

## CONSECRATED THINKING

As we expect to hear a message tonight from Brother Russell that will have to do with the great plan of salvation, we felt this afternoon it would be appropriate to take as our subject something real practical, so we have chosen our text, Phil. 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." We have chosen as our topic, "Consecrated Thinking."

Very often you will hear people remark, "O, a thought isn't very much. It would be a terrible thing if we did anything real bad, but just a little thought – what does that amount to?" But this afternoon we will try to magnify, or exalt, the power of a little thought. We are going to show that the little thought is more important than the word you speak, or the act you perform, so much so that the place you will have in the kingdom will depend on the thoughts you think. We want you to recognize that the ease with which you will gain the victory will depend upon the thoughts you think. Whether you have a place in the little flock or the great company is merely a matter of the thoughts you think. The possibility of your being ultimately lost will depend on the thoughts you think.

We find this matter of thought so important, because thoughts are the beginning of all things. This whole universe began with a thought. Some time, away back in the distant ages of the past, we know not whether a million years ago, or many times a million years ago, our God had a thought of creating a universe. That thought led to the out-working of His great plan; that thought led to the bringing of the sun, and moon and stars into existence; that thought finally resulted in the creation of this earth, and the whole universe. It all grew out of that little thought.

This building started with a thought; somebody, some time, thought of

putting a building here. That thought led to further consideration of the matter; it led to the making of plans and specifications; it led to the making of contracts, and finally this building stood here; it grew out of a thought someone had in the past. So we see that thoughts are very important, because everything starts with a thought.

We might say that thoughts are seeds which are planted to make things grow. In a sense each person is like a farm; you are a little farm and I am a little farm. We are growing a crop on our farm, and that crop we call character. That is the reason Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, "Ye are God's husbandry." The real thought is, "You are God's farm." We are all farms, and we have a crop growing on our farm. As with natural farms, there is a great diversity. You sometimes come to a farm where everything looks very nice. The rows of corn look so prosperous, everything is green and thriving, everything indicates thorough cultivation—it is real refreshing to see a farm like that. Then we may see another farm where the rows are crooked, the crops do not look well, but are overgrown with weeds, there is a general lack of cultivation, the fences are down, everywhere there is evidence of neglect, and it is all in striking contrast to the other farm. It is so with the individual. One has a character like a nicely cultivated farm. You can see patience, and love, and zeal, and godliness, and earnestness, and other grand qualities growing in his character. You meet another man whose character is like the farm overgrown with weeds. In such character we see growing the envy, the jealousy, the malice, strife, and all kinds of evil fruitage.

We understand that just as seed had to be planted to raise a crop on that farm, so thought is required to develop the character we desire. We must be very careful of one thing. While we are going to show the importance of a little thought this afternoon, yet at the same time we want to be careful not to go to the extreme that our Christian Science friends do, and make thought everything. We are not going to put thought on the throne and worship it. Rather, we will continue to worship God, the great Being who reigns above us.

We understand that just as a farmer plants seed to raise crops, so something was needed to raise or grow a character. We believe that the little seed which the farmer plants corresponds with the little thought which we plant. The seed is a very little thing, yet it produces a large plant. So a thought is a very little thing, yet how much will grow from it. We find the idea expressed in the Bible that the seeds we plant are the thoughts we think. The Apostle Paul refers to this when he says, in Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the

flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." When the apostle referred to sowing, he referred to thoughts. The same apostle says again, "I have sown, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase." Here again he referred to thoughts.

We find the same thing brought to our attention in the parable of our Redeemer. He told of a sower who went forth to sow. Thoughts were the seed. Some fell by the wayside, some fell upon stony ground, some fell among thorns, and some fell on good ground. Then He explained what the seed was. He said the good seed was the Word of God. In another parable He put it somewhat differently, saying that the "good seed are the children of the kingdom." You may say this contradicts what you told us; Jesus said the seed was the Word of God. Yes, and what is the Word of God? It is simply a collection of thoughts which God has put in book form for our advantage and help. A man writes a book. He has certain thoughts, and he wants to get them planted in the minds of other people, and he publishes them in a book. The Word of God is simply a statement of God's thoughts. We read there what God thought respecting sin; what He thought about the angels; what He thought about Jesus; what He thought about the resurrection; what He thought about the wicked. As we go to the Bible, we find it full of divine, inspired thoughts. Thus our Bible is different from other books – others record the thoughts of men, whereas the Bible gives us God's thoughts. This is shown in Isaiah 55, where the prophet says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ... thoughts higher than your thoughts." We need to plant more of these thoughts in our hearts and minds, that they may spring up and bear fruit to the glory of God.

