

## GOD'S THOUGHTS TOWARD US

### **INTRODUCTION:**

How was your week? Did you “keep yourselves in the love of God?” in other words, did you bask in...and enjoy...and think about the love God has toward **you**? Last week we touched on three aspects of God’s love. I say “touched on” because we can never fully comprehend what is the breadth...and length...and depth...and height of the love of God. It is greater than our finite, limited minds can grasp.

We looked first at the **permanence** of God’s love. It is everlasting—but not to **everyone**. God’s love does end in the **next** life for those who reject His mercy and don’t think they need Him in **this life**. Listen carefully—there will be baptized church-goers...and Bible readers...and do-gooders **in hell** because they think “doing good” is the way to gain heaven. **NOTHING WE DO** is good enough to get us to heaven!

Isn’t that freeing? In a sense it is **scary** because it goes against what we may have been taught a large portion of our life. If we are honest, though, there is **no freedom** in striving and sweating and working to make ourselves **acceptable** to God. Why? Because we are constantly reminded of how miserably we fail!

Freedom from guilt comes from being forgiven by God; forgiveness comes when we recognize we have **nothing** to offer God and come to Him in child-like faith for **mercy**. The songwriter captured it well: “Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to thy cross I cling.” And when we come to Him, we have the wonderful promise that He will receive us and give us rest. **Matthew 11:28** “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

God’s love for His children is everlasting. It began before we were born—and it will never, ever, end. Not only is it permanent, it is also powerful. Nothing—absolutely nothing—can separate us from the love of Christ. We must focus on that fact and not our feelings or circumstances.

And then we looked briefly at the **proof** of God’s love. How do we know—beyond a shadow of doubt—that God loves us? Because He sent His Son to pay for our sin by dying in our place as our substitute! **Romans 5:8** reminds us: “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

I believe if we “keep ourselves in the love of God”—if we focus on God’s love for us instead of our feelings—it will change our lives! This morning I want to look at another source of comfort that we can have from the Scriptures—the fact that God **thinks** about us! Please take your Bibles and turn to Psalm 139:17-24.

### First, **1. God’s thoughts are personal**

Notice “How precious also are thy thoughts **unto me**, O God!” We are going to look at the fact that God’s thoughts are precious...and plentiful...and persistent...but if God’s thoughts are directed only to **other people**—but not you—how would that comfort **you**?

**David** enjoyed and meditated on the truth that God thought about **him**. This is not the only place in the Bible that David stated this truth, however. Notice **Psalm 40:17** “But I am poor and needy; **yet the Lord thinketh upon me**: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.”

Thankfully God’s thoughts don’t end with David. Notice **Psalm 40:5** “Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and **thy thoughts which are to us-ward**: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.”

Think about that: **All of us** are thought about by God—not just David! And He thinks of us as individuals—not just as part of a crowd. We have a **personal** God that is interested in us as individuals.

Jesus says that very thing in Matthew 10:30 “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” If God has a personal knowledge of the number of hairs of your head, He most certainly has thoughts directed toward you!

I remember when my oldest granddaughter told me about how she had accepted Jesus as her Savior while at Camp Chetek. I don’t remember exactly how it came up, but I remember her sharing this thought with me: ‘My counselor said that if I was the **only one** who had sinned and needed to be saved, Jesus would have come to earth to die just **for me!**’

That is making it personal, isn’t it? And that is what God wants us to do with this verse—believe in the fact that God thinks about **you!**

Not only are God’s thoughts personal, **2. God’s thoughts are precious**

So what does that phrase—“How **precious** also are thy thoughts unto me”—mean? Hopefully I can explain this without being too confusing.

--Does it mean ‘the thought of God thinking about me is **precious** to me?’ In other words, it is precious to me that God thinks about me. Similar to Psalm 104:34 “My meditation of Him shall be sweet...”

--OR does it mean ‘God’s thoughts to me are precious?’ Stated another way, ‘God has precious thoughts about me.’ I tend to think it is this one. Why? Because God’s thoughts **to David** were innumerable—not David’s thoughts toward God. If one part of the verse is **from God to David**, why not have both parts of the verse be in the “same direction,” so to speak?

