
Words of Truth

Paranoia

By: Brian A. Yeager

I once knew a guy I thought was a faithful brother in Christ. There were things that often struck me as odd about this person. He always thought someone was out to get him. He has cameras around his house. He frequently goes nuts thinking someone is trying to hack his computer. His wife once blurted out their passcode for their router in front of brethren and he lost his mind over it. Any email he got asking questions he thought was someone with bad motives. I often mentioned to him he was being paranoid. He took offense to the term and, of course, thought I was attacking him each time I said that.

I was thinking of this person and this subject matter struck me. I thought it would be a good study for all of us. I started by examining what being paranoid means. Consider this definition and we will use such to study the Scriptures on this subject matter. The word "paranoia" means this: "a mental condition characterized by delusions of persecution, unwarranted jealousy, or exaggerated self-importance, typically elaborated into an organized system. It may be an aspect of chronic personality disorder, of drug abuse, or of a serious condition such as schizophrenia in which the person loses touch with reality. Suspicion and mistrust of people or their actions without evidence or justification" (New Oxford American Dictionary).

Upon reading this definition, one Scriptural point must be on the minds of us all whom know the Scriptures. Consider this quote: *"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself"* (I Timothy 6:3-5).

A paranoid person is certainly one who is bent on evil surmising. The Scriptures are aligned with the definition of paranoia in that God says this person has a corrupt mind. The English definition says such may be due to a disorder, drug abuse, schizophrenia, etc. Those things are surely descriptive of a corrupt mind. Therefore, we are going to start our applications to us all by talking about our minds.

The Mind Of A Faithful Christian

God says this: *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (II Corinthians 10:3-5). As Christians we have to have control over our thinking. This starts with

a renewed, converted mind when we obey the Gospel (Romans 12:1-3 and Ephesians 4:21-24). During our growth as Christians, we learn to surrender our thoughts to God perfectly by focusing on the things we should be thinking about (Philippians 4:6-8). We should not allow vain thoughts to reside in us (Jeremiah 4:14).

If we are fully committed to what we do and are doing the will of the Lord, our thoughts will be established (Proverbs 16:3). If we keep our minds stayed on the Lord, rather than evil surmising about everything else, we will have peace (Isaiah 26:3). Controlling our thoughts and considering the Lord in all things will keep us from incorrectly assuming things about other people or situations.

Proper Focus Of Mind Prevents Paranoid Thoughts

Those whom struggle with paranoia would do well to remember that our Lord's will is for us NOT to judge something based upon appearances (John 7:24). Think of a brother or sister who is looking out for your good spiritually and they try correcting you (Galatians 6:1 and James 5:19-20). If you are paranoid, you are going to take any action they make to help you as some sort of attack. You will consider faithful people as enemies (Galatians 4:16). False assumptions will cause you to err (Proverbs 18:13).

The Scripturally focused mind of a faithful Christian will take all we just studied and apply it. The focused mind will be capable of squeezing out the urge to think everyone is against he or she. However, there is another problem when considering a person suffering from paranoia. That person, as the defined term states, has an: "exaggerated self-importance, typically elaborated into an organized system".

If A Paranoid Person Is Puffed Up And Supported To Act In Such A Way

Take a person like Scott Parker in Overland Park, KS. He is paranoid. He has an overreaching mindset towards his importance in the kingdom (of which he is no longer a part of). His paranoia is overlooked and even excused by his disciples. By saying nothing to him they strengthen him in his error (Jeremiah 23:14 and Ezekiel 13:22). He is no longer in touch with any faithful Christians to bring him down to earth.

Arrogance does not lead to repentance (Proverbs 16:5 and Obadiah 1:3-4). When you build yourself up like everyone is against you and then find a group of people to make you their hero; you have built a village of idiots. Brethren, to avoid paranoia we have to live in reality. We have to constantly make sure we are not making things what they are not.

Conclusion

As Christians we all face enough real persecution (Matthew 10:34-37 and II Timothy 3:11-12). As Christians we all have made our fair share of enemies (Luke 6:22-23 and I Peter 4:1-5). As Christians we all have enough people saying untrue things about us (Matthew 5:10-12 and Romans 3:8). We do not need to look for enemies where there are none. If we live faithfully we do not need to make up imaginary villains in our lives. I have seen several over my years who have suffered from this mindset. As we learned from our reading of I Timothy 6:3-5, it is a sinful way to be. Don't embrace or excuse paranoia.