**THINK ON THESE THINGS (#4)**

***Things Lovely & Commendable***

*“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.
The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”*

Have you ever had a favorite author or speaker that you have read from or listened to so much that you can almost anticipate what they will write or say next? Some scholars spend so much time studying the works of William Shakespeare or C. S. Lewis that they can almost read their mind. Personally, I’ve read over 100 books by Louis L’Amour and can virtually tell you the plot by chapter 2. While being a western novel “scholar” is hardly equal to a doctorate in Shakespeare, it makes my point.

Paul is simply telling us to think God’s thoughts after Him. Saturate your mind with God’s Word so much that you can almost anticipate what God would say and Jesus would do in virtually any circumstance. Paul is basically channeling David to make Psalm 119:97-104 our passion in life. “*Oh how I love Your law, it is my meditation all the day … How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through your precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way*.”

By meditating (musing, pondering, thinking deeply) on God’s way of thinking we will find joy and peace, and “*guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 4:6-7). Look at this list of things to think on then connect them to the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is true (Jn. 14:6). Jesus is noble (I Jn. 5:20). Jesus is just (Rom. 3:24-26). Jesus is pure (Heb. 4:15; 7:26). Etc. By “*looking unto Jesus*” (Heb. 12:2) you will eventually imitate Him (I Cor 11:1). The well-worn expression WWJD can also be labeled WWJT (What Would Jesus Think). Remember when the *National Enquirer* used to play on their name with this jingle: “Enquiring minds want to know.” Just so, Christian minds want to know what our Lord is thinking, so we will then know how we should live.

***Things That Are Lovely.***

This broken world can be a dark and ugly place. It is easy to become cynical and negative about all the ungodliness about us. “*Evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse*” (I Tim. 3:13). Reading Romans 1:18-32 can leave you looking at the world through pessimistic glasses. God has given sinful man over to “*uncleanness*” (v.24), “*vile passions*” (v.26), “*to a debased mind*” (v.28). What follows in verses 29-32 will make many throw up their hands in disgust and give up on the world. Don’t!

The Christian must look past the ugliness of this sin-cursed world and become a light shining in a dark place (Matt. 5:16; 2 Pet. 1:19). We do that by thinking on things that are *lovely*. This is the Greek word *PROSPHILE*. This is a relationship word: PROS (toward) + PHILE (friend). It is seeing in someone traits that endear them to you. They are lovable, charming, pleasing to you. You want to be near them. To see them is to love them, for they are lovely people.

While I can easily be distracted by all the ugliness of sinful people around me, God calls me out of the world to see things through His eyes. “*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*” (Jn. 3:16). If I can but work hard to see every sinful soul is made in God’s image and that Jesus came to die for him, then I will begin to see loveliness all about me, for I will long to be lovable to lost sinners. As the hymn says, “Let the beauty of Jesus to be seen in me; all His wonderful passion and purity.” Instead of pessimism I will soon be filled with optimism as I see in every soul a spark of divinity.

***Things That Are Commendable (of Good Report).***

It’s interesting that the Greek word here is *EUPHEMOS*, from where we get our English word euphemism. A euphemism softens the hardness of a word and makes it palatable. It shows things in a different light, trying to raise it up instead of tear it down.

Paul is telling Christians that we are to look for the good in others and speak of them with “*grace, seasoned with salt*” (Col. 4:6). We want to speak well of others, to give them a “*good report*.” We commend others by thinking of them in a good light.

This all starts with our thinking. It does not mean we are Pollyanna’s who only see through rose-colored glasses. We are not naïve, overlooking other’s sins. But it does mean that I am to “*have regard for good things in the sight of all men; if it is possible, as much as depends on* (me), *live peaceably with all men*” (Rom. 12:17-18).

Jesus saw in others commendable qualities that other Jews reviled. Think of the woman taken in adultery He forgave (Jn. 8:1-11), the publicans and sinners He befriended (Matt. 11:19), Zacchaeus He loved (Lk. 19), and the thief on the cross He saved (Lk. 23). He came to save sinners (Lk. 19:10), and to serve mankind (Matt. 20:28). For that the “*common people heard Him gladly*” (Mk. 12:37) and flocked to Him.

How do you think of others? Are you like Barnabas, whom the apostles thought of as “*the son of encouragement*” (Ac. 4:36)? Are you like Paul, who said of the elders at Ephesus, “*I commend you to God and the word of His grace*” (Ac. 20:32)? Do I think happily and positively, hoping to be lovable and commendable to others, and to be loved and commended in return? If so I am thinking like Jesus. In doing so I will live joyfully and God’s peace will guard my heart and mind in Christ.

Today, think on things lovely and commendable. – Rick