb. 5:13,14.

We are willing to agree also that thinking may be a very dangerous matter in the absence of absolute knowledge upon which to base and exercise our reasoning faculties; but the Lord has protected his faithful along this line by providing us in his Word with the proper basis for reasoning on all subjects involving our duty to our Creator and to our fellow-creatures. The Scriptures lay down certain broad lines, and invite God's people to *reason within these lines of revelation*, and by reasoning thus to taste and see that the Lord is gracious; and come to a clearer knowledge of him, a better understanding of his character and plan. Many who are awakened to independent thinking are careless of the *limitations* of the divine revelation, and consequently the influence of the divine Word upon them is a mental liberty and enlightenment which, lacking the divine control, is very apt to go to the extreme of license, selfishness, self conceit and infidelity. Wherever the Bible has gone it has been the torch which has led civilization: millions have profited by its enlightening influence, though only comparatively few walk close to its light and within its prescribed limitations of reason and conduct; and these few are the true Christians--the "wheat" of this age, "the first-fruits unto God of his creatures," which God is now harvesting.-- James 1:18.

THE CONTROL OF THOUGHT

Some are inclined to believe that since man's brain differs from

each other man's brain to some extent, therefore his thinking must necessarily be different; in a word, that a man can only think in harmony with his brain construction. But we reply, Not so; each may learn to weigh and balance his own thoughts, to curb some and to encourage others; but to do this each must have before him an ideal of character, to be copied. Thoughts can be controlled just as words and actions can be controlled: the will is at the helm, and must decide which thoughts and sentiments it will entertain and encourage, and which it will repel. It is necessary, therefore, first of all for the will to be rightly directed, and secondly, to be strong, and to use its power in the control of thought; --in curbing those thoughts which it recognizes as evil, and in stimulating those which it recognizes as good, helpful, beneficial. The will, in Scripture called the "heart," is therefore continually appealed to by the Lord, as he now seeks amongst men for his "peculiar people." The message is, "My son, give me thine heart"--thy will. This request is not addressed to wilful sinners, for they are not recognized or addressed as sons of God, but as children of the Evil One. Those whom God recognizes as his sons are such as have been brought into harmony with him through forgiveness of sins, by repentance and faith in Christ Jesus, the Redeemer. It is to such that the Lord makes known that if they would "go on to perfection"--to the full attainment of his gracious purposes respecting them, the only proper course would be to give their hearts, their wills, to him in consecration.

The heart, the will, thus given over to God, seeks to know the divine will, to catch the divine thought and to obey it in word and in act; and in proportion as this condition of the new mind is attained, in that same proportion will there begin to be a newness of life in every respect; in ambitions, hopes, sentiments, and efforts. It is for this reason that the revelation of the divine will and plan is furnished to believers --that by growing in the knowledge of it, by thinking on these things, by filling the mind with the divine plan and will, the transforming influence may extend into every avenue of life.

OUR TEXT ADDRESSES THE SAINTS

A common mistake amongst people would be to address the words of our text on the subject of right thinking to sinners, to evil-doers and evil thinkers; but this is a mistake. The entire Epistle to the Philippians is addressed to "All the *saints* in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi" (1:1); and the exhortation is applicable to all the saints everywhere, but not to others than saints--not to the worldly, not even to the household of faith, until they have made a full consecration of themselves to the Lord. It would be useless to address others along this line; the exhortation would be of no effect. Hence, the exhortation of this lesson is not specially applicable to any but the most advanced Christians--not even to the "babes in Christ," but only to those who are somewhat matured in the new life. As for the babes who are not developed new creatures, they will have their attention very thoroughly occupied with the cruder elementary lessons, respecting the coarser sins which the new creature must abhor and battle against. This text addresses those who have made considerable progress along these lines of putting away "the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit"--those who are seeking to *perfect* holiness in their hearts, and so far as possible also in their earthly bodies.-- 2 Cor. 7:1.

The context proves our assertion, for after speaking of prayer and thanksgiving to God and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping their hearts and minds, the Apostle sums up this advanced position of grace with the words of our text as the finality or finish of the argument, and of the process of character-development: "Finally, brethren."

"WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE"

This is the first question to be asked respecting any matter: Is it true or is it false? If it is false the Lord's people are to have nothing whatever to do with it,--no matter how beautiful. Love for the truth lies at the very foundation of saintship, and we remember that the Lord declares through the Apostle that those who will be rejected and stumbled in this harvest time are such as "receive not the truth in the love of it" (2 Thes. 2:10)--such as have pleasure in unrighteousness (untruth). With our poor and at very best imperfect brains there is great danger of our being misled, and hence the Word of the Lord

appeals to us with force that we should not even *touch* that which we realize is untrue. This does not mean that we may not weigh and balance evidences to discern the truth from the untruth; but it does mean that as soon as the truth is discovered it will be embraced and acknowledged, and the untruth as vigorously disavowed and completely withdrawn from. To tamper with error after we see it to be error, to "see how it would reason out, anyway," when we know the matter is on a wrong basis, is to lay a trap for our spiritual feet, one which frequently stumbles travelers on the way to Zion.

If we are following God's admonition through the Apostle, in this text, it will mean an avoidance of fiction, of novels, of unrealities. This, on the other hand, will mean an increased reverence for whatsoever things are true, an increased devotion to them, an increase of time for their study, and an increase of the spirit of truth in our hearts as a result.

"WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST"

The truth of the thing is only one of the tests to which it must be put. We may find a matter to be true and yet not find it to be worthy of our thought, dishonorable. Who does not know that there are dishonorable and dishonoring thoughts, the pondering of which not only wastes valuable time, but instead of bringing a reward, a blessing for the time spent upon them, entails a loss, a disadvantage, in that it leaves a dishonorable stain in our minds, unworthy of us as new creatures in Christ Jesus?

The true but dishonorable or unworthy things presenting themselves for our consideration at the bar of our minds are perhaps oftenest in connection --with others--the weaknesses, the errors, the follies, or what not of our neighbors, of our friends. The entertaining of these thoughts, the pondering of them, will be unfavorable to us, and the sooner we discern the matter and dismiss them the better, the happier, the more noble will be our own hearts. The dismissal of these unworthy thoughts will leave us the opportunity and the energy, if we will, to expend that much more time upon whatsoever things are not only true but also honorable, worthy of our attention as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

"WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST"

Here we have another limitation. Our minds are to be occupied in thinking about righteousness or just things, principles, etc.; we are not to be continually meditating upon grievances and injustices, either real or imagined. We are to remember, on the contrary, that we are living in the period which the Scriptures denominate "the present evil world," and that it could not be this if Justice prevailed generally. We are to remember that hereunto we were called,--even to endure injustice, for righteousness' sake;--to do good, to lay down our lives in the service of the Lord and his Word, and yet to be evil-spoken of and to be misunderstood and to have all manner of evil said against us falsely for Christ's sake. We are, therefore, not to think strange of the fiery trials that shall surely come upon all who are of the Royal Priesthood; but rather, having settled this matter in advance, when we made our consecration, we are to take it as it comes, as a matter of course, not grieving over nor specially thinking about the trials, the injustices, etc. And thus doing we will have the more time to give to thinking of the more helpful, the more strengthening, the more elevating things--the things that are just, the things that are in harmony with righteousness, respecting the past, the present and the future, as promised in the Lord's Word.

"WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE"

There is a vast amount of impurity everywhere throughout the world. ⁽¹⁾It, therefore, behooves the Lord's consecrated people to follow the Apostle's injunction, and to carefully strain out the impurities, and see that they do not enter into our hearts, our thoughts, realizing that with them in the result will be to work our defilement, to a greater or less degree. Whoever maintains purity of thought will have comparatively little effort in maintaining purity of word and of action. Whether the impurity come from one direction or another--from the world or the flesh or the devil--its attack must first of all be upon the mind; and if repelled there the victory is won: if not repelled we cannot know what the consequences would be, as the Apostle James declares: "Lust [selfish desire of any kind], when it has conceived [in the mind] bringeth forth sin [develops sinful words or deeds], and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death."--*Jas. 1:15.*

No wonder, then, that the Apostle mentions the necessity for our thoughts being guarded along the line of purity, and that if a matter were ever so well established as a truth, and if it involved no injustice, and even were not dishonorable, yet were impure, this would be quite sufficient to condemn it as unworthy of the mind of the Lord's consecrated people. Nor is it to be overlooked that any smut or impurity entering into the mind may cause such a defilement

as will give trouble in its complete eradication, not only at the time, but for years afterward.

"WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY"

The saints are exhorted to be meek and peacemakers, but in order to be thus they must have amiable thoughts, lovely and lovable thoughts, kind thoughts, gentle thoughts. These in turn will gradually develop into graces of character. We are not to think upon subjects generating anger, hatred, strife, --vexatious thoughts, quarrelsome thoughts, vindictive and contentious thoughts. These all are to be shunned as enemies to the new creature, and instead we are to think of the beautiful things, the amiable things, we may know respecting our neighbors, our friends; even though we be not able to fully close our eyes against their injustices or evil deeds, we may at least refuse to waste valuable time in thinking about their weaknesses and thus cultivating unamiable, quarrelsome dispositions in ourselves.

"WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT"

It may be argued by some that since the world hateth the light and the children of the light, and rejoiceth in iniquity and in getting the advantage over others, therefore those things which would be reputable with it would not be the holy things suitable to the thoughts of God's people. But not so, we answer; the world does recognize to a considerable extent a right standard, even though it does not follow that standard, nor even pretend to do so-- even though it hates those who it sees are endeavoring to walk up to that standard; even though it calls the children of light hypocrites, and crucifies them, as in the case of our Lord. It is policy and false religion that generally excite religious persecution. Nevertheless, if anyone will follow the standard that is reputable, and think upon those things he will find therein a blessing.

FOR THE VICTORS ARE THE REWARDS

Some may feel that if they thus sifted and tested and rejected all the untrue, the unworthy, the unjust, the impure and the unamiable thoughts presenting themselves, that they would have no topic left whereon to engage their minds, and this we believe would be true with a great many--their minds for a time would be quite vacant of thoughts, if all the evil and improper ones were rejected, banished; but by the time they would be in this attitude they would have such a "hunger and thirst after righteousness," truth, things lovely, things pure, things noble, that they would be in the right condition to receive the very spiritual food which the Lord has provided for them. There is one thing, and one thing only, which fully combines all of the above propositions, and demonstrates itself to be the one thing true, honorable, just, pure, lovely,--and that is, the divine character and plan. Let us think upon its various features. Let us study the divine Word and behold through it, as a telescope, the beauty of the divine character, the splendor of the divine plan, as revealed in God's Word and plan...whose length and breadth and height and depth no man can measure, and only the saints can comprehend by the holy spirit, and that in proportion as they receive of the holy spirit, the holy mind, the holy thoughts, replacing and displacing the unholy thoughts and sentiments of the natural man. (*Eph. 3:18.*) What a splendid premium the Lord thus places upon the study of his Word in the esteem of all who are of the class addressed by the Apostle in our text!

Such a ruling of the mind is a conquest; such a self-mastery is a victory; the greatest victory that can be gained. As the Scriptures declare, "He that ruleth his spirit [mind] is better than he that taketh a city." (*Prov. 16:32.*) And the prescription given by the Apostle in our text, for the mental health of the saints, is the very soul-discipline necessary to our development in character, to the degree pleasing to God and acceptable, through Christ Jesus our Lord. These are the victors to whom will be granted a share in the Kingdom. Ah, then, as the Apostle exhorts, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author of our faith" until he shall have become the finisher of it (*Heb. 12:1,2*); remembering that he who is on our part, and who has engaged to help us and to carry us through every difficulty, and to fully instruct us if we submit ourselves to him, and thus to "make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," is Jesus, --who loved us and bought us with his own precious blood.

Well do the Scriptures generally enforce the importance of guarding the mind, the will, the heart, saying, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Keeping it, to the saints now called and in the race, means life more abundant, with glory, honor and immortality. Neglecting it, refusing to exercise self-control, means the permission of selfish desires to be conceived in our brains, and to lead away from the Lord and his "narrow way" on toward sin, on toward the wages of sin-- death--Second Death.

⁽¹⁾ Dec. 12 *Manna*, Pro. 23:7