Whether that is the primary intention here or not, I believe I can emphatically say this—the thoughts God has toward His people are precious because God’s people are precious to Him! Is that not true in our human relationships? When someone is precious—special—to us, our **thoughts** toward them are dear and precious! Let’s consider now some ways we know God has precious thoughts about us.

#### A. Thoughts of mercy

What is mercy? A simple definition is this—holding back deserved judgment. Is God merciful? The answer is a resounding YES! I don’t think I’m going out on a limb to suggest that **no one** is more merciful than God!

--No one is **more holy** than God; no one hates sin more than Him

--No one has been **sinned against** more than God

--No one is **more just** than God

--And no one is in a **higher position** than God. He has the absolute right as the Ruler **over everything** to administer judgment in the way He deems right. And yet, **God is rich in mercy**; He often hold back deserved judgment. **Ephesians 2:4-5** “But God, **who is rich in mercy**, for His great love wherewith He loved us, <sup>5</sup> Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”

God’s mercy is what led Him to provide a way for sinful, undeserving people to be forgiven.

--Our sin can’t be ignored and must be judged because God is holy.

--We cannot—in and of ourselves—**become perfect** and stop sinning; nor can we **make-up** for past sins

--So God “because of His great love wherewith He loved us” came to earth in the person of His Son and died as our substitute. That, my friends, is mercy!

And He offers that mercy—that forgiveness—to all who will in simple faith receive Jesus as their personal Savior.

--It is free—we cannot earn it or pay for it

--It is full—there is mercy enough for all of us—regardless of what we have done against God

--And it is forever! How do I know that? Because Psalm 136 has 26 verses and every single one of them ends with “for His mercy endureth forever.” What does that mean? It means that throughout eternity we will enjoy the mercy of God. There will never come a point when God says, ‘Let’s scrap this plan; I don’t like it and I’m going to come up with a new one!’

God has thoughts of mercy **to you**—and He proved it by sending His Son. Have you received His mercy; have you accepted that gift for you? Just like I mentioned in the introduction that there will come a time when the **love of God runs out** for those who do not have Christ, the same holds true for the **mercy** of God. It will end someday—there is no mercy in hell! If you reject God’s mercy in **this life**, there will be no opportunity for you to receive it in the **next**!

### B. Thoughts of love

The love of God and the mercy of God are tied together; we see that in Ephesians 2:4-5 that we just looked at. Thankfully forgiveness brought about by God’s mercy does make us pardoned criminals with a lighter sentence—it makes us sons of God!

**I John 3:1a, 2a** “Behold, what manner **of love** the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the **sons of God**...; Beloved, now are we the **sons of God**...” Again, I can only scratch the surface on God’s loving thoughts to us as His children. Here are just a couple:

#### **i. As a father pities his child, God pities us**

**Psalms 103:13-14** “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. <sup>14</sup> For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.” “Pity” here means “compassion;” God has compassion on us.

Don’t think for a moment that because you have a trial in your life—and it is difficult...and long...and painful...that God’s compassion has run out. There is a reason for it and although you may not know that reason, it is for our good and for His glory. Trust Him and humbly ask Him to help you learn what it is He is trying to teach you.

#### **ii. As a father wants to meet his child’s needs, God wants to meet ours**

**Matthew 7:9-11** “Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, **being evil**, know how to give **good gifts unto your children**, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?”

We as parents are “evil”—meaning sinful and often selfish—and yet we still want to give our children what they need. How much more shall God our Father give us what we need?

God’s loving, precious thoughts for us cause Him to pity us and provide for us. There are also thoughts to us to **protect** us. How often we give testimonies of God’s protection in our lives! Does God’s protection for us occur without God thinking of us? No; God thinks about protecting us and that is why we have His protection!

God’s thoughts to us are personal and precious, thirdly **3. God’s thoughts to us are plentiful**

Notice the last part of verse 17 and the first part of 18: “...how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand...”

I like what **Spurgeon** wrote about this:

“This figure shows the thoughts of God to be altogether innumerable; for nothing can surpass in number the grains of sand....The task of counting God’s thoughts of love would be a never-ending one....Even **could we count** the sands on the sea-shore, we should not be able to number God’s thoughts, for they are **‘more in number’** than the sand.’ This is not the hyperbole of poetry, but the solid fact of inspired statement: God thinks upon us infinitely! There is a limit to the act of creation, but not to the might of divine love.”

