



2025 Weekly Devotions

Week of: August 25th -31st

Sermon: August 24th



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
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August 25

Philippians 4:8

When considering the topic of manhood, we would be wise to admit that the potential topics are far too numerous to hope to cover in one Sunday or a week's worth of devotions. This means that I had to be selective in what was said during the sermon and discerning as to what would be most helpful to bring to light in this week's Points to Ponder devotions.

In my experience, one of the key areas that dictates a male's ability to be a faithful Christian man is grounded in his thought life. The simple truth is that an unguarded mind is the greatest vulnerability a man can allow. One of the most disturbing things I've noticed in ministry is that most Christians in general, and men in particular, seem to think no differently than those around them. We use the same terminology, watch the same nonsense, excuse the same sins and operate with the same presuppositions that the lost world employs.

This phenomenon has been pointed out by many over the years but, perhaps, the clearest articulation of the problem was delivered to us by Harry Blamires in his wonderful work entitled "The Christian Mind". In the introduction to the book Blamires writes, "The Christian mind has succumbed to the secular drift with a degree of weakness and nervelessness unmatched in Christian history, Christians seem to leave their billions of brain cells unguarded- and undisciplined."

The book goes on to articulate the necessity of choosing to dwell upon those things which are good while consistently, and fervently, opting to disallow unbiblical and therefore immoral thoughts and stimulations that encourage such thoughts.

Blamires treatment of the topic of the Christian mind is helpful for its cultural observations and clear challenges, but his thesis is not new. Instead, the Apostle Paul states, quite clearly, that the Christian must choose to guard his mind. This is the entire point of our passage for today. As we move through this week, we will spend several days considering some of the implications and applications of this jam-packed verse upon our Christian lives but let us begin with this simple observation: the Lord intends for you and I to purposefully think about the right things.

Those who are in Christ have been given new life, filled with the Spirit and, therefore, empowered to be faithful and holy. This means that we have the resources we need to stand against the enemy. It further means that we are responsible for faithfulness in our thought life and this entails effort on our part! Men, you are not a victim of your mind, you are to be the guard and guide of your mind and only when that takes place will we have any hope of being faithful.

August 26

Philippians 4:8

Yesterday we covered the general truth of Paul's exhortation to the church (and by extension all Christian men) as recorded in Philippians 4:8. The very fact that Paul writes these words to believers implies the ability of those who are in Christ to heed his instructions. Stated differently, Paul would not instruct Christians to think on specific things if they were not capable of completing the task! Our job, therefore, is to ensure that we are obedient in our thought life in general, but what does this look like?

The first answer is that Paul's instructions imply a discriminatory ethic to our thinking. What I mean is that the command to think only on that which is "good" or "holy" demands our ability to recognize what qualifies and what does not! R. Kent Hughes says it this way, "A Christian mind demands conscious negation; a Christian mind is impossible without the discipline of refusal."

There is no way to think on that which is holy unless you know what holiness entails and eliminate those things that assail your mind which are not holy! This means that faithfulness in our thoughts requires a working knowledge of Scripture and a commitment to cast out the things that do not qualify.

Men, if you are constantly filling your mind with filth, there is no way that you can be faithful to this command. The idea that wicked, sinful nonsense can continue to enter into your brain without any effect is absurd. In a real sense, you are what you think! Whatever you let in and dwell upon has an impact on your very soul.

If you are constantly listening to people yell and scream and talk about all that is wrong with the world, we ought not be surprised when we are cynical and unloving towards the world around us. When we are subjecting ourselves to filthy language and lewd scenes or "friends" who constantly speak in demeaning and sexually suggestive ways, we shouldn't be all that shocked when temptations to derogatory speech or sensuality pop up in our minds.

Conversely, the implication of Paul's exhortation here is to guard ourselves from such things. We must understand what the Bible defines as good and we must vehemently and consistently see to it that we are dwelling upon such marvelous, glorious, uplifting and sanctifying truths. The result of such faithful thinking, according to Paul is peace and peace flows from intimacy with the Father.

August 27

Philippians 4:8

While the first step in obtaining an obedient thought life is refusing to think about the wrong things, the second, and most important, step is dwelling upon that which is good and holy. The term that Paul uses which is translated as “think” is a word that is often rendered in the English as “logarithm”. It denotes a deliberate and prolonged deliberation as if one is weighing some kind of mathematical or philosophical problem.

The point that Paul is driving at is that good and holy and right things are not to momentarily enter our minds, they are to consume our minds so that we are constantly considering and meditating upon what is true as we go through our day. The Word of God is the source of such things, and this means that we should be always considering and conversing about the truths of Scripture.

The Bible commends this in many passages (see Psalm 1 and 119 as examples) and for good reason! The Bible has a majestic power by virtue of its inspiration of God, to inform and transform our lives and this power is available for both men and women! Fellas, we must not give into the idea that reading and thinking upon Scripture is solely a feminine pursuit! Godliness flows from biblical study!

