

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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GOD'S THOUGHTS AND OURS.

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## A Sermon

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"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"—Psa'm cxxxix. 17.\*

It is very comforting to us to believe in a personal God, and to be able to confide in One who condescends to think lovingly of us, and to consider our needs, and to supply them. It would not be very comforting to us to believe in a mere abstract Deity, or in what some people call "the laws of nature" acting by themselves apart from God, or in a fixed fate that would crush us like some colossal car of Juggernaut. Yet some people seem to be always struggling to get away from the thought of one true personal God,—Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and All-in-all to his people. Those who deny the inspired record of the creation would have us believe that we are descended from monkeys, or from something with even less intelligence than an ape possesses; but I could gather no comfort from such a belief as that if it were true. It fills me rather with pity or contempt for those who can be so foolish as to cherish such a delusion. But when I come back to the revelation of the Bible concerning a personal God, a revelation which has been confirmed by my own spiritual experience, and when I realize that this personal God takes a special interest in me, and thinks of me with tender, loving, gracious consideration, then I lift up my hands in adoring wonder, and say, as David did, "How precious also are thy thoughts

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\* Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon verses 17 and 18, is No. 2,609 in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, "Our Thoughts about God's Thoughts."

unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" Yes, there is great comfort in being able truthfully to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven;" and those who are really the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty find it to be their chief delight that he thinketh about them, and planneth all that is for their present and eternal good.

I. Coming to our text, I ask you to consider, first, HOW PRECIOUS ARE GOD'S THOUGHTS OF US, AND HOW PRECIOUS IT IS TO US TO THINK ABOUT THESE THOUGHTS.

First of all, let me say that *the very fact that God thinks of us is in itself precious*. Perhaps someone here says, "It is not so in my case; I am quite alarmed at the thought that God thinks about me. It is no comfort to me to say, 'Thou God seest me;' such a thought as that only fills me with terror." I can quite understand, dear friend, how you feel; of course, if you only think of God as if he were an officer of justice with a warrant for your apprehension, it must be a dreadful thing for you to realize that he is thinking of you; but suppose you were his child, would it not then be a continual joy to you to reflect that your heavenly Father was constantly thinking of you? If you were completely reconciled to him by the death of his Son, if no consciousness of guilt remained upon your conscience, if you knew that all God's thoughts concerning you were thoughts of love, then you would bless his name that he was so gracious and kind as to think of you.

Further, *those who are serving the Lord delight to remember that he is thinking of them*. After we have been reconciled to God, it becomes our great privilege to spend such strength as we have in promoting his glory. Well, no one is ashamed of being sent on a good errand. The eye of God, instead of being dreadful to the man whose heart is right with him, is one of his greatest encouragements. He feels that, though his fellow-men may never say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," it will be enough for him to know that God has seen him, that God keeps a book of remembrance, and that, at the last, a full reward, not of debt, but of grace, shall be given to him who is faithful. I do not know how it is with you idle professors who profess to be saved, but who do little or nothing for Christ; I do not see how the fact that God is observing you can give you any comfort. If it is true that you are not your own, but that you are bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, can you calmly think of God watching your idle hours, listening to your many words that have no weight, no value in them, and noting how you neglect your many opportunities of serving your day and generation? But, on the other hand, in proportion as you are constrained by the love of Christ to be instant in season and out of season, in the same proportion will it be sweet to you to remember that the Lord is observing you, and that he is ever at your right hand to help you in your service for him.

