

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Let Your Mind Dwell on These Things Philippians 4:8

We live in a day of conflict. I am sure that we are all aware of the drama that is now being played out on the world stage between Iraq and the United States. This conflict has reached such an intense level that nations throughout Europe, Asia and the Middle East are being forced to choose sides. There is also conflict on the national level with opposing sides debating the merits of the president's economic stimulus package. There are conflicts raging on the state level as governors and legislators are trying to figure out the best way to cut their budgets.

There are conflicts on every hand but there is one conflict that is presently going on which is largely unnoticed but which is of great importance and that is the battle for our minds. The basic question is, who is going to control our thoughts? Is it going to be the world, which is ruled by Satan or will it be the Lord.

There is no battle more important than this battle for the simple reason that the outcome of this battle will not only dramatically impact how we live our lives in the here and now but in the hereafter as well. Does the following statement sound familiar to you?

“Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny”

There is a battle taking place for our minds and whether we like it or not we will be involved in this battle. We will be involved in it because our minds are in fact the focal point of the conflict. And whether we like it or not, we will find ourselves aligned with one side or the other either by choice or by default.

Who are you aligned with? The answer to this question will largely dictate who is presently in control of your mind and therefore who is in control of your life. The passage of Scripture that we will be considering this weekend addresses this issue of alignment and therefore ultimately the issue of control.

We have been examining **Philippians 4:4-9**. This passage gives us a series of exhortations. The first exhortation that we have considered is in **Philippians 4:4** “**Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, rejoice!**” The second exhortation that we have considered is in **Philippians 4:5** “**Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.**” The third exhortation that we have considered is in **Philippians 4:6** “**Be anxious for nothing.**”

We have now examined three different exhortations in **Philippians 4:4-9: (1) Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice (2) Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men and (3) Be anxious for nothing.** This weekend we will go on to a fourth exhortation.

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We find this fourth exhortation in **Philippians 4:8**. Let me read this passage for you **“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, let your mind dwell on these things.** What is the fourth exhortation that we find in **Philippians 4:8**? **“Let your mind dwell on these things.”**

I am hopeful that this weekend’s message will help us not only to appreciate the fact that there is an unrelenting battle taking place for the control of our minds but hopefully that we will know what we need to do in order to align ourselves with Christ in this battle and are committed to doing it.

Therefore the question that I would like us to answer this weekend is “What do we need to do in order to align ourselves with Christ in His battle for our minds?” And there are a couple of things that I would like you to consider.

We need to make sure that we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Let us read the exhortation one more time. What is Paul’s exhortation to Christians at Philippi? **“Let your mind dwell on these things.”** The reason why Paul could actually give this command to the Philippians is because the Philippians possessed the mind of Christ. If the Philippians did not possess the mind of Christ, any effort to dwell on the things that Paul outlined in this verse would have been utterly worthless in establishing Christ’s control over their thinking.

The reason why Paul could give this exhortation to the Philippians is because they possessed a mind that could dwell on the things that he had outlined for them in **verse 8** and have a good result. Their minds were not depraved, their minds were not blind, their minds were not ignorant, their minds were not foolish.

When a person is joined to Christ by the baptizing work of the Spirit, he is joined to Christ and therefore to the mind of Christ(1 Corinthians 12:13). Does this mean that we have Christ’s brain? Of course not. Does this mean that we have lost our ability to form thoughts that would be in contradiction to His thoughts? Of course not.

Having the mind of Christ makes it possible for us to be controlled by the thinking of Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:12-16). This is spelled out for us in **1 Corinthians 2:12-16.**

Turn in your Bibles to **1 Corinthians 2** and let us begin reading at **verse 12** **“Now we (Christians) have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God.”** Of course we know that this is the Holy Spirit. Why have we received the Holy Spirit according to this passage? What does the verse go on to say? **“That we might know the things freely given to us by God.”** But now we have to ask the next logical question.

How can we know what has been freely given to us by God? The Spirit will reveal that to us as God makes His truths available. But how do His truths become available? God’s truths are made available to Christians through the teaching ministry of the apostles.

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We see this in **verse 13** when Paul goes on to say “**which things we**” referring to the apostles “**also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.**” The words that the apostles spoke were inspired and when Christians who are indwelt and filled with the Holy Spirit consider those words, which are recorded for us in the Bible, they can potentially, through the ministry of the Spirit, become convinced that they are true and can get very excited about them.

Over the last several weeks we considered the words of the Apostle Paul. Do you remember those words? What did he say, “**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**” Hopefully as you considered those words you became excited and began to think about how you might apply those truths to your life. If you are a Christian at least this is what potentially could have happened.

But not everyone can get excited about the Scriptures. Let us continue to read “**(14) But the natural man...**” or in other words the unsaved man “**...does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.**” The natural man lacks the inner capacity that is provided by the Holy Spirit to grasp God’s truths. They are either nonsense to him or they have no appetite to apply them. If an unsaved man were here the past several weeks while we considered **Philippians 4:6-7** it would have been an exercise in futility for him. The time considering God’s word would not have particularly impacted him, either because he would have no clue what was being said or he would have no interest in applying those truths to his life. For them the message of the world would be more relevant in dealing with the problem of anxiety than what Paul said in **Philippians 4:6-7**.