This is what Paul meant in the passage we read awhile ago, "I have sown, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." He meant, I came among you and planted certain thoughts in you minds which you never had before. Apollos watered those thoughts, and God finally will bring these to fruition. It is the same as expressed by Paul when he says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." He meant, whatsoever he thinketh, that shall he reap. You say, "I never thought of it that way. We thought 'whatever a man soweth' meant whatever he does he will reap accordingly; it will depend on how he lived, how he spent his money, how he spent his time – this will determine what he will reap." Think of this a moment. Why do you spend your money as you do? You begin by thinking, and your thoughts lead you to act that way. Why do you go where you do go? Because you think of it, and your thoughts lead you to go that way. Why do you live as you do? You think about it, and you prefer to live that way. Why did you say

those bitter words about that man? Because you had been thinking bitter thoughts. Everything starts with a thought. Sowing the seed is not spending the money, but thinking the thoughts that result in the spending of it. Sowing the seed is not the saying of the bitter word, but thinking the thought that led to saying the bitter word. So we recognize that sowing has reference to thinking the thoughts – the seeds are the thoughts.

We know there are two kinds of seeds. There are good seeds and bad seeds. There are seeds that produce things helpful, like the grain and flowers, and there are other seeds that produce injurious, hurtful plants, such as thistles and weeds. As there are two kinds of seeds, so there are two kinds of thoughts. There are good thoughts and bad thoughts, helpful thoughts and evil thoughts. As the good seeds produce grain and flowers, correspondingly good thoughts produce patience, godliness, humility, gentleness, meekness and faith. The bad seeds which produce weeds correspond to bad thoughts which produce jealousy, malice, hatred, envy, strife, ungodliness, and all sorts of evil things.

There is another thing about the two kinds of seed. When you plant a good seed, it requires so much attention. You cannot plant a good seed and just let it go. After you have planted a good seed, it requires cultivation, and fertilizing, and careful attention or it will not amount to anything. That is the way with good thoughts. It will not do to stick some good thought into a corner of your mind, and expect that it will grow. We must work over it, we must cultivate it, and water it, and give it attention if we expect it to grow. Just as it was so easy to plant that flower seed, and then let it die, so it is easy to think a good thought, and then let it die. It is different with bad seed that produce weeds. You do not have to work over them; you need not labor to make them grow. You can stick them in any corner of the garden and they will be pretty sure to grow. So with bad thoughts. You do not have to struggle with bad thoughts to have them grow. Stick them in any corner of your mind and they will be pretty sure to grow. The great trouble will be to keep them from growing. The work of the successful farmer or gardener is to make the good seed grow, and to discourage the bad seed from growing. So the work of the Christian is to encourage the good thoughts to grow, and to discourage the bad thoughts so they will not grow.

There is another important thought here. Seeds produce more seeds like themselves. The plant grows, and if you allow it to continue far enough, by and by that plant will go to seed, and you will have more seed of like kind to the first. If in the corner of your lawn there is a little dandelion plant, and you do not pluck it up, by and by that dandelion

plant will go to seed. What kind of seed will it produce – grass seed, and thus make your lawn look nicer than ever? No, if you do not look out, you will soon not have a lawn, but only a dandelion patch. So if you plant a good thought, and you encourage, water, and cultivate that good thought, it will grow and produce a prolific harvest of good thoughts. On the other hand, if you plant a bad thought, that will by and by go to seed and you will have an abundant reaping of bad thoughts. So we can see how necessary it is that the Christian start with right thoughts, for so much will grow out of his thoughts.

