
THINKING ABOUT THE RIGHT THINGS

We've been studying how the peace of God guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, and looking at what it takes to maintain an attitude of inner peace. We saw that it begins by understanding who we are in Christ Jesus. It doesn't take long to realize how truly blessed we are to belong to Him. You are HIS, and He is YOURS. Understanding that significance, we can begin viewing our life situations from a grace view, or a biblical viewpoint that incorporates patience and gentle reasoning as His Spirit produces His fruit within us. As a result of understanding the grace given to us we are then able to extend grace to others. If we are having a difficult time with that, then we need to study His grace all the more.

Through God's grace He sent His Son to be our Savior. It was sheer grace that tore the veil of the temple from top to bottom so that we might be able to enter into the Holiest of places, the very throne room of God. What a sweet privilege that is. It is also His grace that provides His Spirit to teach us, may we listen to Him today.

Our lessons have talked about the fact we are not to allow anxiety into our lives by attempting to reason the how, what, when, where, and why of our situation, (even though in our natural state we are so good, or rather so bad, about doing that!) BUT, in every single thing, we are to present our needs and desires to God in prayer, and don't forget, it's with thanksgiving knowing Who we are praying to. More than likely, each of us could think of a situation right now that we need to apply this to. Our minds must be re-trained so as not to think about life in any other way than from His godly perspective.

As we look further in the fourth chapter of Philippians, Paul emphasizes some things on which we should focus our thinking on in order for the peace of God to have its effect on us, and it's not the how, what, when, where, and why of our situation.

Take a look at today's text, Philippians 4:8-11

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right,
whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute,
if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me,
practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me;
indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content
in whatever circumstances I am." (NASB)

Here's a little exercise for you - go back and either circle the things we are to think on, or write them down. (I've already gotten you started by circling "true".)

That's quite a list, wouldn't you agree? Paul is asking them to "think." Now, I'm quite sure he knows of what he speaks since sitting in prison. It's pretty apparent he had lots of time to think. I'm also certain these words were pretty significant to him. They may have been his lifeline, so to speak, as he sat day in, day out, not knowing when or if he would ever be released. Paul had to keep his thinking straight. We need to also. We know the kind of mental games we can begin to play when our circumstances are difficult. Paul says, when that's going on, don't just follow your normal reaction, instead, if you want God's peace in it, change your thinking and think on these things.

How would facing life's issues be different if we did?

How would your "self-talk" or "stinkin'-thinkin'" as one speaker called it, how would that all change if you had the things you circled above uppermost in your thoughts about that situation?

What is a primary concern in your life currently? Write it out:

How would your fear, your worry and concern change if those words from Philippians 4:8 were placed into the equation? Re-write it with the focus on the words above:

They say that 85% of what we worry about will never even come true. Seems like we waste a lot of time and frustration, don't we?

Transforming our thoughts, renewing our thinking, changing how we think about things comes, that comes as we accept God's word as truth.

Paul says to think on, "Whatever is true" - In this day and age of "relative truth" we can often be led astray. It is astounding that in this period of time that we are living that God's word has been taught to be irrelevant and archaic - let me speak boldly - THAT IS A LIE! The REAL TRUTH is God's word is timeless. He, after all, is the Creator of all, including time! He was before there was time and will be here long after.

You see, there is no one nor no thing that is higher than the God who created all things. Mankind may have its own bias and preference but there is only one TRUTH, and it's God's! When we degrade it, we degrade the truth. That is exactly what has happened in our culture, especially in our education systems who have placed their worldly "knowledge" above that of the Bible. The word of God has been misused, misquoted, degraded, deemed outdated by those who choose not to believe it. And the world has bought into it. Sadly, much of the church has bought into it, too.

If you want to know the truth, it's in the written word of God, the Holy Bible. The "Holy Bible." We don't call it that much anymore, do we? Perhaps we have forgotten the hallowedness of this manuscript put together by 40 men over a 2000 year span, written as the Apostle Peter said, by

"...men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Peter 1:21)

God's word is truth and immutable. It alone is, and must be, the standard of all truth. We have to be careful to not follow after man-made tradition or words that seek to change that truth, but rather, please, let us be consumed by the word of God so that it permeates our life.

When a situation arises,

"take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Change your mindset and don't react as the world would deem a normal response; shock them all, and bless yourself in the process, as you respond as Christ would.

"Transform your thoughts by the renewing of your mind" as Paul says in Romans 12:2.

Paul says, thinking on whatever is true, whatever is honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, any excellence or worthy of praise, dwell on these things. Not the ugly, distorted, worldly ways, but looking upward to view things from a different perspective. Our mindset should be that of Christ's for that is where real peace dwells.

We looked earlier at the protection that we have as God's peace stands between us and others, a buffer and shield, a reconciler of relationship. That same perspective must be in mind when we look at the world around us. If the lens of our life is focused through God's viewpoint our world will look different, like looking into a kaleidoscope we begin seeing the different facets and colors that He sees when He looks at our circumstances. Seeing things from His vantage we find that our problems aren't nearly as big as they seem when we look at

them from our earthly angle. His view is much more vast.

Before we stop for the day, take time to read and write out Psalm 139:17

Let that soak in and believe it Dear One. He cares for you.

REVIEW

~ We are not to allow anxiety into our lives by attempting to reason the how, what, when, where, and why of our situation

~ We need to re-focus our thinking in order to experience the peace of God. Philippians 4:8-11

~ God's Word is not outdated, it is THE truth. 2 Peter 1:21

~ Have the mindset of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5, Romans 12:2