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“The Thoughts of God”
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One thing is for sure, it's not because we haven't prayed enough, or we haven't done this enough or haven't done that enough. I know there's a shift that's gone on in all of our hearts and minds, also. My confidence isn't in my commitment to the Lord. I think commitment is important, but my confidence is in the commitment of God and to what He has promised. I don't mean that commitment isn't important on our part, but our commitment is really born out of a response to God's commitment of His promises and His purpose for us. I guess when I preach, I told somebody that I'd just like to put in a good word for God. He's worth the difficulty that we find ourselves in.

Step back sometimes when you get discouraged and say that the thing God is doing is just so amazing and impossible and beyond our comprehension, that He is bringing forth sons—spiritual sons, spiritual beings, Christ, His many-membered new man—out of earthen vessels. Once in a while we should read in 2 Corinthians 4; this promise and purpose of God is of a magnitude that we can hardly wrap our arms around. The magnitude of God bringing something out of nothing, and the likes of us into that new creation and the fullness and all that means. So, give yourself a little space; step back and say, “God, this is beyond me, but my confidence isn't in my commitment; my confidence is in Your commitment to Your purpose today.”

Somebody asked me a question after I had spoken at convention because I had made a comment that ‘we have the mind of Christ;’ Paul says that, but we don't have the thoughts of God, necessarily, or we don't have the fullness of the thoughts of God. I appreciate genuine questions from people, because you get up and you preach a lot of stuff and then somebody asks you, “What did you mean by this?” And you can hardly remember saying it, so you have to think, “What did I mean by that?” It provokes you to search things out.

So, they asked me the question: what is the difference between the mind of Christ and the thoughts of God? How I see it is, that we have the mind of Christ, which is that new nature birthed within us, that is characterized by a nature of

humility and being directed under the hand of God. That's what you and I are coming to the fullness of—to have all the thoughts of God.

I finally responded to them after I got home; I wrote and answered the question the best I could. To have all the thoughts of God, if we had all those in hand, then the trial of our faith would be over. This is a progressive unveiling of who our Father is. This is an unveiling that's been going on in our hearts, but we are still stretched to come into the fullness of this relationship of trust with our Heavenly Father. Every step, our faith is stretched and our trust is stretched to be able to continue taking another step. These steps of faith are real things. The faith that you started with, however many years ago, is different than the faith that you're walking in now. God has progressively led us in this way where we find out that we really didn't have a handle on how absolutely trustworthy our Heavenly Father was.

I have said, "At this point in time I don't know how I will ever get through this particular time in my life." But looking back, I see that God was carrying me through things that were so beyond me and impossible, and a stretch to my faith. That is still true today that there are places where our faith is still being stretched. This relationship is still growing with our Heavenly Father. Maybe you feel the same way, but I'm not satisfied with the level of relationship that I have with my Heavenly Father. I'm not satisfied with the extent of the communion and the clarity of who He is and what He is doing.

What I want to say further, related to the thoughts of God, when I say we don't have them all, that does not mean that you and I are not in the condition to seek those thoughts out. We need the thoughts of God. We need that revealing to continue, and to go on and grow.

I want to talk about the thoughts of God and give us a few examples of His thoughts. Let me just say that we all understand His thoughts are way above ours. We all know that. We found out that, Ghee, I had a thought that I thought was THE thought. One of the most difficult things I've walked through is to sit in a meeting—and I've been in a lot of meetings over the years—you sit in a circle of people and you have a meeting and you walk in thinking, "I have THE thought." You bring up THE thought that you think is so significant in the circle of a meeting and it is dismissed with an immediacy and an off-hand. I've been so crest-fallen to find out that perhaps I didn't have THE thought, but that's the ongoing work of

God to show us that we don't have the thought, He's got the thought and just because we don't know it, it doesn't mean that He isn't thinking.

One thought of God that's really great is in Psalms 65:4, 'Blessed is the man whom You choose and cause to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple.'