There is another point here which we believe very essential in many respects. A good seed will never do any good unless you plant it. The bad seed will never do you any harm unless you plant it. A good thought will never amount to anything unless you think it; and a bad thought will never do you any harm unless you think it. There is the same relationship between the seed, and the planting of the seed, as there is between the thought and the thinking of a thought. Most people do not distinguish between a thought and thinking the thought, but there is a vast difference. To plant a seed, you must bury it; you must cover it up. So a thought is one thing, and to think a thought is to plant the seed. To think a thought is to welcome, to encourage, to harbor it. A good seed is of no value unless you plant it, and a good thought is of no use unless you think it; unless you welcome it, unless you entertain it. The bad seed will never do any harm unless you plant it. The bad thought will never do harm unless you think it; unless you welcome it, unless you entertain it.

Let me show the distinction between thought, and the thinking of a thought. You remember the account tells us of Jesus being baptized of John in Jordan, and how immediately He went out into the wilderness. You recall that He was without food for forty days, and finally He was an hungred. Satan came to tempt Him. Satan did not come visibly. He doubtless suggested a thought to His mind. You remember what the temptation was. Satan said, "Command that these stones be turned into bread." This was merely a thought which came to Jesus. "Command these stones to be turned into bread; you have the power; you are hungry, why not use your power making some bread out of these stones." He refused to entertain that thought; He would not plant that thought. He said, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He refused to plant the seed – to think the thought. Suppose He had entertained the thought, and reasoned like this: "I know it would not please My Heavenly Father to have me turn these stones into bread. I will not do this. I will not think of doing any thing the Heavenly Father would not wish me to do. He did not give me this power to be

used in satisfying my hunger in such a way. I will not do this, but how nice it would be if I could. I would never need to buy bread; all I would need to do when hungry would be to command the stones to turn to bread. But as God does not want me to do this, I will not do it. I wish I could do this, though; it would be so nice, so convenient. I really wish my Heavenly Father would allow me to do this, but I will not do it because my Heavenly Father is not willing." This would have proven that Jesus had planted the seed, and we do not know what the final result might have been. We do not know how it might have injured the Redeemer's character. We are glad He was proof against the temptation. The seed was handed to Him by the evil one, but He did not plant it.

There is a lesson for us here. We are not to blame for our thoughts, but we are to blame for what we think. If a good thought comes to our mind we are not to be commended. Perhaps God has put you in the way of getting that good thought; He has permitted the good lesson to come to our mind. Perhaps someone whom you were talking to suggested it. But you do deserve the approval of God if you think the thought. That is, planting it. So also with bad thoughts. We are not always to blame for bad thoughts. If someone puts a thought into my mind by a statement which he makes, I am not to blame; the remark of the other put it there. But I am to blame if I harbor it, if I welcome it, if I think the thought. We are not to feel discouraged if we have bad thoughts, and we are not to feel over-confident if we have good thoughts. The question is, "What are we doing with our thoughts?" A bad man has good thoughts, and a good man has bad thoughts. A man is bad when he entertains bad thoughts; a man is good when he entertains good thoughts, rather than bad ones. The Scriptures say, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is not, "as a man's thoughts are, so is he." O, no; it is not according to the thoughts, but according to the thinking.

So in our text the apostle says, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK on these things." We see that this is the idea expressed by the apostle in Galatians 6. "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." When he says, "He that soweth to the flesh," he means he that thinks thoughts out of harmony with God's will—thoughts altogether in keeping with the spirit of the flesh. If he entertains such thoughts he is sowing to the flesh. The apostle says he shall reap corruption. This does not mean that if he has such thoughts, and thinks them, that he necessarily will be lost.

Suppose a little garden patch of corn. Suppose you took a handful of weed seed and went out and scattered it through your corn. What would the result be? You would be sowing corruption and would reap corruption. That would not mean that you would not have any corn. You might get corn anyhow, but it would mean that you had done something that would stand as an obstacle to the end you were trying to accomplish. You wished to raise corn, and now you had been undoing that work. It would mean that you would have to work harder to make the corn grow. Some of the nourishment that should go to the corn would now go to the weeds. You might get some corn, but not so much as if you had not sown the weeds. So if we are trying to serve the Lord, and a wrong thought comes to mind, if we plant the thought we are sowing corruption, and we will reap corruption. We may not be lost on that account, but we are making it harder for ourselves to get into the kingdom; we are making that much more work for ourselves, and if we get into the kingdom at all we will have a lower place, because we were willing to think these wrong thoughts. When he says, "He that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting," it means this: If a thought comes to our mind in harmony with the Spirit of God, and we think along that line, we harbor that thought, and we will reap everlasting life because we are sowing the seed, or entertaining the thoughts that will help us to develop the character that every one must have who will get everlasting life. So we see how important it is to think of right things.