We also learn the preciousness of God's thoughts to us *as we depend implicitly upon him as the great Lord of providence*. It is

of little use to you to have anyone thinking of you if his thoughts never bring you any practical help; but if you have a rich friend who has promised, as soon as possible, to find you a position in which you will be provided for as long as you live, I should not be surprised to hear that, even while you have been at this service, you have been gratefully thinking of him. "Yes," you have been saying, "I could not make my way on my own account, but I have a friend at my back who says that he will see that I shall never be in want, and it comforts me to think that he is thinking of me." Well then, if the promise of an earthly friend affords so much consolation as that, how much more should this be the case with you who have a heavenly Friend who is both able and willing to fulfil all his promises! He is always thinking of what is best for you, what you require to-day, and what you will require to-morrow; he is always forestalling your wants, providing Elims with wells and palm trees while you are travelling through the desert; and as you meditate upon the way in which he is thinking of how he shall bless, and perfect, and glorify you, his thoughts must indeed be precious to you.

One reason why God's thoughts concerning us are peculiarly precious is that *gracious men long to get near to God*. They are not satisfied with what they are. The wanderings of their thoughts towards inferior objects are a burden to them, and they are continually longing to get nearer to God. If there is one cry that rises more frequently to our lips than any other, it is this,—

"Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee!"

But, alas! our thoughts of God are a very poor help to us in drawing us nearer to him, they flag, and tire, and soon die; but the thoughts of God toward us are strong, like God himself is, and these, like so many unbreakable cords firmly fastened to us, are drawing us ever nearer to him. Thought leads to action, and God's thinking of us leads to the practical action of drawing us nearer to himself. So the fact that he is continually thinking of us encourages us to believe that we shall one day be close to him, and be fitted to be close to him, being perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, and drawn into the closest possible fellowship with God.

And *the nearer we get to God, the more precious will his thoughts of us become to us*. If we were not such babes in Christ, and so carnal, we should prize every crumb from our Father's table, and much more every thought from our Father's mind. We should prize, far above gold, and rubies, what I may call the ordinary outgoings of the divine mind in his providential arrangements for us; but much more should we value those deep, eternal, infinite thoughts which have already secured our salvation, and which shall, ere long, complete our sanctification and our glorification too.

II. Now, secondly, there are SOME POINTS IN CONNECTION WITH GOD'S THOUGHTS OF US WHICH RENDER THEM ALL THE MORE PRECIOUS TO US.

And, first, let us remember that *God's thoughts of us are everlasting*. When we begin to think of Jehovah's thoughts of love concerning his people, we have to go back beyond the region of time, and to get where all dates are lost in the shoreless sea of eternity. Beloved, you were loved of your God long ere he created the world; yea, from everlasting he had thoughts of love toward you, then must not those thoughts be indeed precious to you? Besides, as they were from eternity, so they will be to eternity; God will still be thinking lovingly of you when sun, and moon, and stars have fulfilled their mission, and been forgotten, and when all things which men now count solid and lasting shall have dissolved like the bubble upon the billow's crest, and passed away for ever. God has so linked you with his Son that he has made you also to have a life which is eternal, and which can never die. Let all things else perish, and the pillars of the universe crumble and decay, and the whole visible creation fall with thunderous crash, yet you, the beloved of the Lord, shall dwell safely with him,—

“Far from a world of grief and sin  
With God eternally shut in.”

His thoughts will always be directed towards you, he will never forget you. There has never been a moment in the past when he did not think of you; even in your years of sin, he looked upon you with an eye of pity; in your deepest depression his heart was full of sympathy for you; never has there been an hour, in the silent watches of the night, or amid the cares and business of the day, in which he has not always been thinking of you just as much as if you were the only being he had ever created. The Lord has from the first been looking upon you and thinking of you as though you were the sole centre of his undivided attention, and so will he continue to think of you incessantly.

The Lord's thoughts of you are especially precious because *they have always been thoughts of love*. Even when you were dead in trespasses and sins, and he hated your sins, he did not hate you, for he had loved you with an everlasting love.

“He saw you ruined in the fall,  
Yet loved you, notwithstanding all;  
He saved you from your lost estate,  
His loving-kindness, oh, how great!”

