

Part One: Care of People

I Corinthians 9:19-23; Jude 17-25

I. Careful Thoughts

Before words or actions are aimed at people we must be careful how we think about them. What we sow is what we'll reap (Galatians 6:7). When we consider our influence on people, our thought-life (or thoughtless life) will be the seeds which cause us to reap. Do we intend to serve Christ and make a difference in our world? Then seek to be a blessing to people. It's not easy to bless someone that you don't understand or that you don't like. Love and truth, working together in us, will overcome the difficulties. In the introduction of this series it was stated that ultimately there are only two kinds of people: Believer or Unbeliever. One of the difficulties we face is that of not knowing with whom we are working. Some people clearly are not believers. Some think they are, but maybe they really aren't. Some believers think and act too much like unbelievers. The use of these Scriptures in this study will require prayer and discernment. Let's pursue some wholesome guidelines for our thought-life about people.

- A. **Humble Thoughts** – "But for the Grace of God, there go I." Let us learn from Christ's parable in Luke 18:9-14. Pride ruins everything (Proverbs 8:13). We must gain and retain an honest understanding of our own sinful weakness (Galatians 6:1). We all have not committed the same sins, but honesty demands that we acknowledge our guilt (I John 1:8-10; I Corinthians 6:9-11; Titus 3:1-3). In order for Ezekiel to be a "watchman" and minister to others, he had to sit with them (Ezekiel 1:1; 3:15-17). We must identify with sinners and not be "above" them (Isaiah 65:5).

- B. **Compassionate Thoughts** – We are rescuing captives, not fighting personal enemies (II Timothy 2:24-26 – note vs. 10, how much have we endured for the cause of men's salvation?). Compassion also requires that we do not get side-tracked with charming other people with our personalities, wit and talent. They must be impressed with Jesus Christ! (I Corinthians 2:1-5). See the gentleness and compassion that Paul expresses when he describes his feelings and motives for others (I Thessalonians 2:7-11; Romans 9:1-3; 10:1 – note vs. 2-4 as we go to the matter of discernment).

- C. **Discerning Thoughts** – While we look at others compassionately with their sinful weaknesses and see lost people as captives under Satan's influence, we still must understand that people are dangerous and must discern their problems (sins) and attack the real issues. We must not be naive! Consider Romans 10:2-4 (remember the attitude in vs. 1 and 9:1-3). People are spiritually dead to God and His ways and under the influence of Satan (Ephesians 2:1-3). They are enemies of the cross (even believers struggle with the way of the cross – Matthew 16:13-17 cp. vs. 21-26): their god is their belly (they serve their desires); they glory in their shame (pride, foolishness and blindness – Psalm 10; Ephesians 4:17-21); their mind is focused on earthly things (tunnel vision). See Philippians 3:18-19 – note the tears...their end is destruction! cp. Psalm 126:5-6. We cannot think right thoughts and deal with people in our own wisdom and strength (II Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-12).