I think how blessed we are today because of the choosing of God and not just that, but that He is actually causing us to approach. That stood out to me recently in the last few weeks; I've been thinking of that, 'causing to approach.' You don't realize today that this relationship that I'm in, with the Spirit of God, I'm not left to myself to develop it. I am not developing this relationship on my own. There is a Heavenly Father, that you and I have, which is committed to developing this relationship with Him to such a degree that He actually causes us to approach. We are so blessed today that God is calling us to approach! And the way He causes—that is a challenge!

If I employed God's method of causing my spouse to approach, I might get into trouble. You look at the way God deals with people when all along—actually what His Spirit is doing is causing us to approach—He's drawing us closer. We can be duped sometimes because we look at what we can see; we look at what appears to be.

I want to look at a couple of examples of God causing to approach. In the book of Jeremiah, he talks a lot about going into the captivity to Babylon. In Jeremiah 29, it's the first year of captivity and He prophesies through Jeremiah and says, 'I know the thoughts that I think toward you; they are thoughts of good and not evil, to give you an expected end of a future and a hope.' God's perception, God's thoughts were so different than what appeared. They are so much higher than what seems to be so evident.

In Jeremiah 24, He talks about having two baskets of figs. He said to Jeremiah, "What do you see?" The prophet said, "I see two baskets of figs. One basket of good figs and one basket of bad figs." God said the good figs are the ones who are going into captivity. I think, wait a minute, wouldn't the good figs be the ones who don't go into captivity? No. God said, "The ones that are going into captivity, that I brought captive, in only the way that I can, brought you into a captive place

because this is how I'm going to bring you close to Me. This is how I'm going to cause you to approach unto Me. This is how I'm going to cause you to dwell forever with Me."

When I read that scripture, 'How blessed are those that you have caused to approach that they may dwell in Your courts...' You look up that word, "dwell" and that word is not like you overnighted somewhere. That is a word of permanency—that you are permanently dwelling with your Heavenly Father. That is the work that He is doing in us. It's only His thoughts that are way above. The children of Israel looked at captivity to Babylon as a negative thing, so you have a whole bunch of them that went down into Egypt; you have a whole bunch that refused to go into captivity because they didn't see, they didn't know, what the thoughts of God were for them. There were thoughts of God that were totally contrary to what could be seen naturally, and that is still true now, today. It's true in all of your lives and it's true in my life, that there are thoughts of God that are totally contrary to what we can actually perceive with our eyes.

There's another example in Matthew 15. There are a few steps here. Keep in mind that 'no one comes to the Father except the Father draws them.'

Matthew 15:22, 'And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.'"

The first thing you see in Verse 23 is, 'He answered her not a word.' Apparently, He ignores her. Then His disciples chime in and said, 'Send her away; for she cries after us.'

So, the first thing is: Jesus ignored her; He doesn't answer her. The second thing is: the disciples ask Him to get rid of her. Then in Verse 24, Jesus says, 'I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' The subtext was, "I'm not sent to you, a Gentile. I am only here for the children of Israel. You're not part of this group."

Verse 25, 'Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me." This woman still came after those three rebuttals. She still approached after those

three rebuttals. Do you know what was going on? The Spirit of God was causing her to approach.

Then Jesus said, 'It's not meet (good) to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.' I don't know; sometimes you wonder if Mary and Joseph did a good job teaching manners to Jesus, because some of the things that are said, I would get into trouble. I have 3 daughters and a wife who would immediately be coming to me and perfecting me, as they've made efforts to do over the years. What do you mean? The essence is that He called her a dog. Can we just say there are some other thoughts that are working? When I say, "thoughts," I don't mean like we have so many arbitrary thoughts. I mean the thought that is full of the power of Almighty God because His thoughts are the same as His eternal purpose.

It says, 'It's not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.' She says, 'Truth; yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat from the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Do you understand what is going on with this woman? She is living in another thought that is going on. She is being drawn and being caused to approach. She is not put-off. I thought what a picture this is, that there's another thought that's at work there, that she's connected with. She's not put-off; what a picture! She's not put-off!

And what did Jesus say at the end? 'O woman, great is thy faith.' It's as if God is a show-off, that when the whole natural environment is contrary to us, He demonstrates that His thought, which is higher, has the capacity in the middle of all those things to cause us to approach unto Him and to be with Him and to be joined with Him in the kind of relationship that He is committed to bringing forth out of all of us.

