

Thoughts

2 Corinthians 10:4,5

Pathway Church / November 15, 2020

Welcome to Pathway Church.

- Hello to our friends joining us ONLINE today...
- And greetings to our brave souls who drove ON CAMPUS for our DRIVE IN service in the parking lot!
 - As you watch the service on our Jumbotron and listen in on our FM radio station...may you also find lots and lots of loose change in the cracks and crevices of your car seats...along with that Dutch Bros gift card with a balance 20 cents left on it...
(please don't put that gift card in the offering today...
God says it's yours to enjoy).

Please Open Your Bible & meet me in 2 Corinthians 10:4 today.

Last week, we considered our WORDS and the power they have to edify and impart grace to our hearers.

Today, we will consider the various types of THOUGHTS that float in and out of our head...and the power God gives us over our own thoughts.

Illustrations:

I learned early in life that I cannot trust every thought that pops into my head.

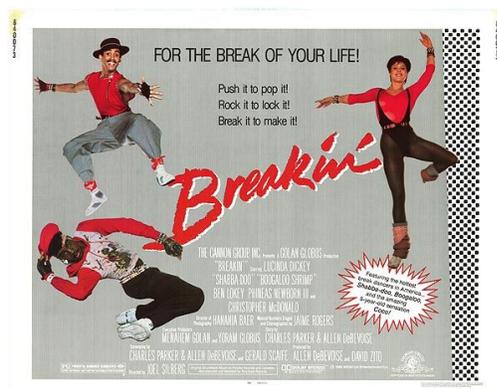
- I was 4 years old...sitting in the back of my Mom's 1968 Firebird
(I was not in a car seat...and I was not in a seatbelt...it's just the way things were back then).
- My mind was a sponge as I was learning all about force, gravity, momentum, and movement.
- I learned that when we were waiting at a red light...if I pushed the passenger seatback forward and waited...
 - when the light turned green and my mom put her foot on the gas...that heavy seat would SLAM back to its original position.

- Then a thought popped into my head...a dangerous yet exciting idea sprouted:
 - What if I put my tiny bare toes in the place where the seatback would slam?*
 - Would I have enough time to remove my toes when the light turned green?*
- The game was afoot!
- I succeeded a few times...until I didn't.
- The red light took longer than my small attention span could handle...
 - o I got distracted.
 - o The light turned green...my mom slammed on the gas...and my tiny toes were crushed...the seatback was crowned the Victor.
- The best part is, I recall as a very young boy concluding: “Yeah, that wasn't a very good idea...let's not do that again.”

As I got older, my thoughts and ideas and conclusions continued to deceive me.

- I learned in 5th grade that Jazz Dance Class is NOT the same as BREAK DANCE class.
 - o I was an aspiring break dancer...popping and locking, doing backspins on my salvaged cardboard dance floor.
- I saw a flyer advertising an after-school JAZZ DANCE class.
 - o Without any research. Without any input from a trusted adult, I concluded that this was a class that taught us how to break-dance.
 - o I convinced my breakdancing friend Jason to join.
 - o Our parents paid our fees. We showed up for class the first day.
 - o And within the first 10 seconds I said, “*Oh Dear God, what have I done? Please make me a bird so I can fly far, far away.*”

This is what I THOUGHT it would be:



(Turbo, Ozone, ...and maybe Special K)

But this was the TRUTH:

I learned one dance move that day
(give a demo)

Jason was not happy.
...and Jason's mom made him
attend class each week and perform in the recital at the end.



I learned that **MAYBE**, just maybe, I need to call into question the
THOUGHTS and arguments and reasonings that my **MIND** ponders.

The stakes got higher as I became a teenager and an adult.
More and more thoughts entered my mind.
Thoughts about **GOD**, about **OTHERS**, and especially thoughts about
MYSELF: my identity, my worth, and what others thought of me.

Sadly, many of these thoughts I had about myself were **LIES/UNTRUE**
but I accepted them as **TRUE**.

Thoughts are powerful.
Thoughts can determine the course of your life.
We **MUST** evaluate our thoughts: is this true? Is this a lie?
Does this thought line up with what God declares to be true?

There is a battle in our mind...a battle of truth vs. lies...
and the Apostle Paul teaches us in our passage today to go to **WAR**
against every thought, every claim, every argument that sets itself up
AGAINST the truth of God.

Context:

- In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul is responding to accusations from those in Corinth...those who oppose Paul and have questioned his authority as an apostle.
- These opponents have raised intellectual arguments as to why they think Paul is a fraud.
- Paul responds to this accusation by using a military metaphor: he talks about warfare, weapons, destroying strongholds and fortresses, and taking captives.
 - But Paul isn't talking about a physical battle in the flesh
 - He is speaking of this battle as a spiritual battle, one that takes place in our minds and thoughts...it's a battle of Truth vs. Deception.

