

The Precious Thoughts of God

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[0 : 00] Well, Christian brothers and sisters, you are richer than you think. That's the testimony of the word of God. And it's the burden of Octavius Winslow in this book that we're studying, *The Precious Things of God*.

He's reminding us of these precious things that are ours in Christ. We've seen so far we have a precious Christ. And we have a precious faith. And we have precious trials.

And we have a precious book. And now this morning, we look at the precious thoughts of God. Now, turn to Psalm 139, which is Winslow's taking off point in this study.

Psalm 139. And in this familiar psalm, David celebrates God's omniscience and God's omnipresence.

The fact that God knows everything and that he is everywhere. And then he bursts out in praise in verses 17 and 18, which is our text, our launching off point.

[1 : 19] How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

So here's the next precious thing. God's thoughts. But it's not just God's thoughts in general. God's thoughts about everything. That's not the focus of David's praise here.

It's rather God's thoughts of David personally. God's thoughts about him. Notice in the footnote of verse 17.

How precious to me. Could also read how precious concerning me are your thoughts, O God. And I believe that captures the sense of David here.

How precious concerning me are your thoughts. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. And this is seen throughout this psalm from the beginning to end. David is speaking not about God's thoughts generally about everything.

[2 : 25] What's he talking about? He's talking about God's thoughts of him personally. We notice this as the psalm begins. Notice all the me's, my's, I's.

God is thinking about David. O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and you know when I rise.

You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down. You're familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue.

You know it completely, O Lord. You hem me in behind and before. You've laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. Too lofty for me to attain.

You see, it's God's thoughts about him. In everything that he does, even what's passing through his mind. God is thinking about David's thoughts and knows them.

[3 : 24] And then it continues on down into verse 15. He says, my frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.

Even there, God was thinking of David when he was in his mother's womb. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
How precious concerning me are your thoughts, O God. You see? You see the thing he's talking about?

It's God's thoughts of him personally. That cause him to see this next great preciousness that we want to appreciate today.

Notice verse 18. That when I awake, I'm still with you. And the idea here is I'm still in your thoughts. My thoughts drop off when I sleep, don't they?

[4 : 20] And yours do too. But when I awake, I find that I'm still with you. That your thoughts have not dropped off of me. But you've been thinking of me all through the night.

And when I wake up, I'm still in your thoughts. Still with you in your thoughts. Such knowledge is just too wonderful for me. Too precious. For me.

So can you see why David would exclaim how precious God's thoughts about him are? He's thinking of me. And that's not some special privilege that was true of David alone.

What could be said of David, the child of God, can be said of every single one of God's people. That his thoughts of you are vast.

More than the grains of sand. And so they ought to be precious to us. None of these personal pronouns that we read in Psalm 139 are any more true of David than they are for you, child of God.

[5 : 25] So that's the first thing that makes God's thoughts precious. It's who's being thought of. He thinks of me personally. Now the second thing that makes these thoughts precious is because who it is that is thinking of me.

And it's just to put the emphasis on different words. They're precious because you're thinking of me. But they're precious because you are thinking of me.

How precious are your thoughts of me, O God. Now this staggers the mind that the infinite, eternal, unchanging God.

The one and only. The true and living God. The sovereign Lord who created all things. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Who brings out the starry host and calls them each by name.

That he should think upon me. By name. Personally. And have me upon his mind. This is the one who's got the whole world in his hands as we sing.

[6 : 30] And that's a lot to look after. That's a lot to think about. Most of us are maxed out just thinking of ourselves and our families and a few others. He's got the whole world in his hands.

Upholding everything by his powerful word. Feeding over 7 billion people on the planet. Most of them every day. Giving life and breath to every living creature.

Directing the affairs of nations. Turning the hearts of kings. Taking one down and bringing up another. Accomplishing every single one of his purposes and plans in history.

This is the one who is thinking of me. Of me personally. That simply means that could you pry into the mind of God.

You would find that any time day or night that he is thinking of John Heaney. And he is thinking of you. Child of God. Personally.

[7 : 34] Personally. Poor and needy me. Harassed and helpless me. Weak and faltering and sinning me. The Lord thinks of me. Psalm 40 verse 17.

The Lord thinks of me. Now we feel so small and insignificant in this earth, don't we? We're just a single drop in the ocean. We're a speck of dust in the universe to ourselves.