Then the last one, we've heard a lot about it. There are 41 chapters of processing in Job. He finally found the thought of God in the last chapter. He said, "I said a lot of stuff, a lot of things, that I didn't know what I was talking about." Through the agony of his own thoughts, and he had a lot of them, it wasn't actually just his own thoughts, it was the agony of his friends who had thoughts, too, that came to the way of Job's flailings and failings.

Honestly, we look at ourselves without the thoughts of God working in us; we look at ourselves and we have more confirmation for discouragement and quit

and unbelief. There are people who come and want to talk to me about some things, “Do you know what’s going on in the community? Do you realize the problems that are here?” And finally, after listening to that for a number of minutes and it seems like an eternity sometimes with the case that’s presented, I say, “Can I just tell you something? I can outdo you 5-to-1 with the information you have just given me.” And all of us can. All of us are able to do that, because we have our own thoughts—we are flooded sometimes with thoughts that are not God, but there is a higher thought at work that Job came to, ‘I was talking about stuff that I didn’t know.’ It’s worth it to read through some of the stuff in the book of Job. You find out that Job really had some ugly things that God really brought out. His self-justification was pretty heavy-duty in what came out of him and how he responded. The reason it’s worth looking at, is to see that he came through all of that. The power of God’s capacity to cause Job to approach unto Him, to be joined to Him, was greater than all those things: all the loss, all the thoughts, all his self-justification, everything that was there. In the end, you see God’s capacity to cause him to approach unto Him and bring him into the place where he actually, out of his own mouth, said, “I talked about things that I didn’t understand; things too wonderful, which I knew not.” What a beautiful thing this is. God said, ‘Job said the right thing about Me.’ What a wonderful conclusion that is. ‘You other guys said the wrong thing, but Job came to the place where he said that thing which is right about Me.’

For all of us, the warfare, and what we are contending for, is for this increase of faith in our hearts, and this increase of trust in our hearts, through whatever thing we find ourselves in, that this trust would grow. Jude says it really clearly, ‘Contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints.’ If you look it up, it says, ‘earnestly contend’. It’s a Greek word, “epagonizomai”, which means agonize. That’s really where the crux of this is; that’s where our warfare is. That’s where our contending must be. “Lord, increase my faith here. Lord, I’m touched with the feelings of unbelief. I’m plagued with thoughts of doubt and discouragement because of what I see. God, increase my faith, that there is a higher thought that’s going on, that even though I don’t have it in me at this moment, Lord, bring me to that place where I trust You again.”

Every one of you has walked in faith, and I have also, but we want to come to the end of our faith. The Bible says there’s an ‘end of our faith which is the salvation of our soul.’ I don’t know where we are in that. I used to do a bunch of running,

like 10ks when I was much younger. When I knew I had maybe a half a mile to go, or whatever it was, I would get an exhilaration that I was getting close. I don't know exactly where we are in this process; I just know that I haven't finished, yet. "So, God, I need an increase of this faith to go forward from where I am in this relationship."

Jude says you have to contend for that faith. Jesus says the work you do is to believe; the work you do is to trust. That's not a static thing, or mental consent. That's something that's written in our hearts, which brings us into a condition where we trust. Trust is manifested in actions, manifested in words, sometimes you feel unbelief and doubt rise up in your heart. Just because you feel that doesn't mean that you're stuck in unbelief. Unbelief is really defined in Hebrews 3:12. Unbelief is defined by departing from the living God. It says, 'Take care lest there be an evil heart of unbelief in departing from.' The point is this: unbelief takes action and that's where you and I say, "God, I don't want to be led; I don't want to be covered; I don't want to be directed by unbelief. I feel unbelief, but I don't want to depart from You. Lord, draw me! Draw me afresh, Lord! I know You have promised: Your thoughts in Psalm 65 is that I am blessed because You are causing us to approach. Lord, I am confident because of Your commitment to this relationship to which You are bringing forth in the earth."