Let us come to the text. Paul tells us what things these are that we should think. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Let us take these things and analyze them.

First, whatsoever things are true. That means, if any thought comes to your mind that is not true, crush it, put it down, do not entertain it, do not harbor it. Exaggeration is simply the result of entertaining untruthful thoughts until an untruthful disposition is developed. It reminds me of an experience I heard of a year or two ago. There was a minister of one of the denominations who came from England to the United States to accept a position. He was over here preaching, I believe, for about a year. At the end of that time he went back to England again. When he went back he had a photograph of himself which had been taken here. In this he was dressed up like a cowboy on horseback. He carried a gun, and in his belt were pistols, and cartridges and a hunting knife, and thus he gave the people in England the impression that America was such a place that he needed to be dressed up like that for safety; that you could not tell when

you would meet a lot of desperadoes, so one must go armed to the teeth. Finally, he was exposed, much to his humiliation, and the people recognized that he had misrepresented America. How did this happen? I think about like this: When he thought of going back to England, he said to himself, "I wish I had done something great here in America; something wonderful, so the people would make a big fuss over me when I get back. Of course I have not. I wish I could pose as a hero when I get back, but I have not done anything great – just common things, like I did in my own country. I wish I could have fought Indians – wouldn't that have been fine? I believe I will just dress up like a cowboy and see how I will look in that kind of a suit." He got the suit, put on the belt with pistols, cartridges and knife, went to a photographer and had his photograph taken on horseback. Probably he said to himself, "Now I will not tell the people that I had to go around that way; that would not be true. I will just have a little fun, and see if they recognize me in this dress." When he got to England he showed it to some of his friends. He said, "Who is this? They said, "Why, that is you." "Yes." "Did you have to go around looking like that in America; is it a country like that?" He had thought these things so long that he could not resist the temptation, so he said, "Yes, that is the way I had to go in America." So we can see how an untrue thought held in the mind can ultimately lead us into great difficulty.

While we do not want to entertain an untrue thought of anyone or anything, let us be careful not to entertain untrue thoughts about God. You may say, "Does anyone ever do that?" It is one of the most common ways of stumbling among Christians. How? Like this: The thought may come to a Christian, "Suppose God would not be true to His promise? Possibly God will not give us the grace we need when we get into difficulty; possibly He will desert us." That is an untrue thought, because He has stated, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He says that "He will supply all of our needs, according to the riches of His grace." He says, "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." These are only a few of the passages the Christian has to rest his faith upon. If you and I entertain the thought that God is going to desert us, we are entertaining an untrue thought. As we entertain that thought it will begin to develop the weeds of doubt; we will begin to say to ourselves, "It would be awful, terrible, but surely He won't; He has promised to be with me, and I know He will be, but it would be terrible if He would not. How could I ever stand it? Yet, it would not be a surprising thing if He might; I am so unworthy. But He won't; He said, "I will never leave thee." But then, you cannot tell. I hope He will not, but I would not be surprised if He did, when I think of my failings. Sometimes I almost feel that He is not

as close to me as He once was. O, I know He will be true to His Word. But, O, my! if He ever should forget His promise; even now He does not feel as close to me as He once did. I am afraid He is leaving me. What shall I ever do; He has deserted me." Our faith is gone. You see how dangerous it is to entertain an untrue thought of God.

When a thought of this kind comes to our mind let us reason that it is impossible for God to forget his promises; it is impossible for Him to go back on His Word; it is as impossible for Him to desert His child, as it would be for us to do the most impossible thing imaginable. If there is any deserting, we will be the one to desert. He never deserts anyone. In one Scripture the Lord says, "If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you." Some say, "There, He says He will desert – He will walk contrary to us." Do you know what the Lord meant by that? He meant that He was supposed to be walking with us, and we walking with Him. He says, "If the time ever comes when you walk contrary to Me – if you turn around and walk in another direction, I will go right on, but it will be walking contrary to you. I will not turn around and walk the other way to keep with you. I will go straight ahead and walk contrary to you." Why? Because we have turned around and are walking the other way. We want the faith that will not entertain a thought that God will be untrue to what He has said. Whatsoever things are true, think on these things, and do not for one moment think of the untrue things. Untrue thoughts will come to your mind, but crush them, resist them.