Let's look at our passage:

2 Corinthians 10:4,5 (NKJV)

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [of the flesh] but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

- The WEAPONS at our disposal are NOT the same as the world's weapons.
 - The world's weapons are determined to fight against God and what He says to be right and true.
- The WEAPONS we have are MIGHTY IN GOD to pull down strongholds [fortresses]...
- The WEAPONS we have are able to:
 - CAST DOWN ARGUMENTS [reasonings, thoughts, speculations]
 - and every HIGH THING [a tower...opinions and philosophies that are 'lifted up' in our minds and the minds of others]
- The WEAPONS we have face off against every argument & lofty opinion that exalts itself AGAINST the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

A false thought...a lie about God, others, or ourselves...is like a fortress where a person mind find their “shelter.”

- For example: a person might camp under the argument that:
 - there is no God.
 - God is a bully.
 - God does not forgive me, He hates me.
 - God does not accept me.

You might wrestle with one or more of these thoughts...

But these are in direct opposition to the true knowledge of God.

These may be intellectual arguments, but God’s Word says differently:

The Scriptures speak of God’s existence,
His gracious patience with us as sinners,
His sacrificial love to redeem us and bring us back to Him in Jesus,
and that in Christ we are now accepted by God.

How do we wage war against these strongholds, these fortresses that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God?

- We speak the GOSPEL TRUTH...the good news of Christ’s death on the cross for our sins, His resurrection 3 days later, and the implications His victory has in our lives.
- Paul’s proclamation of the gospel involved reasoning and arguing with his hearers in an effort to REMOVE FALSE BARRIERS set up against the truth of God.
- Paul challenged the false arguments and deceptive philosophies of his day.

I would like us to consider the last phrase of 2 Corinthians 10:5
bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of
Christ,

- Paul's purpose is not only to demolish false arguments but also to bring people's THOUGHTS under the lordship of King Jesus.
 - That the thoughts in our mind would be in line with and in submission to Jesus Christ.

- For example:
 - A person might be held captive under a thought like this:
"I am here by random chance. I have no purpose. There is no plan for my life."

 - It's like this thought has you in a submissive hold, with your arm twisted behind your back.

 - But we have weapons to fight against this thought: our weapon is the truth of what God says about us.

 - I recall **Ephesians 2:10** which says,
For we are His workmanship [**His special creation**],
created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

 - And now, through proclaiming and acknowledging this truth of God, you have flipped the script...done a sort of Kobra Kai Karate move...and now YOU hold this THOUGHT in submission with its arm twisted behind its back!
 - You say, "This thought is wrong...it is not in-line with the truth of Christ...therefore, this thought cannot remain in my mind."

Today, let us consider our own thoughts.

Are there thoughts, arguments, philosophies...that are in REBELLION against the knowledge of God...that have taken residence in your mind?

We have an enemy, the devil, who feeds us lies about God, others, and our very own self.

We are susceptible to troubling thoughts about ourselves...

Thoughts that come into our minds and affect us deeply.

In doing some research, I found that teenagers are especially vulnerable in this time to what are called **Automatic Negative Thoughts** which drive them deeper into emotional struggle and anxiety.

As I read through some of these **Automatic Negative Thought** patterns, I realized that many of us adults have the same thoughts...and we may have been held captive by these thoughts for years.

Unchecked thoughts wreak havoc in our life.

With any thought that comes into our mind, it is vital to:

- A. **Spot and Identify** these thoughts (call them out)
- B. **Challenge and Dispute** these thoughts (Test: is this really true?)
- C. **Bring these thoughts into Captivity** to the obedience of Christ.
(adjust our thoughts to match reality found in Christ)

According to doctors and therapists, here are seven harmful thinking patterns that affect both teenagers and adults:

(I ask you to consider if any of these have set up camp in your mind.)

1. All or Nothing thinking.

- Also known as polarized thinking.
- We think that things in our life have to be perfect or else we are a failure.
- *If I don't get an A on this test, I'm a loser.*
- If I can't be the best then I don't want to play.

2. Jumping to Conclusions

- We think we can read other people's minds.
- *"They're not going to hire me."*
- *"He would never go out with me."*
- *"They're not going to like me or want to be my friend."*

3. Negative Filtering

- We focus only on the negative aspects of a situation.
- We magnify the bad parts and fail to see any of the positive.

Example: You give a presentation at work or a speech in class. Your boss or your teacher says you did a nice job but that you need to slow down your pace. You conclude that you failed it.
(in reality, the teacher may have just really wanted to hear what you had to say)

An athlete might score 8 points in a basketball game, with 5 assists and 3 rebounds. When someone says, "Great job out there." They respond, "I turned the ball over 4 times. I'm no good. The coach is going to bench me." (were we watching the same game???)

My example: I've been preaching for almost 25 years now. I've heard numerous times from people who say, "Trav, you have really improved in your preaching."

My interpretation: "Trav, you used to stink, now you don't stink THAT bad."