This is the love of which Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.” And ever since your conversion God's thoughts concerning you have been thoughts of love. He has smitten you sorely until you have felt that surely he must be your enemy, but it was not so, never has there been anything but love for you in the great eternal heart of God. If—

“With afflictions he may scourge us,  
Send a cross for every day;”—

this is not a proof of his anger toward us; on the contrary, it is a token of his affection,—

“All to make us  
Sick of self, and fond of him.”

Besides this, *God's thoughts of us have always been wise thoughts.* They have not been such casual thoughts as pass through men's minds while journeying quickly by road or rail, and merely noticing this object here and that other object over yonder; but God's thoughts have infinitely more in them than the deepest thoughts of men ever can have. You know that there are many ways of thinking of a certain thing; you may think of it in such a way as just to keep it in remembrance, or you may think of it so intently as to lie awake at night, turning it over in your mind, looking at it from all points of view, so that you may understand it in all its bearings. You may think of it with the careful consideration that a barrister gives to an important case for which he is about to plead, or that an inventor gives to the intricate details of a machine that he is seeking to perfect. Such consideration as that, only of an infinitely higher order, God gives to every one of his people. He is continually arranging that which is most for their good in his providential dealings with them, and constantly thinking and working on their behalf with the ultimate view of bringing many sons unto glory. God's thoughts are always wise, but they are so high above our thoughts that we cannot attain to them; yet, the more we are able to comprehend them, the more wisdom and prudence shall we perceive in them.

Once more, *these thoughts of God towards us are pre-eminently practical.* God so thought of you, brethren and sisters in Christ, as to ordain you unto eternal life. Concerning the whole Church of the living God this decree was pronounced, “They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” Not only was there a divine decree concerning them, but there was an eternal covenant made between the Father and the Son, by which the everlasting salvation of all the chosen is infallibly secured. More than that, in the fulness of time, those eternal thoughts of love took practical effect in the gift of God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die for his people, “the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” These thoughts of God further took effect by the coming into our hearts of the Holy Spirit, so that now, through his divine power and energy, we have been converted, renewed in the spirit of our minds, helped thus far towards heaven, and comforted with the full assurance that we shall, in due time, be brought into our heavenly Father's immediate presence, unblemished and complete. So you see, beloved, that the thoughts of God toward us should be exceedingly precious to us because they are of such a practical character that they bring to us all the blessings, temporal and spiritual, which we daily enjoy.

III. Now, thirdly, let us briefly notice **SOME TIMES WHEN GOD'S THOUGHTS ARE PECULIARLY PRECIOUS TO US.**

It is so when we have been betrayed and deserted by some in whom we have confided. When he that ate bread with us hath lifted up his heel against us, then we turn to our ever-faithful Friend, and we rejoice to know that *his* thoughts concerning us are never false and treacherous. He is the Friend who sticketh closer than a brother; he is always true even though everyone else should prove to be a liar. Ahithopel may forsake his king, Judas may betray his Lord, and we in our measure may know what it is to be forsaken and betrayed; but God's thoughts towards us shall, all the while, be thoughts of love and faithfulness. Vain was the trust we reposed in some who went out from us because they were not of us; but God has never forsaken us, he has ever been thinking of us for good, and therefore his thoughts are peculiarly precious to us.

So are they also when we are neglected by our fellow-Christians and by others who ought to esteem us. It must be very hard to continue toiling on in some obscure sphere without having a kind word or a cheering smile from anyone; to be living, perhaps, as a servant in a family, and striving to do your duty faithfully, yet never meeting with the slightest encouragement from those at the head of the household; or to be earnestly working as a Bible-woman or a city missionary in some back district, and having so little success that your superintendent looks upon you as if you were doing nothing. I can imagine how painful this must be to your sensitive spirit, and how comforting it is to you to think, "Well, Jesus knows all about it, and his thoughts are worth far more than the thoughts of men, for he can read my heart, and he can see that it is love to him that constrains me to do what I can in his service. Men may call me a fool, but if my Master knows that I only desire to be a fool for his sake, if he considers that I am faithfully serving him to the best of my ability, how precious will his thoughts be to me!"

