

1. **Introduction:** For a person of faith to pursue sanctification requires knowing God has provided for holiness and acting upon that knowledge. It is knowing that when we are redeemed, we are irrevocably changed and cannot go back to being what we were.
 - The Holy Spirit enables going forward. Actively training and using our mind is necessary to worship God for who He is. We must understand His attributes – His sovereignty, holiness, mercifulness, wisdom, etc. Likewise, all the activities of Christian life need knowledge.
 - Our mind must be renewed mind if we are to build the Christ-like character that enables living a life that pleases God.
 - Regeneration and faith come first – a person who fails to know and acknowledge the God of reality will drift from proper thinking and be unable to think properly about anything.
 - Even after regeneration, renewing our mind is hard work, requiring diligence and persistence, as we cooperate with the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.
 - Prior to conversion, a person’s thought life inevitably includes wrong habits of thought that fill their memory with inappropriate things.
 - Our minds need cleansing as well as developing new patterns of thought.
 - To deliberately forget something as a means of cleaning the mind is impossible. All we think or perceive gets stored in memory and stays there. What we think of as forgetting is usually a retrieval problem not that some memory has been wiped out.
 - So, true elimination of improper thing stored in memory cleansing the mind is not usually possible. However, retrieval of those memories can be blocked by focusing the mind on good things (like memorizing Scripture).
 - When bad thoughts come before our consciousness, we must learn to override them with good thoughts, fixing the eyes of our mind on Jesus and that which pleases Him.
 - But be aware, one tool Satan uses in his warfare against us is to bring to our mind things we have tried to suppress and to do so at times they are most disturbing.
 - Scripture says, ***“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”*** (Gal 5:7-8)
 - When Snoopy (the cute dog in the Charlie Brown comic strip) when heard this Scripture being read, thought to himself, “I would like a little more leeway than that.” So would each of us, but do not be deceived. There is no leeway. We reap in life what we sow.

- “Reaping what we sow” is true both for thoughts and actions. Thoughts are real and powerful, determining our words and actions.
 - Good or bad, the thoughts we plant and cultivate in our mind will yield consequences we will inevitably reap.
 - If we keep our thought life and actions aligned with loving God with all our being and loving our neighbor as ourselves, we will reap eternal life with Him.
 - ***“Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will”*** (Rm 12:2b).
2. **Testing God’s Will:** We cannot test God’s will without obeying it. That means we act in accordance with God’s will, testing the character of His will through conscious choices and deliberate obedience, and observing the consequences.
- We are so steeped in the way of the world that at first God’s will often seems unreasonable.
 - As we prove His will – patiently, perseveringly, with prayer and obedience – we increase in understanding, peace, joy, and a deeper and broader view of God’s purpose ... and truly see that his will is indeed good and perfect for us.
3. **Proper Thought Life:** The things that occupy our mind are of utmost importance. We must be careful what we think about and how we direct our thoughts.
- It is profoundly true that ***“For as he thinks within himself, so he is”*** (NASV Prov 23:7).
 - The computer age saying – “garbage in, garbage out” – correctly warns of the consequences of garbage (bad) thought.
 - The old adage has it right! “Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.”
 - We will reap the consequences of thoughts we sow. If we sow bad (garbage) thoughts, we will inevitably reap garbage results.
 - In Philippians 4:8, Paul uses 8 words to describe things that are appropriate to fill the thought-life of a Christian, things to concentrate on as we renew our mind.
4. **Philippians 4:8 (ESV):** ***Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.***
- As we think on such things and make them an integral part of our life, they will give godly shape to our attitudes, actions, and speech.
 - Each of these words is filled with meaning for us. We will consider them one-by-one.
5. **Whatever is True:** Scripture underlines the importance of truth. A few examples:
- (1.) Jesus said, ***“I am the way and the truth and the life”*** (Jn 14:6).
 - (2.) He prayed to the Father about his disciples saying, ***“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth”*** (Jn 17:17).

- (3.) He said, *“if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”* (Jn 8:31-32)
 - The first requisite for good thinking is to be sure we are not mistaking error for truth.
 - It is an unfortunate fact that much mischief in the world is caused by good intentioned people acting on error. Driven by something they believe to be true when it isn’t.
 - Knowing how to test information that claims to be true; knowing what degree of certainty or uncertainty is acceptable for a given situation; knowing how truth, knowledge, and faith are related – these things are vital. Strive to know and understand truth.
 - TV programs, computer blogs, books, and other sources expose us routinely to a steady stream of things that are not honorable, not worthy of respect, not right, and not “just” or right.
 - When such things capture attention, they tend to control the flow of thoughts and actions.
 - We are to be in the world but not controlled by its patterns. We are to keep our eyes on Jesus and live a life compatible with God’s character.
 - Living in this world, we cannot totally avoid contact with unjust and dishonorable things. There is always risk that constant exposure to such things and the people who do them may trap us into thinking it must not be too bad.
 - We should constantly strive to bring before our mind things that are right and worthy of respect.
 - Since we are in the world, there will be unavoidable contact with things inappropriate for a Christian’s attention. We need to vigilantly examine ourselves to ensure that we don’t bit-by-bit become desensitized to wrong and dishonorable things.
6. **“Whatever is Pure, Lovely, Admirable”**: By pure, Paul almost certainly means moral purity, the state of being free from moral fault or guilt.
- Lovely means that which is beautiful, attractive, and harmonious. Admirable means that which deserves esteem, is worth talking about, or appealing.
 - Every believer is to focus on high and noble thoughts, thoughts driven by knowledge of Scripture, thoughts compatible with the fact they are “in Christ.” Believers should not focus on morally depraved thoughts so common in this fallen world.
7. **“Anything Excellent or Praiseworthy”**: By this phrase, Paul reaches out to encompass and sum up other virtues he might have put into this list of desirable things to think about.
- Excellent means eminently good, “top quality.”
 - Praiseworthy refers to things that are worthy of praise, things that have God’s approval.
 - Filling our heart and mind with God’s Word will provide us with a built-in error detector for sensing wrong thoughts.

8. **Developing “Right Behavior”**: As the Holy Spirit works within to transform us into a likeness of Christ, we are to cooperate with Him by thinking thoughts and having attitudes and actions that correspond with his gracious work.
- Becoming Christ-like in character requires both “putting off” bad behavior and “putting on” righteous behavior (Eph 4:20-24).
9. **Next**: We will begin next time with a behavioral tool that is very helpful in the “putting off” and “putting on” process. The tool is called “Building Forms.”