And nobody in the eyes of the world. Forgotten and ignored by most. And yet the God upon whom the universe hangs thinks of me. And not merely with a passing glance our way.

With a mind preoccupied with other and bigger things. No. But with a loving, sympathetic concern. As if I alone were his preoccupation.

Winslow said, Each child of God dwells in his heart and engages his mind as though he were the sole occupant of this boundless universe. Can you even think of it?

[8 : 38] As if you're the only one here? And all of his thoughts are upon you. He thinks of you as if that's the case. Does that blow your little mind wondering how can this be?

It doesn't blow his mind. Remember, his mind is infinite. His thoughts of his people are infinite. We tend to limit the Holy One of Israel.

And think of him in terms of ourself. Well, I can't give that kind of steady concern and thought to one person. And to do it to many people.

I have to choose. If I'm thinking of this one, I'm not thinking of that one. But God's not like that. He's not like us in that way. He has no limits to the number of his thoughts.

Rather, his thoughts are so far above ours as the heavens are above the earth. So do not with your finite mind limit his infinite mind.

[9 : 33] It's because he is the infinite God that he's able to never let you out of his mind. Even while doing the same thing for your brothers and sisters all around the world.

A few quotes from Winslow in this point. The thoughts of his infinite mind encircle and enfold thee more closely than the ivy clasp the elm.

Been in the woods? You've seen the ivy clasp the elm? Pretty tight hold, isn't it? That's how God's thoughts enfold you, child of God. More fondly than the mother holds her newborn infant.

You've seen that lately? That fondly does his thoughts enfold his children. And again, this is a truth too mighty to grasp were it not too precious to refuse.

And too divine to disbelieve. In other words, we never would believe this unless he had told us that it were so. And he has done just that. How precious are your thoughts of me, oh God.

[10 : 45] Over the past several years, we've received a lot of sympathy cards due to the loss of mom and dad and brother in our family. And I kept a huge pile of them and found myself going back and just noting that nearly half of those cards had in them thinking of you.

Our prayers and thoughts are with you. And certainly the writers of sympathy cards know that in times of trouble, it's comforting just to know that others are thinking of you.

They are. And if that's true on the human level, what's the comfort afforded in our troubles just to know that almighty God is thinking of me?

Folks, he has sent us a card in several places saying, I'm thinking of you. And even the Lord Jesus, I'm praying for you.

Spurgeon says no sweeter subject ever occupied your mind. I am poor and needy. Yet the Lord thinks of me. Precious thoughts indeed.

[11 : 57] Precious because of the one who is thinking them, God. And precious because of the object of his thoughts, me. Now, thirdly, let's take up the question then.

We've already touched upon it, but how many thoughts does God have of me? And this is where it exceeds the thoughts of our own minds. But you notice in Psalm 139, 17 and 18, how precious to me are your thoughts, O God.

How vast is the sum of them. Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I'm still with you. When he says, were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.

That simply means it's an infinite number. Remember, that was the way that God told Abraham that his seed would be, his offspring, his spiritual offspring would be more than the sands of the sea.

Well, that's the crowd that's around the throne in Revelation that is more than can be numbered, John says, as he looked at them. Vast number.

[13:02] Well, here it's an actual infinite number. There is no end to it. Psalm 40 and verse 5 says of his thoughts that no one can recount them.

There are too many to declare. And we just saw that when I awake, I'm still with you. My mind takes a break at night, but yours doesn't. You never slumber or sleep.

Why? Because you're thinking and watching over us all night long. You see, he's having lots of thoughts of us even while we sleep. So that when I rise, you're thinking of me.

When I sit down, you're thinking of me. When I go out into my day, you're thinking of me. When I lie down at night, you see, day and night, you are familiar with all my ways.

He's thinking of us continually. So intense is his love for us that we're never out of his thoughts, believers. I remember reading the biography of John Newton.

[14:01] And there's a place in that biography where it talked about while he was still out at sea, working on the ship. And he was married. And he had prearranged with his wife that at a certain time, I think it was every month, maybe the full moon, a certain time each month that they would both look at the same moon and think of each other.

Isn't that? Touch your heart, women. Okay? Men, take a note from John Newton. So here am I, out in some sea, far from home, and there's my dear wife back at home.

And there's something about looking at the same moon and at the same time having thoughts of each other. It's almost like it becomes a shield that booms our thoughts to each other.