Then he says, "Whatsoever things are honest, think on these things." You know a child of God has a very different conception of honesty from the people of the world. The man of the world considers everything as honest that would not rob another man of money, or property, or anything that belongs to him. The Christian has a higher conception of honesty, for everything he has belongs to the Lord. His eyes, his ears, his tongue, his hands, his feet, all are the Lord's; all of the money in his pocket-book, all of the money in the bank, and all of his interests are the Lord's. The Christian considers that it would be dishonest to take that which he has given to the Lord and use it selfishly. It would be dishonest to let these hands engage in anything that would be displeasing to the Lord; it would be dishonest to let my feet take me to any place that I could not go with the Lord's endorsement. The dishonesty is not in doing a thing merely, but it is in allowing yourself to entertain the thought.

Usually, when the time comes to do a dishonest thing, it seems honest. The Christian usually has persuaded himself that it is honest by that time. We have given all of our time to the Lord. Possibly there comes to the Christian an interesting novel, a work of fiction. He thinks it would not

be honest to read this, because his time belongs to the Lord, and the Lord would consider that he could use his time more intelligently and more consistently. Not that I believe reading a novel is sinful, but we believe the Christian has a higher standard. There would be nothing wrong for a man of the world to do this, but the Christian feels that his time belongs to the Lord, and he feels that the Lord would be pleased that his time should be used some other way. The thought comes to him, "It would be dishonest to take this time that I have given to the Lord and use it in such a way. I will not do this, but I would like to do it, for I believe this novel would be interesting. I do not see why it would not be right. I know there are other things I could do that would glorify the Lord more; and do not suppose I would be following the Lord's footsteps by reading it; I do not believe He would spend His time in this way. I wish I could, though." He entertains the thought; he plants the seed. The more he thinks of it the more he thinks it would be right; the more he thinks he would be justified, and by and by he thinks he ought to do this. He says, "I believe I need a change to take my mind from some of these things that have been occupying me so closely." Or, he thinks, "Perhaps I can find some illustrations to use in my discourses; I need some." He reasons, "Possibly if I read this it will open the way to get into conversation with someone else along that line, and I can lead from that to spiritual lines." and there is this, and that, and the first thing he knows, there are a half dozen reasons why he should read that novel. He can read it now and not feel that he is dishonest; it looked dishonest to him when he first thought of it. If you entertain the thought – if you do not crush it, you will come to the place where you find yourself overcome. If a thought comes to us that is not quite honest, say "Here is a thought that is not honest – help me, Lord, to crush it." Then you have gained the victory. Whatsoever things are honest, think on these things.

Then, "Whatsoever things are just, think on these things." This would mean that a Christian has no right to do what God would not approve of, he has no right to endorse an unjust thought. What would be an unjust thought? It would be unjust to entertain any thought that would be inconsistent with the principles of justice. For instance, it would be unjust to entertain a thought of some other brother that you would not like that brother to entertain about you. It is unjust for you to think that God will make allowance for your imperfections and weaknesses, but that He will not do the same for others. It is unjust to think that others should not be harsh in judging you, while you are harsh in your treatment of others. The Scripture says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure you

mete it shall be measured unto you again." This is like saying, "Lord, you just give me exactly what I am giving others. Lord, I do not make much allowance for others; do not make much allowance for me." Or, as we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." it is equivalent to saying, "Lord, do not forgive my trespasses, because I do not forgive those who trespass against me." Or, "Lord, only make believe to forgive me, as I make believe that I forgive them"; or, "forgive me today, but tomorrow and the next day bring them up again with interest, for that is the way I do." If we realize that God measures to us as we measure to others, what allowances would we make?

