

## **5. CULTIVATING SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS**

For the next six lessons we will be dealing with suggestions as to how we may cultivate Spiritual thoughts. This is not an easy task, for our thoughts so often behave like unruly children – we seem to have no control over them. Even though we resolve to direct them in a certain direction, yet they wander all over the place. As Paul says in **ROM 7:15** “What I want to do, that I do not do”. We are also often at a loss as to what we should do.

The first rule is to think about what God is saying to us in His providential acts in the world. For instance, we must know that disasters are the expression of God’s displeasure with the wickedness that is in the world. It is not fate. Providence also teaches us that earthly pleasures are uncertain and not the only purpose of life. **PROV 22:3** “A wise man sees trouble and steers clear, but the fool barges right in and pays dearly for his folly”. Proverbs are packed end to end with good advice of how to conduct the affairs of life. God is talking to us all the time and warning us through His providential acts. We therefore should search our hearts to see if we are not in any way contributing to God’s displeasure.

We should always be ready to submit ourselves in all our affairs to the will of God. We will not be able to do this unless we are spiritually minded.

The second rule is to think carefully about our trials and temptations. The problem that we face is that the more we think about the things that tempt us, the more likely we are to be tempted, because we so often use our favourite sins as soothers. But temptations gain strength over us when we continually think about them. So let us carefully approach these temptations in our lives, seeking God’s strength to expel them out of our hearts.

There is a special way to deal with this problem. We must not think of the nature of the sin to which we are being tempted, but rather we should think of the guilt of it, and about the power of it that we might seek Christ’s strength against it. Deliverance from temptation comes from trusting Christ.

There are two kinds of temptation. And we are all subject to them at sometime. Firstly, there are extraordinary temptations that God orders into our lives for a specific purpose. These are those temptations that are sent to us that we may learn our weaknesses and be brought to seek God urgently. These weaknesses are the particular sins that we as individuals may be prone to. It could for example be anger or pride or slothfulness or hate.

Then there are other sins that we may hardly think about as wrongdoing, unless we are Spiritually minded. It could be like jumping the queue. There are those sins which the rich are prone to – for example arrogance; and those that the poor are prone to – for example stealing.

The third rule is that we should fill our thoughts with Biblical truths. Biblical truths are the things that Jesus spoke about. And here we refer to His promises. For example, we should think much about heaven, its reality, its nature, and our future enjoyment of it – because Spiritual mindedness is heavenly mindedness. And so many believers are either ignorant of this fact or neglect it.

To the unbeliever, heaven is understood more in the abstract (hypothetical, philosophical), but to believers we have the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts who gives us faith and wisdom to understand the insights into heaven as explained to us by Jesus and also John in **REV.** If that is where we are hoping to go, let us spend time familiarizing ourselves of this destination of unspeakable beauty and majesty. As we think more about heaven, our faith and understanding will increase. The hope as described in the New Testament is not something which is uncertain but is a confidence that grows from faith.

Should we decide at some stage of our lives that we wish to relocate to another country, the wise person would find out about, and familiarise themselves, with as much knowledge as they are able about their new country. Being familiar with their new home would make the difficulties of the journey much more tolerable. We as Christians should think much about heaven and the wonderful life of peace that is ours in the presence of the Lord. Only heavenly mindedness would give us the support and fortitude to bear the trials of this world with hope and faith.

The fourth rule is that if our thoughts are fixed on things above, we will be less likely to be tied to the things of the earth, which we cannot take with us, and which distract us from our good works here on earth. That is not to say that we should neglect our families or businesses, but rather our main focus should be on thinking on things Spiritual. Our priority is on the next life, not our lives here on earth.

We cannot be Spiritually minded unless we determine, through the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to do so. As we train and discipline ourselves to accomplish those earthly activities which are necessary to do, so we must train and discipline ourselves, more so, to be Spiritually minded.