If we are going to align ourselves with Christ in His battle for our minds then it begins by us possessing the Spirit of God who makes it possible for us to grasp the truths of God’s word. Another way of saying this would be, if we are going to align ourselves with Christ in His battle for our minds then it begins with us possessing the mind of Christ. Look at **verse 16** “**For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.**” Possessing the Spirit of God, and therefore the mind of Christ, makes it possible for the Christian to align himself with Christ in the battle for his mind.

But we are not done. Just because a Christian who has the mind of Christ can align Himself with Christ in the battle for his mind doesn’t mean that he has. There is something else that is needed.

We who possess the mind of Christ also need to be committed to thinking right thoughts if we are going to align ourselves with Christ in His battle. There are many Christians who do in fact possess the mind of Christ who have the potential of aligning themselves with Christ in the battle for their minds but who in fact have not done so. It is not enough for Christians to have the right mind we must also be committed to having the right thoughts. This commitment to right thinking allows the Spirit of God to fill us and to make God’s truths come alive for us so we can think on right things. But what are those right things? Let us again read **Philippians 4:8**, “**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, let your mind dwell on these things.**”

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Paul is telling us that we should dwell on what is true rather than on what is false. Paul is telling us to dwell on the things that are honorable rather than dishonorable. Paul is telling us to dwell on things that are pure rather than on the things that are impure. Paul is telling us to dwell on the things that are lovely rather than unlovely. Paul is telling us to dwell on things of good report, in other words to dwell on things that are judged good by fellow Christians rather than on things that are not judged as good by our fellow Christians. If there is any moral excellence or any item worthy of praise, these should be the things that we are thinking on. These are the right things to think on.

But now we get to the hard question. How can we know when something is true rather than false. How can we know when something is honorable rather than dishonorable? How can we know that something is pure rather than impure? How can we make the distinctions that we need to make in order to think on the right things.

We can distinguish what we should be thinking on from what we shouldn't be thinking on through Bible meditation. "Let your mind dwell on these things" is inseparably linked with Bible meditation. In fact the thoughts we should be dwelling on and which are listed in Philippians 4:8 are the thoughts that flow from Bible meditation.

Let us again read **Philippians 4:8**, "**Let your mind dwell on these things.**" The word translated "dwell" (LOGIZOMAI) means to think continually. Paul is calling the Philippians to meditate, to give continuous attention to, to mull over, to be occupied with "these things" or in other words the things that he has spelled out in the verse. Such as the things that are true, right pure, lovely and so on. But this is not the only time that we are called to meditate, to give continuous attention to, to mull over to be occupied with something. The Lord calls us to think on the "Scriptures" day and night. Listen to the words of Joshua to the nation of Israel in **Joshua 1:8**, "**This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate upon it day and night.**" As we meditate on the Scriptures it will become the foundation from which right thinking flows.

How can we be dwelling on all the things spelled out for us in **Philippians 4:8** and dwelling on the Scriptures at the same time if these things are not linked. The answer is simple we can't. The thoughts we should be dwelling on and which are listed in Philippians 4:8 are the thoughts that flow from Bible meditation.

Let me ask you this question, have you been meditating on the words of Paul in **Philippians 4:6-7**? Have you been mulling over, pondering, giving continued attention to Paul's exhortation to be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God? If you have then what kind of thinking has flowed from that meditation? Have you become more sensitized to your sin of anxiousness, thinking to yourself when an anxious thought comes to your mind, "this is sin!" Have you through your meditation on Philippians 4:6-7 become more aware of your need to cast those cares upon the Lord leading you to think when a care or concern arises, thinking, "I need to pray and cast this care upon the Lord!"

Now let me ask you another question. Are the thoughts being produced by your meditation the type of thoughts that we are to be thinking on according to **Philippians 4:8**? And I would have to think that the answer would have to be yes. These thoughts produced through meditation on God's word are true, they are right, they are pure, they are lovely and they are of good repute. They are excellent and they are worthy of praise.

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Certainly the thoughts produced through Bible meditation would be far superior to the thoughts produced in the minds of people, even professing Christians, who are preoccupied with the things of this world.

And as we mull over the Scripture, as we continually give attention to the Scripture, the process of meditation will produce many different thoughts and those thoughts will move us closer to the thinking of Christ.

CONCLUSION

There are many conflicts in the world today but there is no conflict that is more important to us than the conflict being waged for the control of our mind.

Paul is calling Christians in Philippians 4:8 who have the mind of Christ, to align themselves with Christ by committing themselves to the pursuit of right thinking. Hopefully your response to this call is very positive. But don't think that you can dwell on the things he has called you to dwell on in this passage without making a commitment to Bible meditation. To mulling over and giving your attention to the truths of God's word.

What will be the benefit for us in doing this? Let me read for you **Psalms 1, “Blessed in the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers** (blessed is the man who is not preoccupied with this world and the thinking of the world) **(2) but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. (3) And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”**

The Christian who aligns Himself with Christ in this life through a commitment to right thinking will not be disappointed (Psalms 1).