Whatsoever things are just, think on these things. Do not entertain unjust thoughts of others. Be as charitable as you can. You remember when Peter asked the Lord, "How often shall I forgive my brother; unto seven times?" The Lord replied, "Peter, forgive your brother seventy times seven," or four hundred and ninety times. Suppose Peter had said, "Lord, if I do forgive my brother four hundred and ninety times, and he sins against me the four hundred and ninety-first time, I will not have to forgive him that time, will I?" I imagine the Lord saying, "Peter, it will not be so hard for you to forgive the four hundred and ninety-first time, after you have forgiven four hundred and ninety times. By the time you have got to the place where you can forgive four hundred and ninety times, you can start over and forgive as many times more." We should think just thoughts. Let us be careful in this particular. As we are just in our thoughts of others, the Lord will think similar thoughts of us. It will be an evidence that there is a place for us at the Lord's side in the kingdom.

Again the text says, "Whatsoever things are pure, think on these things." Here again the child of God has a higher standard than the man of the world. A man of the world would think that any thought was pure that was not terribly immoral, but that is not the way with the child of God. The child of God recognizes that any thought is impure if there is any selfishness or any pride in it; or if there is any envy, jealousy or malice in it. It does not have to be immoral to be impure from the Christian's standpoint. If a thought comes to you and you realize there is selfishness in it, crush it; if there is envy in the thought, seek to put that thought down. You cannot afford to entertain a thought that is impure, or a thought that is adulterated – a thought that is mixed with the spirit of the world. As we have said before, it is only as we do this that we can properly understand just what kind of characters the Lord wants us to have, because the more impure thoughts we entertain whether they are impure along the lines of selfishness or pride, or some other line it means they are dominating our heart and we are less qualified to judge what is right and

what is wrong. Many people in the world are doing things that are absolutely wrong, yet they are sure they are right. Many men in business are engaging in questionable methods, but they keep on entertaining thoughts that what they are going to do is right, until they come to a place where you could not convince them that they are wrong. They started wrong. Let us be careful that we think only on “whatsoever things are pure.”

Then the text says, “Whatsoever things are lovely, think on these things.” If any thought comes to our mind that is so unlovely that we would not like others to know about it, do not entertain it. I have often thought how careful we would be about what we think if God had made us with glass heads, so others could look through and read our thoughts all of the time. If you were on a car with a half dozen others, and they were all looking your way and you knew they could see what was in your glass head, you would be very careful what you thought. You say, “I am glad that we do not have glass heads.” But you have. We all have glass heads, but God, in His wisdom, made our heads of a special kind of glass. He knew that if he made them of ordinary glass, so that our acquaintances could all read what is in our head, the world would get into a more demoralized condition than He intended to allow. In our day, many people have bad thoughts come into their minds, but outwardly they live fairly good lives. They would be very chagrined if they thought people could read their thoughts. If their thoughts were bad, it would besetting a bad example wherever they sent, and the degradation of the world would be still more rapid.

God in His wisdom made our heads of a special kind of glass, so we cannot read the thoughts of one another, which would be harmful. But they are made of a kind of glass that God can look through, and the angels, and the devil can also look through our glass heads. That is the way the devil gets his pointers. He would not know how to attack us if he could not look through our glass heads. He would put before us temptations that would not mean anything to us. Sometimes we get temptations that look as if someone made them who knew our thoughts. The devil can read our thoughts and so knows what temptations to put before us. So with Jesus in His temptation. Jesus was thinking of the work He was to do; of the miracles He would perform, and other features of the work. The devil had been looking through His head, and he said, “I see how I can get Him; He has been thinking over what He is going to do; I guess by this time He will be puffed up a little; I will try to get Him to use His power in a selfish way.” He put the temptation before Him to turn the stones to bread. But Jesus could not be overcome in that way.

So the devil tempts us. He looks through our glass heads and sees what thoughts we are entertaining. Then he says, I see now where he is weak; I can trip him up now." You wonder how it is that temptation comes so subtly. The devil would be working in the dark if he did not have that knowledge. I should not be surprised if you could look into the devil's office you would find a list of the lines along which he could attack us; you would find in his notes under your name what you had been in the habit of thinking about, where you are weak, so that when a chance comes to put a certain kind of temptation you probably would be caught by that kind of bait. Let us be careful, whenever anything unlovely suggests itself, that we do not think on these things. Resist such thoughts; put them down.

"Whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things." We are not to think on whatever the neighbors may say. If the neighbors give a good report of the play at the theatre, we should not think on that. No, what God has given a good report on, "think on these things." You say, "I have to think about my family." We find a good report of that in the Bible. "He that provideth not for his own hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." As we go to the Bible there is a good report on the kind of thoughts that have to do with caring for our families. If there is any thought we do not find a good report of in the Bible, do not entertain it.

Then the text says, "If there be any virtue, think on these things." That seems to suggest to think thoughts that will help to make you a better man or woman, or Christian. Do not think any thoughts that will not have that effect. That is the way to keep wrong thoughts out of our mind by thinking good thoughts, virtuous thoughts, thoughts that will be helpful. We often find people distracted, almost to the point of desperation, because they cannot get rid of bad thoughts. Bad thoughts come to us and we strive frantically to drive them away. You will never get rid of bad thoughts in that way. It is like going to the ocean with a broom and trying to sweep it back. I will tell you how to get the ocean back, so it will never return. Do not take a broom; take something more substantial. Take a rock and drop it down, and the ocean cannot get back, for the rock is there. If a wrong thought tries to come in, put a good thought in its place. Do not make frantic efforts to displace bad thoughts. Call some passage of Scripture to mind, sing some helpful hymn, put good thoughts in place of the bad ones.

This reminds me of something along this line, told me by one of the sisters in Chicago, and which I have never forgotten. I think it is one of the most practical suggestions I ever heard. This sister had to go down town every day to her work, which required two hours of time, one hour

going and an hour returning at night. She tried to spend the two hours in reading something helpful, but her eyes give her trouble and she had to give that up. Then she tried to spend the time thinking and meditating on spiritual things, but so many things attracted her, and her mind would wander, so there was not much success in that direction. She finally thought of a way of spending the two hours profitably, without the necessity of reading and straining her eyes as before. She began to read the advertisements on the street car. After paying her fare she would read the GOLD DUST WASHING POWDER advertisement or LIPTON'S TEA, or some other. She said that after spending an hour or two each day reading these signs, she had been drawn so much closer to the Lord; she received so much blessing that she almost felt disinclined to get off the car. When I heard it I thought, "That is a strange way to get a blessing," but when I heard how she did it I thought it was one of the most practical suggestions ever heard. She would take the different letters in each word of the advertisement. Take, for instance, GOLD DUST WASHING POWDER. She would take g and think of three or more Scriptures beginning with g. After she had thought of those Scriptures beginning with the letter g, she would take up the other letters in the same way. She would take o. For instance, she would think of "Our Father which art in Heaven." Then l and d, etc. It developed her memory as regards Scriptures. You could think of verses of hymns beginning with these letters. We might think of what good quality begins with g. Godliness. Then take o. What good quality begins with o? Obedience. Then, continue with other letters. Then we might think of the bad qualities beginning with these letters. Thus we find that out of the simplest events of life we will be able to extract blessings; we can get helpful lessons and draw closer to the Lord. "Whatsoever things are virtuous (if there is anything helpful), think on these things." The word virtue is not used here in the sense we use it, as opposed to vice. It means having something helpful in it – that which would strengthen and fortify you for your Christian battles.

Then, "If there be any praise, think on these things." If you find that God would praise you for thinking certain things, "think on these things." If you find you can praise God better as a result of them, "think on such things." If there are things that would not meet with His approval; if there are things that would not enable you to praise and glorify God better, do not think on these things.

In these words, we have the rule for attaining skill and success as a Christian. Whether or not we have a place in the kingdom will depend on thinking of these things. The rapidity or slowness with which we make progress will depend on thinking of these things. The degree to which we

will be helpful to our brethren will depend on thinking on these things. While this seems to be so simple and easy, so few want to do it. They say, "I know I am thinking unkind things about my neighbors; but I will not say anything I will just think them; there is a little satisfaction in thinking of these things." You do not want to think of these things. I do not know of anything more important to impress on your minds than the lesson of this passage, "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."



## Three Gates of Gold

LET every thought thy lips would utter pass three gates of gold,—  
But, if through these it fails to pass, then let it not be told;  
And o'er each gate in silver letters written thou wilt find,  
Above the first one, "Is it true?" the second, "Is it kind?"  
And "Is it necessary?" o'er the third one and the last.  
Then guard thy thoughts, let none escape,  
save those these gates have passed!

— Gertrude W. Seibert