There's something that is touching about the thought that she's thinking of me right now. But the dearest friend in life cannot always be thinking of you.

A third of their time, they are unconscious in sleep. Much of the other two-thirds finds them preoccupied in mind with other things, but not so with the Lord.

[15:17] Though he has ever so many sons and daughters, the Lord thinks of me is always true. How vast is the sum of his thoughts of each one of us.

They outnumber the grains of sand. I don't believe that's an exaggeration. When you realize that he's been thinking of you from eternity. Okay?

It's not enough just to count his thoughts of you from your 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 years or whatever. No, he's been thinking of his people from all eternity.

Notice the intimate thoughts and concern for David that immediately lead up to this outburst of amazing wonder on David's part. He's thinking of God's involvement with him before he was ever born.

In verse 15, My frame wasn't hidden from you, as we saw, when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body.

[16:13] You were thinking of me before my feet hit the ground. Indeed, all the days, verse 16, All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

What does that mean? That means that he was thinking, Before one of my days came to be, he thought of them, and he wrote them in his book, in his decree, in his plan for me.

This takes us clear back in eternity past, to God's decrees, where I learned that even then, he was already thinking of me, planning my life, and every day in it.

Psalm 40, in verse 5, says, Many, O Lord, my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us, no one can recount to you. Were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.

The wonders of God are in conformity with the plans of God. Christian, all God ever did for you, he did according to his plan for you.

[17:22] What does that mean? That means before he did it, he was already thinking of you. He was thinking of you when he planned it. That's a lot of thinking, isn't it?

Just for one of us, let alone all of us. Where's planning done? You're going on a vacation, so you're planning a vacation. What are you going to do? You're going to think about it, aren't you?

You're going to think ahead. Where are we going? What would we like to do when we get there? Where are we going to stay? You're thinking. Planning is an activity of the mind.

And we're told that God's plans for us, from eternity past, are too many to count. Well, what's that saying then? It's saying, his thoughts of us are too many to count.

Indeed, the Hebrew word for plans is often translated thoughts, because planning is an activity of the thoughts. Your thoughts toward us are more than can be told.

[18:26] Many of the translations read at Psalm 40 and verse 5. So if his plans for us are beyond counting, so are his thoughts that go into his plans. Again, Winslow, his thoughts of us involve the predetermination and rearrangement of each event, each circumstance, each step of our personal history, trivial though it be, such as a hair falling from our heads.

Wouldn't believe it if the Lord had not said it, but he did. The Lord determines our steps, Proverbs 16, 9. Every step of every day determined, planned by the Lord.

Now, these plans of the Lord, these thoughtful plans of the Lord remain hidden. They were made in eternity past before I was on the scene, and they remain hidden in the infinite mind of God, treasured up in the divine mind, until each circumstance in my daily life unfolds and makes them known.

Then we learn how real and how precious God's thoughts of us are, Winslow. So I made it to church today. You did too. And in so doing, I learned that before the creation of the world, God planned for John Heaney to be at Grace Fellowship this morning.

He had that plan, but it was hidden for all those ages, and it was just uncovered today as He worked out everything according to His plan in my life today.

[20:05] And now I find, ah, this was in His mind for me. What was His thought of me for today? There is not a moment, beloved of God, that the Lord is not thinking of you.

and not working out everything for good according to His well-thought-out plan for you. Though His precious thoughts are hidden to us, they are all known to Him.

Jeremiah 29, 11, For I know the thoughts. Now many of you have memorized that verse as plans, and again, the word can go each way. I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord.

Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you hope and a future. The Lord knows His plans, His thoughts of us, even though we don't. And so the application from Winslow.

Attempt not, therefore, to fathom the divine mind or to penetrate the thoughts, the plans that are hidden from, are hidden there. Know that they are thoughts of everlasting love, and let this quiet your mind and bring you patiently to wait until providence reveals them.

[21:17] Enough is revealed by Christ to satisfy you that God's thoughts of you are thoughts of reconciliation. Hear this, that there exists not in the divine mind a solitary thought adverse to your well-being, child of God.

Not one thought adverse to your well-being, for He works out everything for our good.

So let's do a walk through the God's infinite thoughts of you. Starting in eternity past, and we'll go right into eternity future. So from everlasting, He's been thinking of you, child of God, loving you.

Jeremiah 31:3, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore, I have drawn you with loving kindness. Paul says in Ephesians 1:4, He chose you in Christ before the creation of the world.