There were many great men in history who loved the Word of God while being courageous and fruitful in the “real world”. One example would be General William K. Harrison. Harrison was the most decorated soldier in the 30th infantry division which General Dwight Eisenhower rated as the number one infantry division in World War II. He went on to decorated service in Korea and various overseas posts.

According to his own testimony, at the age of 20 Harrison began reading the Old Testament once per year and the New Testament four times each calendar year. Even during WWII, Harrison could be found reading his Bible when the opportunity presented itself to the point that he returned from the war on schedule to complete his reading for the year! At the age of 90, his eyesight no longer permitted him to read for himself, so he had others read him the Old Testament 70 additional times and the New Testament another 280!

The effect of this imbibing of the truth of the Word was palpable in his life. Harrison’s associates claimed that his life was characterized by humility and wisdom. Harrison knew what to do and how to respond to all of life’s circumstances (whether in battle or in his personal life) with an uncanny insight and a consistent righteousness. He was sought after by soldiers from all backgrounds and honored as a brave and wise man.

The point of the story is fairly simple... men if we desire to be holy and wise and honorable, there is no better course of action than to think on the right things in the faith that our thinking on Scripture will yield a practical and spiritual wisdom that is both necessary for obedience and desirable for a God-honoring and blessed life.

August 28

Job 27:5

Biblical knowledge and faithful thinking are key to a Christian man's obedience but they are hardly sufficient. It is possible to know the right things, and even to think about the right things, without DOING the right things. Perhaps the greatest example of this would be Ananias and Sapphira. This infamous couple is discussed in Acts 5. They are known for their dishonesty before the Lord. While they knew the right thing(s) to do (in this case that would be giving to the furtherance of the Kingdom through the local church) and while they clearly thought about the importance of giving, their decision to be dishonest before the Lord rendered their partial gift totally worthless.

The problem that Ananias and Sapphira had, amongst others, was that they were not people of integrity. Integrity is crucial to our faithfulness as men because integrity is the attribute of those who are genuinely faithful to the Lord in all arenas and all settings. The word integrity is derived from the Latin language and it means "wholeness, entireness or completeness". The idea is simple enough, a person with integrity is wholly devoted or faithful regardless of the situation or impact.

Typically, integrity is discovered in moments of privacy. My wife has a famous saying that she repeats to our children often. She reminds them that "integrity is what you do when no one is watching". This is a true statement but it assumes a horizontal reality. The truth is that people are not always watching us but we are always living our lives "Coram Deo" (before the face of God).

Godly, Christian men are men of integrity for the precise reason that our entire lives have been given to us by God to steward for His glory and to be lived underneath His watchful and approving eye. The truth is that we learn more about who we are and what we believe when we think we can get away with something. Its relatively easy to be faithful underneath the scrutiny of the watching public but it is far more illuminating and indicative of a man's heart to know what he does in private.

Many "Christian" men talk the talk in public but far fewer live according to their own stated standards in private. This is the measure of the level of our faith because our private lives are just as much under the directive of the Lordship of Christ as our public persona. Men, pray today that the Lord would convict you of private sin, seek His forgiveness and seek to make much of Him in all arenas of your life. If you are struggling, confess your sin to God (and perhaps even a trusted friend) and ask the Lord to remind you of truth, convict you of sin and empower you to walk in holiness.

The simple truth is that our integrity, or lack thereof, will almost always eventually show. At some point, something is going to escape the private corners of your lives. In those moments, God will either gain glory through your holiness or you will be embarrassed. May we seek to live every moment in faithfulness now so that we can stand with dignity and transparency before the Lord and our world for God's glory.

August 29

James 3:1-8 & Matthew 19:26

If we were to attempt to formulate a list of all of the potential pitfalls that exist for a godly man, the ditch of inappropriate speech would have to be foremost. You can ruin more circumstances and relationships with your tongue than any other entity.

If you have lived for any length of time, you are aware that words endure. Hughes once famously said, “words do not dissolve mere organs and nerves but souls! This world is populated by walking human caskets because countless lives have been dissolved and sucked empty by another’s words.” I find this to be exceedingly true in ministry. There are more “walking wounded” who have suffered at the hands of an angry, vindictive or critical father than one might realize.

To further complicate the matter, the Bible tells us that it is “impossible” for any human being to tame the tongue! The matter seems bleak. If the tongue produces the kind of damage that can last, if it can start fires (according to James) that we cannot put out and if we are unable to control the tongue, then we seem doomed to fail. Indeed, many men live as if they are doomed in this regard. Some have given up on even trying to tame their tongues because they have realized the impossibility of the task. To be sure, few would voice those words, instead we hide behind statements that seem noble or at least acceptable. How many blunt, angry men have told us that they “say what they think” and that you don’t have to wonder where they are coming from as if saying every word that comes to mind is a badge of honor?

