

Character of Thought

Philippians 4:8 *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.*

Romans 12:1-2 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

In our understanding of “Character of Thought”, we must understand how important the thought process of a Christian is. We know, that according to the Bible, we are all sinners. Sin is the inherent nature of every human being since Adam and Eve sinned in Eden. We were conceived in sin. We are born sinners. The nature of sin passed to all of us through our earthly fathers. That is why the doctrine of the virgin birth is so important, or else Jesus would have been a sinner too. But all 7 billion inhabitants of this planet that are spread across 7 continents are sinners. Now, let’s think about sin. Sin begins with a thought, or, temptation. When that thought, no matter what the subject may be, gets out of control, then wrongdoing (sin) will be the imminent result. Eve’s sin began with a thought. Adam’s sin began with a thought. My sins begin with thoughts. That is why we, as believers, must control our thought process through purposed character. **Character does not happen by accident.** Character comes from the determination and commitment of each person that decides they will do what is right, no matter what. If a Christian wants to be a person of integrity, then they must be a person of character. That bleeds over into the Church. That bleeds over into the home. That integrity will soon become the fabric of that person’s make-up. It will become who they are. Paul told Philippi HOW to do it. Paul told the believers at Rome WHY we do it. What a person is on the inside bleeds into every part of their outside. Today, let us examine on whether or not we have “Character of Thought”.

I. HOW TO

Philippians 4:8

(a) **Right Now**: Paul begins this verse with “*Finally*”, but character or control of our thinking shouldn’t be something that we ‘finally’ get. It should be the challenge and goal of every believer from the start.

1. Paul gives us 6 ‘whatsoevers’ as keys to having character of thought. Let’s examine those one at a time. “*Whatever things*” means ‘great things’, so these aren’t some little tidbits for life or spiritual anecdotes. These are the great things of character!

a. The Whatever of True: One would think that ‘true’ and ‘honest’ are the same things...they are not. “*True*” here means ‘*open, not concealed*’. It coincides with the narrative that Jesus spoke of when He contrasted the works of light versus the works of darkness in His conversation with Nicodemus.

John 3:20-21 *For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.* (ESV)

1) Paul told Agrippa in Acts 26, “*King, this Gospel of Jesus Christ hasn’t been done in a corner!*”

b. The Whatever of Honest: The word ‘*honest*’ here means a lot to me as a veteran. It means ‘*honorable*’. Someone called me ‘unethical’ once and I was angry. That person literally called me ‘dishonorable’. This is much deeper than taking an ink pen from work. That spoke against my character, and I didn’t like it at all!

2 Corinthians 8:21 *For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.* (ESV)

1) “*Aim at*” (Gr. *hamartia*) Sin is aiming at righteousness but missing the mark. Control your thoughts and your aim is better!

c. The Whatever of Just: The word ‘*just*’ means ‘*holy, equitable or unbiased*.’ This is where the believer gets beyond the thoughts of ‘moral superiority’ based on beliefs or denomination or socioeconomics or race. Like Joseph, if you don’t possess GRACE, you can’t be just in your dealings with others.

Romans 5:20 *...But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

d. The Whatsoever of Pure: Now again, you would look at being just and being pure and say, “Same thing”, but like ‘*true*’ and ‘*honest*’, they are different. *Pure* means ‘*clean, modest, innocent*’ just like the pure thoughts of a small child.

Matthew 18:1-4

1) Notice how Jesus squelched the thoughts and intentions of fame or prestige because of the Gospel. Those words began as thoughts, thoughts from the heart. Wrong thoughts from wrong hearts and those thoughts must be ‘converted’ (remember that).

e. The Whatsoever of Lovely: This word means ‘*friendly towards*’ and being friendly towards others no matter who they are or what they are doing is key to the character of thought. When you were without Christ, your **conversion** began with someone being friendly towards you. Now, think for a moment about Paul when he was still Saul. Two people were key in his becoming the minister of the Gospel that he is at this time.

- Ananias: “*Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus has sent me to pray for you to have your sight*” (Acts 9:17)
- Barnabas: “*But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles*” because they were afraid of Saul. (Acts 9:27)

f. The Whatsoever of a Good Report: Here’s the closer, this is your *reputation*. Hebrews 11 tells us that the reputation of those faith-filled saints is what engraved their names in that great chapter of faith. The spiritual term is ‘testimony’. Let me blunt. Next to your salvation itself, your testimony or reputation is the most important thing that you possess.

1) What lends credibility to your testimony?

- Our *virtuous* thoughts (valor)
- Our thoughts of *praise* (commendable)

(REPEAT) 2 Corinthians 8:21 *For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.* (ESV)

II. WHY DO

Romans 12:1-2

(a) **For Mercy's Sake**: When Paul begs the Roman Christians to present themselves to the Lord completely for the transformation of their minds, he is NOT begging them like a dog begs for a treat. It is an invitation, or a calling to allow the process to take place. Why? Vs. 1

1. Like I just said, it is for mercy's sake; pity. It's not because believers are pitiful, but for the pity of the lost.

a. When YOU present YOUR body...

- As a living (quickenened) sacrifice (victim)
- As a holy (sacred, blameless) sacrifice
- As an acceptable (agreeable, pleasing) sacrifice

(b) **For Heaven's Sake**: Look at that opening portion of verse 2, "*And be not conformed to this world...*" In the world of horse flesh, conformation is a familiar term. Conformation is how that horse was bred or born that will make it what it is in the arena or on a trail or track. Thoroughbreds look like what they are, racehorses. Quarter horses look like what they are, work or pleasure horses. You won't see a quarter horse at the Kentucky Derby, and you won't see a thoroughbred running barrels at Frontier Days in Cheyenne.

1. Paul said that if you look, act, respond like the world, then you are conformed to the world. You look like that's where you belong.

a. Conformation to the world will NEVER prove what is good or acceptable or perfect (complete) in the will of God.

2. Instead, we are challenged to be transformed, or changed by a renovated mind.

John 15:19 *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (ESV)*