You think about what you choose. God thought about us as He chose to save us, and as He planned our salvation, as far back as you can go, there has never been a time when He has not thought of you with loving thoughts.

[22:30] He chose you because He loved you, and He loved you because He set His love upon you. And that's as far back as we can press.

Loving thoughts. He thought of your sinfulness and of your need for a Savior with pitying thoughts. He thought of your wondering like a sheep without a shepherd, harassed and helpless by the trials and troubles of this life, and with the judgment that was coming upon you, and He thought of you with loving thoughts as He planned to send a Savior to you.

And so just according to plan, the Savior was made man for you. Perfectly kept the whole law for you. Set His face like a flint to go to Calvary's cross for you, where He was made sin for you as the Father laid all your iniquities upon Him and then treated Him as you deserved and punished Him that you might have peace with God.

He was pierced for your transgressions. He was crushed for your iniquities. The punishment that brought you peace was on Him, and by His stripes you were healed.

So don't remove His thoughts of you from His great work of Calvary. You were on His mind throughout His work of planning and accomplishing your great salvation.

[24:04] It was not just some unknown, abstract blob of people for whom He died. No, He had you on His mind at Calvary.

For me, kind Jesus, was thine incarnation, thy mortal sorrow and thy life's oblation, thy death of anguish and thy bitter passion for my salvation personally?

And Paul says, yes, He loved me and gave Himself for me. He was doing it for me with me in mind, for by His knowledge my righteous servant will justify many.

And so you, dear brothers and sisters, were part of that joy that was set before Him as He went to the cross. The joy of bringing you to glory. That was part of the thing that kept Him going, enduring the cross, scorning its shame for the joy of bringing you personally to glory.

If you remove yourself from the mind of the Son of God at Calvary, you rob yourself of one of the most precious things of all, that He was doing it for you with thoughts of you.

[25:14] So don't depersonalize Christ or His work of salvation that was carried out in joyful thought of fulfilling God's eternal plans for you. How precious to me are your thoughts, O Lord, your thoughts of planning and then carrying out your salvation of me.

And how precious were His loving thoughts of you then through all the days of your unconverted life when you were still wandering from Christ, still pursuing your own way, choosing yourself over God, rebelling against Him.

When you were trying your hardest to forget Him, He would not forget you, dear child of God. When you were just one breath away from eternal torments, all those days of your eternal, of your pre-Christ life, if you had been taken in death before then, you'd be lost forever.

What were His thoughts of you then? thoughts of pity, thoughts of love, thinking about you with long-suffering patience that you just kept sinning against.

Thoughts of electing love refused to give up on you but followed you into that far country and spared you from death and hell, still thinking of you as one of His chosen instruments that He was determined to save.

[26:36] how precious were His thoughts in your pre-conversion days, His thoughts of you. And then think of His thoughts of your conversion. We've seen something of the intricate plans of God for the conversions of the Ethiopian eunuch, of Saul, of Tarsus.

We're going to see it again in Cornelius, the centurion, this morning. God had an intricate plan. And folks, His plan for you was no different. He thought of your conversion and planned it.

Just what instruments He would use to bring the gospel to you. What circumstances in life whereby you would be brought to an end of yourself and say, I cannot live without this God as my Savior anymore.

He planned those events, those disappointments, those heartaches, all in loving thought of you to bring you and the gospel witness together with the power of the Spirit to cause you to repent and come and trust in Jesus Christ.

What were His loving thoughts the first time you looked in faith to Jesus? How did He delight in thinking of that moment when with trembling faith you threw yourself upon Christ asking Him to save you?

[27:57] How precious were His thoughts of us then. And since our conversion, how precious are His restoring thoughts in all of our sinful wonderings, all of our backslidings, our sins, in the face of such goodness, love, and faithfulness, still He's had thoughts of pardon and mercies as new as this day is new for us who are in Christ Jesus.

Restoring thoughts, seeking thoughts, bringing back, restoring to us the joy of His salvation. precious thoughts, thoughts for your sanctification, thoughts for your perseverance to the end of life in the way of holiness.

And then His thoughts of your glorification and eternal joys at His right hand. He's preparing that future joy for you. He's been thinking about it. How precious are His thoughts of you even now wanting to be with you.

Remember Jesus' prayer to the Father? Father, I want those that You've given me to be with me where I am. They might see my glory that You've given me before the creation of the world.