This is also specially the case when our words and actions are misconstrued and misrepresented. Some of us know what this trial means. When we have tried to be disinterested, and have really been so, men have said that we have acted from some sinister motive. When we have spoken with the utmost plainness and simplicity, we have often been misunderstood, and worse than that, we have been wilfully misrepresented; well, what then? Our heavenly Father knows the sincerity of our motives and the meaning of our words, so we take the whole case away from this lower court where human tongues jangle and cause strife, and we appeal to the supreme Court of King's Bench in heaven. Our petition is, "O Lord, give thou the verdict in this case! Thou knowest who has desired to serve thee faithfully, and to speak thy truth with courage; do thou give a righteous decision which none can gainsay!" At such times as these, the fact that God thinks upon us is peculiarly precious to us.

So is it in times of perplexity, when we are, as Bunyan said, "all tumbled up and down in our thoughts." I suppose, dear friends, you sometimes get into such a condition that, although you have

all the forces of omnipotence at your disposal, you are so distracted that you do not know how to make use of them. You are in a place where two seas meet, wave upon wave rolls over you, and you fear that you will be overwhelmed. You do not know what to do, you cannot think of any way of escape out of your perplexity. Well then, do not try to do it, cease from even thinking about the matter, and refer it to the great Thinker whose master-mind can bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and order out of confusion.

God's thoughts are also precious to us *when our own thoughts are bright and cheerful*. The genuine Christian does not run to his God merely in his times of trouble, but he delights himself in the Lord at all times, and under all circumstances. He thinks of him when he is in the land of drought, but he does not forget him in the land of peace and plenty, for he sings then,—

"If peace and plenty crown my days,  
They help me, Lord, to speak thy praise."

Let your brightest thoughts, beloved, always be those that concern your Lord; and above all the joys of earth let this joy rise to the very zenith, that your heavenly Father thinks of you. This is a better fortune for you than thousands of gold and silver; this is a better protection for you than the friendship of ten thousand times ten thousand earthly friends; this a greater consolation than all the comforts of time can ever afford you. In your brightest hours, believer, I hope that you will still say, with the psalmist, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sun of them!"

IV. My time has gone, but I want to give you just a FEW PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ARISING OUT OF THIS SUBJECT.

The first is this,—*if God's thoughts are so precious to us, how very precious his words ought to be!* Here, in this inspired volume, you have the thoughts of the Divine Thinker incarnated, if I may use the word in that sense, and therefore I would have you prize very highly every word in this blessed Book. There are many nowadays who refuse to believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, but I fail to see how the sense of Scripture can be inspired if the words in which that sense is expressed are not also inspired. I believe that the very words, in the original Hebrew and Greek, were revealed from heaven; and notwithstanding every objection that can be brought from any quarter, I have never been able to get away from the firm belief that, if I give up my Master's words, I give up his thoughts also. I cannot well love a man's soul without having an affection for his body also; and I cannot love God's thoughts, which are the soul of his revelation, without loving the words which are the body in which it comes to us. Do not tamper with the words of Scripture, nor even with a single letter of it; but say, "How precious also are thy words unto me, O God!" Have we not known times when the blessing which we have derived

from a text has come to our hearts, not so much from the main thought contained in it, as from the use of one special word? Some of us, on turning to our Greek Testaments, have been perfectly astounded to find that a particular word has been used which has exactly met the predicament in which we have been placed; and if the Holy Spirit had moved the writer to use any other word, it would not have been so suitable to the circumstances in which we then were. We praise him for selecting that very word, and not any one of its synonyms, which would not so precisely have met our case. Therefore, brethren and sisters in Christ, prize the words of God above everything else that you possess.