In contrast to this kind of misguided machismo, the Bible would agree that we cannot tame the tongue, but it would also teach that we have to! Is this a contradiction? Only if we look at the situation through a purely humanistic lens. You see, Christ is able to do what we cannot do. Through His death and resurrection, He has made it possible for you and I to be reconciled to God the Father and this reconciliation includes paving the way for the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower those who believe. This means that what is impossible for man is made possible in and through the Lord!

Jesus reminds us in Matthew 19 that there are things that are impossible for man but very possible for the Lord and this would include our speech. Men, it is your duty to tame your tongue, but you cannot do it in your own strength! Instead, the Lord must move in your lives, and He will do so as you pursue Him. As you imbibe Scripture, pray in communion, walk in fellowship with other believers and grow in your affection for Christ, He will change you in ways you cannot even fathom. Don’t fall victim to the mentality that nothing can be done, instead press into the Lord and trust that He can do that which you could never hope to accomplish.

August 30

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 10

Today's devotion is going to be about a subject that might seem rather taboo in our culture today. Many people despise even the mention of this word, and others act as if it should be eradicated from society altogether! Millions seek to avoid it, and others despise having to do it and yet Scripture commends and even commands its pursuit. The subject is that of work.

Men, you have been made to work. In fact, the Bible would teach us that work was something that existed before the fall of man and the subsequent cursing of the world. This means that work was not a product of sin or evil, work was, and is, good! We know that work is good because God described all of creation as good and that included his command (given in Genesis 2) to work.

The Bible would go so far as to tell us that work is necessary for the sustenance of mankind and, therefore, it should be required for provision. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians during a time in which poor theology had crept into the church. Evidently, there was a group of individuals who were advancing the idea that work was pointless, and to be avoided, because time was short and Jesus was going to return any minute. This led to a group of men who decided to lay out of work, choosing to leech off of the provisions that others had won through their labor. In light of this circumstance, Paul informed the church that those who didn't work should not eat!

The point is that we were created to work. While it is true that women and men are both called to work, that work often looks different. In particular, men are called to provide for their families by perfecting and using the skills that God has given to advance His Kingdom and supply goods and services to the surrounding culture. Work is the way we support ourselves and it is also the way that we contribute to the wellbeing of our society. A farmer supports his own family by growing and selling a crop, but he supports many other families with the fruit (pun intended) of his labor.

Men, I desire for you to see your work as a service to others and to the Lord. Those who are diligent in their occupation are working to help humanity obey the mandate to exercise dominion over the world. We are not only seeking a paycheck, we are seeking the good of our fellow man and the glory of God and this makes work both wonderful and imperative. My favorite quote on the topic was given by David Ben-Gurion. Writing on the nobility of work he penned these words, "We do not consider manual work as a curse, or a bitter necessity, not even as a means of making a living. We consider it as a high human function. As a basis of human life... Men ought to be proud of it."

August 31

Hebrews 12:1

If you are going to be a godly man (or woman) in this culture, you are going to have to endure some very difficult circumstances. There is simply no easy path to godliness and faithfulness in a lost and fallen world. This is why perseverance must be evident in your lives as godly men!

Perseverance is a hallmark of faithful achievement. Any story of Christian success includes a substantial section on perseverance. Edwards persevered through countless physical afflictions, Spurgeon persevered through theological conflicts and the betrayal of his brother, Churchill persevered through a grueling war with Nazi Germany, Paul persevered through various afflictions, Peter persevered through his own sin and persecution from others, and the list goes on.

The author of Hebrews encapsulates all of these stories as he reminds us that we are running a race and this race requires perseverance! You will notice an interesting synergy between what we began the week discussing and our closing devotion as Hebrews exhorts us to lay aside those sins which entangle us. If we are going to persevere in the race, we cannot carry the extra weight of disobedience! The first step of perseverance is holiness but that is not all that we are exhorted to pursue in this precious little passage.

Indeed, there is much to do after we lay aside sin! The author here uses the metaphor of running a race. Laying aside sin is only in preparation for the race ahead. While we cannot run the race with besetting sin, we must realize that running the race requires diligence and commitment even after we lay aside sin.

The point is that the Christian life requires us to stick to our walk, even when it is difficult. Men, this means you must run the race of leading your home amongst the challenges. You must run the race of discipling your children when you are tired. You must run the race of walking with integrity and making disciples and faithfully serving the body of Christ and all of this is challenging!

Races yield exhaustion. Every worldclass runner knows that you must push through the urge to quit if you are going to win the prize. In the same way, we must run our race with perseverance, looking to the prize of Christ. Why would we exhaust ourselves in work and live with integrity when others don't and study the Scriptures when we don't feel like it and refuse to imbibe the filth on television and love our wives and children? The answer is that we do these things because we believe that the finish line brings glorious reward! This is the motivation for faithfulness in our walk, and it is one that lies just ahead.