His thoughts of you, Jesus' thoughts of you right now. Father, I want her here with me. I want Him here with me. Precious thoughts. Thoughts that anticipate all of our needs and supply it.

[29:20] Blessed. Here's Winslow's. Blessed it is to trace a Father's thoughts of us in our providential mercies to feel that this good, whatever it is, has come.

This mercy has been given. This table spread. This need supplied. This pressure relieved. This evil thwarted by God's careful, providential thought of us.

Trace all your circumstances back to His loving thoughts of you. He was thinking of you and so you ate. He was thinking of you and so you found grace in your time of need.

He was thinking of you and so you were kept from falling, not tempted above what you were able, but found through His grace a way of escape to stand and to survive.

There's never been a time when He was not thinking of you and there will never be a time when He is not thinking of you. Now that's a lot of thoughts, more than the grains of sand.

[30 : 25] So in all your trials, your Heavenly Father has thoughts of you. Your sympathetic High Priest Jesus has thoughts of you and your Comforter within has thoughts of you. And they can no more forget you and a mother can forget the baby at her breast.

Yes, she may forget, but I will not forget you. See, I've engraved you on the palms of my... I can't forget you. Your walls are ever before me. You're always on my mind. I'm always... I can't forget you, He says to His people.

Psalm 40 is a psalm where David finds himself in great need and his sins seem to have been the cause of it all. and he ends the psalm, I'm poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.

Here I am. I'm in need again. Again. And what is my comfort? It's just this, that the Lord is thinking of me. Winslow ends with a searching question.

He says, we've seen how precious His thoughts of us are to us. And he asks, now what are our thoughts of Him? That's a good follow-up question, isn't it?

[31 : 50] It's a mark of the ungodly that in all their thoughts there's no thought, no room for God. And it's a mark of God's children that they think upon His name.

On my bed, I remember you. I think of you through the watches of the night. It's a mark of a believer. His thoughts go back to God like carrier pigeons go back home.

There's no higher use of the mind than to use it thinking about Him, fixing our thoughts on Jesus. Think what Spirit dwells within you.

Think what Father's smile is thine. Think what Savior died to save thee, to win thee. Child of God, shouldst thou repine. And remember how precious to His heart are your thoughts of Him.

Malachi 3, Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other. That's what we're doing today. Talked with each other and the Lord listened and heard and a scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the Lord and thought upon His name.

[32 : 56] He's listening today and as He sees us thinking of Him, talking of Him, honoring Him, every thought in our mind as we sing the hymns, every single thought that runs to Christ, runs to the Spirit, runs to the Father.

He's delighting. He's writing it down in His book. He's so delighted. And there will never be a time when that will not be a cause of delight in His heart over you.

Every time we pray today, every thought that traces that prayer up to our Father, those thoughts are precious to Him.

so may we suck in all the sweetness that's found in this precious idea. How precious are your thoughts of me, O God.

In all the things in this world that would unhinge your mind, fix your mind upon Jehovah Jesus, lock your thoughts on Him, for He will keep in perfect peace Him whose mind is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.

[34 : 07] Think of Him who cannot but help you because He is thinking of you. So great, His infinite, unchanging love.

Now, I wanted to save time for us to sing our praise. David just burst into praise. How precious to me are your thoughts. And that's what we have in our grace hymns number 22.

Would you turn there with me and I'd like for us just to sing together what is a summary of our study this morning. It starts with the number 22, indulgent God, how kind are all thy ways to me.

And it starts with our dark, benighted mind was enmity against God. But it ends with your mind was filled with eternal thoughts of love to me.

So let's sing it together. Number 22. Number 22. Let's pray together. Lord, we confess we're the poor for not thinking of your thoughts of us.

[35 : 09] And so we give you thanks that you've sent such words to us to lift us up when we're low and poor and needy. Oh, we're always poor and needy.

Yet the Lord thinks of us and he knows that we're poor and needy and he knows what we need. And so we rejoice in you and we delight in your thoughts of us.

thoughts when we were lost making haste to hell. Whatever your loving thoughts were upon us from everlasting to everlasting, the Lord's love is with those who fear him.

So thank you, Lord. Open our hearts and minds to believe what you've told us and to drink in all the comfort and joy that comes from it and teach us to encourage one another with these words and be glorified in our thoughts of you today.

in Jesus' name. Amen.