Oh, for more Bible-reading! I fear that this is an age when almost everything else is read except that which is most worth reading. I believe that many professedly Christian people positively poison their minds, and stop up all the avenues of sense with the masses of sawdust, chaff, and druff that they get out of their light reading, which a man might read to all eternity without ever being the better for it. Yet, all the while, there are solid, sober, interesting books, full of valuable information and instruction, that are left unread; and, worst of all, God's Book, the Bible itself is lying neglected upon the shelf. True Bible-readers and Bible-searchers never find it wearisome. They like it least who know it least, and they love it most who read it most. They find it newest who have known it longest, and they find the pasture to be the richest whose souls have been the longest fed upon it. When one of our missionaries had to read a certain Book of the Old Testament through a hundred times while he was translating it, he said that he certainly enjoyed the hundredth time of reading it more than he did the first, for he understood it better, and it seemed to him to be fuller and fresher the more familiar he became with it.

In the next place, as God's thoughts are so precious to us, *God's actions, which spring from his thoughts, ought also to be precious to his people.* They ought to be so, but are they? Perhaps one of God's actions has been to lay low in sickness one who is very dear to you; can you say to God, "How precious is that action"? No; you shake your head, for you cannot say that. Possibly you have had a great loss to-day, and that loss came by the direct act of God. Now, God first thought, then he acted, and took away something that you greatly prized. You say that you cannot see any preciousness in that; but if you judged according to faith, and not according to sense, you would say, "Yes, Lord, this trial is precious to me because I believe it comes from thee, and I will not only submit to it, but I will thank thee for it, and even fall in love with the cross which thou layest upon me." As we look back over our past experience, we see how precious our trials have been to us. Someone said, "Give me back my bed of languishing, give me back the aches and pains that I suffered in that long trying illness, if I may but have such enjoyment of my Master's presence as I had then."

Now, in closing, let me just say that, as God's thoughts are so precious to us, *we should make the best return we can by thinking much of him.* Thou, believer, art married to Christ, and as thine Husband is ever thinking of thee, canst thou be content to live without thinking often of him? Hast thou lived through this day in forgetfulness of him? Hast thou been so occupied with the toils and cares of this life that thou hast forgotten him who has given thee a higher, nobler, and better life than this? If that has been the case with thee, then blush for very shame, and ask forgiveness of thy Lord, and let this be thy sincere prayer now, "Lord Jesus, thou art always thoughtful of me; henceforth by thy gracious Spirit's blessed working, make me always thoughtful of thee."

I fear that I am addressing a great many who do not often think of God, and that there are some of you to whom it would be a comfort if there were no God at all. Or, if you do think of him at all, he is only an all-powerful Being of whom you stand in dread because you fear that he will punish you for your sins. Then take warning by your own thoughts of God, and seek to be reconciled to him so that you may no longer have cause to fear his righteous anger. That reconciliation may be obtained by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one Mediator between God and men; so, if you put your case into his hands, and ask him to act as your Advocate, he will, by his Spirit, reveal to you the glorious truth that the reconciliation was effected, long ago, when he laid down his life for you upon the cross of Calvary. Then, when you have received this blessed assurance, it shall be your continual delight to think of God, and your constant bliss to know that he is thinking of you; and you will say, in the words of our text, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"

### Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM CXIX. 105—120.

We will read to-night two of the stanzas which make up the 119th Psalm, beginning at the 105th verse.

Verse 105. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

God's Word is full of brilliance; it is always giving out its blessed light. It casts a light upon all our daily life. It is a light for the house, and a light for the way, and happy is the man who never walks abroad without this lantern to light up his pathway. There are many pitfalls on the road, and many places where the traveller's garments may soon be besmeared, so he has great need of this light to guide him.

106. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*

I scarcely remember ever hearing of a man swearing, and then approving of it; but this kind of swearing is right enough: "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." We are to determine, with the most vehement resolution, that, God helping us, we will keep his righteous judgments; for, if we have only a weak resolution, we usually fall short even of our own determination. What shall we do then if that