I was especially intrigued by that last statement: “There is a limit to the act of creation, but not to the might of divine love.” Let’s think about that for a moment. God created the heavens and the earth in six, literal, twenty-four-hour days—and then He **stopped** creating. Notice **Genesis 2:1-2** “Thus the heavens and the earth were **finished**, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God **ended His work** which He had made; and He **rested** on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.”

God didn't "rest" because He was tired—He "rested" because He was done creating what He wanted to create! But His thoughts to us are innumerable! Why? Because they don't stop; He does not **rest** from thinking about us! And that brings us to truth #4 about God's thoughts to us:

#### **4. God's thoughts to us are persistent (constant)**

We see the truth that God's thoughts are continual in the last part of verse 18 "when I awake, I am still with thee." Commentators are not in 100% agreement as to what this means, but **Barnes** explains it like this: "I have been lost in forgetfulness of thee in my slumbers; but thou hast not forgotten me." Stated another way, 'Although my thoughts toward God "take a break" when I'm asleep, when I awake, I am still with God—I am still in His thoughts.' In other words, God's thoughts to me don't stop just because I'm sleeping!

Aren't you glad God's thoughts to us are **constant**? To again quote Spurgeon: "One or two thoughts would not suffice for our many needs; if He only thought of us now and then, what should we do in the meantime? But He thinks of us **constantly**." So how can God love us constantly?

##### A. God has an infinite mind

What do I mean by having an **infinite** mind? Maybe considering this thought will help us "wrap our head" around the infiniteness of God's mind: *God can think about everyone in the world at the same time—all the time!* We can't do that, can we?

A guy named **Johnson** wrote: "Husbands and wives think of each other often and tenderly when separated. So the fond mother and her darling child. But **their thoughts are interrupted** by necessary attention to other matters. By the very limitations of their own nature they cannot hold their minds incessantly upon one person, however dear. Not so with God. Great events do not divert Him. He may have worlds to create and govern, but He is not so absorbed in them as to forget us."

Mind-boggling, isn't it? I can only think of one thing at a time—and one person at a time. I can't think of you all day long because I would not be thinking about my wife at all. God is not limited like that! He can think of me...and you...and the Corona-virus all at the same time! That's what I mean by God having an infinite mind.

##### B. God has infinite strength

What does God having infinite—endless, inexhaustible—strength have to do with God's ability to **think** about us constantly? Simply put—He never gets tired; He never has to take a break! I already mentioned that in passing, but here are the verses that demonstrate that thought.

**Psalm 121:1-5** "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. <sup>2</sup>My help cometh from **the Lord**, which made heaven and earth. <sup>3</sup>He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will **not slumber**. <sup>4</sup>Behold, He that keepeth Israel **shall neither slumber nor sleep**. <sup>5</sup>The Lord is **thy** keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand."

Maybe an illustration will help us think about the picture that is being painted here.

It won't be long before Abbey and Andrew will be welcoming their little baby girl into their home. Abbey will love and cherish that little girl. She will feed her and burp her and change her diapers and keep her warm and protect her. She will be thinking about her while she is awake—and even be listening for her while they both sleep. But Abbey will **have to sleep**. No matter how much she loves that little girl, she cannot go day after day and night after night without sleep.

But God can, can't He? God—the One who made heaven and earth—is our **helper**. He is also our **keeper**. And the double blessing is that He does both "24/7" because He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

How it ought to amaze and humble us to think that the God of the universe not only loves us, but constantly thinks about us!

***CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS:***

1. First and foremost, have you personally seen the **need** for God’s mercy—and accepted the gift of God’s Son? God has thoughts of mercy to you, but if you reject Jesus Christ as the payment for your sins, you will pay for them yourself by being eternally separated from God in a place called hell. “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!”

2. Child of God, are you discouraged by the difficulties and trials and uncertainties of life? Don’t focus on those things. Instead, focus on the fact that you are precious in God’s sight and that He thinks of you always. He has thoughts of mercy to you—and He has loving thoughts of you. He thinks of your protection—and He thinks of your provision. Do you look to Him? Do you trust Him? Are you thankful for His thoughts to you?