4. Catastrophizing (making things out to be catastrophic)

- We expect the WORST outcome at all times.
- *I'm afraid to drive because I'm going to crash!*
- *What if I don't make the team and the others give me a hard time about it for the rest of the year?*

Can you see how thoughts like these...which are not grounded in truth...can deeply affect your life and decisions? ***Are these thoughts TRUE? No!***

But you BELIEVE THEM TO BE TRUE...you give power to these thoughts...you are captive to them.

5. Should Thinking

- You have a list of rigid rules about how you and others should behave.
- Let's say it's taking you a long time for you to figure out something... like a math problem...or a new program on your computer.
 - o You think, "*What's wrong with me? This shouldn't be so hard to figure out. I must be stupid.*"
- We beat ourselves up with all the things we "should" be doing and doing better.
- This leads to shame.

Story: When I was 33 years old, I took a sabbatical from pastoral ministry and worked at a well-known coffee establishment for a year. This coffee establishment had its own language and codes you had to quickly write on the cups.

- o I wasn't getting it right away...I was also slow in making the coffee drinks...and I was once scolded by a customer, after I handed her a cappuccino, she said, "Your bubbles are too big."
- o I was being trained and supervised by 19 year olds...they were able to learn the coffee lingo and make small bubbles...
- o I kept thinking, "*What's wrong with me? I should know this by now.*"

6. Negative Labeling

- You stick a negative label on yourself.
- *I'm no good. I'm stupid. I'm a disappointment.*
- As a teenager, my go-to label for myself was JERK.
 - o I would say over and over, "*Trav, you're such a jerk! When will you get it right?*"
 - o I expected perfection out of myself...but I always fell short.
 - o I adopted this label...a label that was fed to me by the devil...but he disguised his voice...it was MY voice in my head berating me.
- But am I really a jerk? Is this TRUE? Is this how GOD labels?
- I had to take this thought captive and make it obedient to Christ.
 - o I could no longer call myself a Jerk...**because it was not true.**
 - o I may have messed up and needed to make amends, but my identity in Christ is **forgiven, sanctified, and accepted.**

7. Negative Comparisons

- You unfavorably compare yourself to others.
- *She's thinner. He's stronger. I could never compete with him/her.*

- *I'll never preach like so and so; I'll never spike the ball as hard as him.*
- I learned something good in seminary:
Never allow the giftedness of others diminish YOUR own giftedness

So...what THOUGHTS are holding you captive in your mind?

- Something bad is going to happen
- God is disappointed with me.
- We lost that game because of the referees.
- My birth parents gave me away...I am unwanted.
- No one cares if I live or if I die.
- Last night's argument with my wife was 100% her fault...she's to blame.
- My boyfriend hits me but I deserve it.
- God could never forgive me for that sin.
- My parents hate me. My teacher hates me. My boss hates me.
- I fail at everything I do.
- God does not have good plans for my life.

Let me leave you with two encouragements in regards to our thought life:

1) Don't beat yourself up for having bad, false, or evil thoughts.

- All types of thoughts come into our heads...I can't control some of the crazy stuff that pops in my head.
- But I don't let those thoughts go UNCHECKED!
 - a. I frisk them like a TSA agent. Is this true? Is this harmful? Does this line up with what God says to be true?
 - b. If not, then I USHER THAT THOUGHT OUT!
You can't stay here. There's no place for you to sit.
I have no use for you and I will not factor you into my decisions.

“You can't keep bats out of the bell tower,
but you can prevent them from building nests.”

2) The remedy for negative thoughts is NOT positivity...the remedy is TRUTH.

- Our weapon against destructive thoughts is TRUTH...does it line up with the knowledge of God? Or is it in opposition to what God says is true?
- We must reject any thought, any conclusion, and argument that is not true.
 - o We just have to call Shenanigans when we hear them:
 - My parents don't hate me...it's just not true.
 - I was fired from my job, not because the boss had it out for me...but because I wasn't faithful to do what was asked of me.
 - There *are* people who care if I live or if I die...I need to let them in on my struggles.
 - I don't deserve to be hit by my partner. I am worthy of love and respect.
 - God does forgive me...for the sins of my past, my present, and my future. His forgiveness is everlasting.

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⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

May we SPOT and IDENTIFY these thoughts hanging out in our mind.

May we CHALLENGE and DISPUTE these thoughts, asking “Is this true?”

May we take each thought CAPTIVE to Jesus...and usher out every lie out the door...that we may walk in truth.

Prayer.

1. Offering -

- Remember if you'd like to give an offering or tithe today you can:
Give online by going to our website pathwaychurch.life **OR**
 - You can Text "GIVE NOW" to 75787 **OR**
 - You can mail in your offering.
- Or, if you're onsite for our Drive-In Service you can drop off your offering in the lobby.

2. Services Next Weekend -

- Join us for ONLINE service next Sunday at 9:30am and 11:15am.
- Or you can join us for Drive-In Church at 9:30a on our plaza and watch the service on the Jumbotron.

3. "...Great God..."

- **Thank you so much for joining us today.**
- **Don't forget as you go through your week that you have a GREAT GOD.**
He is with you every step that you take and the joy of the Lord is your strength.