A couple more thoughts on God's thoughts: one is, it's OK to seek out what the thought of God is, because we don't know. And I don't mean that you can paste it on. I'm so struck with how necessary it is to really have a living word working in me. A living word. I know we preach; we do a lot of things; we communicate but what actually must be taking place is that there is a living word being written inside. A living word, because it's the living word that comes by the Spirit of God, as it says in Hebrews 4, that's able to separate the very thoughts and intents of the heart. I need the clear, sharp sword of God's living word, through His Spirit, to divide, so I can divide these thoughts. I've lived under the wrong kind of thought and I want to be connected to this thought of God that propels me forward in this relationship. It must be a living word.

I want to read a couple things about the thought of God. This doesn't replace the living word, but it came alive to me, personally, when I was looking at it. Seek the living word. "Lord, I need your living word in the words that I can get, in the framework that I can get it. I'm in the middle of whatever I'm in, in my life, but in

order to not be directed by what I can see, Lord, I need that living word to impact me, to intersect me, to get inside of me.” I’ve had that experience where God uses a word to get to me, that stopped me, and sometimes it comes through somebody. Sometimes people will say things and they get you, they pierce and provoke you because there’s a piece of beauty of Christ that you see comes through; you’re jealous for that kind of influence working on you.

There are a couple things I want to read from Psalm 139. In verses 1 and 2, it says, ‘O Lord, You have searched me, and known me. You know my downsitting and my uprising, You understand my thought afar off.’

That should give us a little bit of comfort today, that God understands my thought afar. He understands what goes through my head, what goes through my heart. He understands; He sees it. The Psalmist goes on and I was so moved by this: in verse 17 it says, ‘How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.’ Have you ever picked up a handful of sand at the beach and started to count? Neither have I. If the psalmist is counting the sum of God’s thoughts towards us, the sum of it comes down to this: His thoughts are more than the sand.

But then the psalmist says, ‘When I am awake, I am still with Thee.’ The summation he is communicating to us, the summation of the very thoughts of God is this: ‘When I awake, I am still with you.’ What a promise! What a beautiful picture for us that the sum of God’s thoughts is, that when I awake out of my unbelief, when I awake out of my bad response, when I awake out of a multitude of thoughts, when I awake out of the infirmity, when I awake out of the discouragement, when I awake out of a hopelessness, guess what? It has not stopped God’s purpose; I am still with Him! Can you be encouraged today, that regardless of what you’ve been lulled to sleep by, what you’re dull about—Job had 41 chapters, it appears, of dullness. In the 42nd chapter Job woke up and said, “Now I see You. Now I get what was going on.” While we’re in that state, we awake out of it and guess what we discover? That God has never left us, “I am still with you.” How about that for encouraging? I thought, “God, there isn’t anything; there isn’t anything that can thwart Your very intention and thought for Your people.” The sum of these thoughts is, “When I awake, I am still with thee.”

Now, there's one more thought of God I want to mention. It's a thought that Paul revealed in 2 Corinthians 12, which God revealed to Paul, "Regardless of everything that you are going through, I heard your request and My answer is, "No," but I want you to know something else of My thought," God said to Paul; "My grace is sufficient for you." What a thought of God that is! That's why the end of Hebrews 4 is so important, 'Come boldly to the throne of grace, to find help in time of need.' Come boldly to that throne of grace. There is not a condition, there is not an environment, there is not a place, there is not a framework in your mind, there is not a warfare, there is not a loss, there is not an infirmity, there are none of those things that God's grace is not sufficient for. None of those things. "God, help us to not quit coming boldly to Your throne of grace."

I find this idea, of praying without ceasing, is not like some learned tradition; it's something that's being spontaneous, like a fountain out of our hearts because we have no place to go except to the throne of grace to find help. Paul gives us this profound thought of God that, 'My grace is sufficient for you.' There's no place where the grace of God is not sufficient for us to get us through and propelled into what His thought for us is, so that you and I are living under the power of His thought. Don't be duped again, like I have been. Don't be duped by what you see. Say, "Lord! I'm coming to Your throne of grace because I know I have a multitude of thoughts. I have a multitude of thoughts going on about this, Lord, but I know You have a thought that is higher than all these. It's above all of these."

There's no condition that we find ourselves in, that this thought of God, that His 'grace is sufficient' is not there and is not functioning. There's no condition. God help us to find His thoughts in this walk of faith, as He grows this faith and trust in our hearts for this relationship.