

# **“Whatsoever Things & The Example of Paul”**

**Dale Menzies      Philippians 4:8-9**

**Sermon – Sun. Feb. 18, 2007**

## **Background / Review – Uncommonly Bound**

Book of Philippians –This contemporary letter to the church in Philippi, was one of his most personal letters. And it has hit me between the eyes many times. It has a joyful spirit, with no sharp rebukes of the congregation, or no big glaring problem that it was addressing. The warnings are cautionary and preventative in nature, but it is so relevant to our people today.

The frequent emphasis on Jesus Christ, explains the underlying relationship that Paul had to his readers. He was bound to them in an uncommon way – knit together in faith to Christ.

The names Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, Lord Jesus Christ, Lord Jesus, Jesus, Christ, Lord, and Savior, occur 51 times in the 104 verses of the letter.

Love it

And there is such a call to Sanctification – Holy Living.

That is how we can glorify God and reflect the character of Jesus Christ to others.

We too have been bound in an uncommon way.

Knit together in faith to each other through the work of Jesus Christ.

And we have the very presence of God, His Holy Spirit who walks with us, and keeps us on the path to living for God.

Too often our Christian walk becomes just a creedal formula or dead works rather than **a living reality** in our hearts and minds.

Jesus Christ has paved the way for us.

We must choose to live in the **living reality**.

**Hebrews 10:20**

**by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body**

So let's read the passage that Jeff gave to me to teach today.

**Philippians 4:8-9**

**8Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or**

**praiseworthy—think about such things. 9Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.**

Prayer.

**This passage is powerful!**

**It may seem like a light stroll in the park, but not necessarily so.**

**Today before we go into our passage, I want to set it up with the context of where we've been in chapter 4 so far. To get us back into it.**

Look at verses 1-3 – Stand firm in the Lord, and agree together in the Lord – stay in unity with the body above all else.

Vs. 4-6 Rejoice in the Lord, Let your gentleness be evident to all. We'll see that again in today's passage.

Vs.6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. V. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and you minds in Christ Jesus."

Let's stop there for a minute. I want us to reflect on a couple things that lead up to today, and see a set of book-ends.

**Notice the bookends around today's passage.**

**V. 7 the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds**

**v. 9 and the God of Peace will be with you.**

First: V. 7 the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds.

There is a need for a garrison of peace around our hearts and minds.

Wow. A garrison – like a walled tower.

I have visited some of the capitals and castles of Europe, and the cities would build towers for people to find safety in. Like the song we sang today based on [Proverbs 18:10](#)

The **name** of the **LORD** is a strong **tower**; the righteous run to it and are safe.

We need that safety – like a tower or a garrison – to guard our hearts and bring peace, and preserve peace.

V. 7 the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds.

The heart in scripture is the inner source and spring of life, and when we guard our heart, the inner-side of our personality and emotions and passions, then our minds go along with it. The mind is the outflow from this source in terms of definite plans which we entertain, imaginations which captivate us and so on.

The mind is the outflow of the heart, and when the mind is astray, it will lead the heart astray.

When a new life is formed as a new child of God, we encourage them to study and learn in their minds all about God's love and grace and wrath and plans and purposes.

The mind renewed in Christ will act in accordance with the will of God.

## **Romans 12:1-2**

1Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual<sup>[a]</sup> act of worship. 2Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

J. A. Motyer writes:

"It is the mind renewed in Christ which is the growing point of the child of God. Since, therefore, the outward impact of the church upon the world depends upon its own inward unity, member to member, and since this in turn depends upon sanctified individuals, the first and most crying need is for a transformation and keeping of hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, lest they go the way of the enemies of the cross of Christ and individual degeneration jeopardize the cause of the gospel."<sup>1</sup>

And look here in verse 6 & 7 "In everything, by prayer and asking with thanksgiving, give your requests to God. And the **peace** that passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds.

There are 2 promises here.

First – the peace that passes all understanding – the promise that our lives will be touched with the mark of the supernatural!

The God of Peace is the God of our salvation

His Powerful and Victorious work.

We need the peace of God to guard our hearts and mind. We need that peace when we might least expect it.

We have been praying for 4 weeks now for Annie Sullivan. We don't understand it, but God gives strength when we need it.

I was telling my Mom and Dad on the phone yesterday what passage I was preaching today, and they reminded me that that is one of the passages that helped them through the time that my brother was in the hospital for 6 months! God we need your peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Motyer, J. A., *The Message of Philippians*, page 207

And now to Verse 8: Finally, may not necessarily mean the last thing, but in Paul's writing he often uses this as a "next" as he is teaching. (1 Thes.4:1, 2 Cor.12:11, Phil. 3:1) or, here is the next set of admonitions or encouragements.

Finally, **adelphoi**, brethren & friends, dearly beloved. Mixing the gentleness with the important exhortation to come ---

In order to live the Christian life and desiring to bring glory in our lives to Jesus Christ,

Believers should keep on thinking and doing what is morally and spiritually excellent.

This involves centering our minds on exalted things and then putting them into practice, based on the life and teaching of the Apostle Paul.

**These are an exhortation or precepts for our thoughts.**

**Discipline for our minds.**

In verse 8, Paul sets up a veritable charter for Christian thought in a memorable verse.

One of the commentary says that Paul deliberately puts these virtues in a sequenced rhetoric. Possibly this was a common day list or sequence or mantra. The list of virtues that Paul asks the Philippians and us to "think about" is not a distinctively Christian list, and could have been embraced by many right-thinking people in ancient times. Paul seems to place special emphasis on the breadth or collection of all these qualities by repeatedly using the indefinite adjective "Whatever".

In fact the "whatever" is used in an interesting way in this verse – "all things", "everything" "every part" "in totality"

He tells the Philippians to look for the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy everywhere around them and in all things, and to ponder the things in which these qualities are exemplified. This is not an exclusively Christian list.

Frank Thielman writes: "Perhaps Paul knows that since the Philippians are being persecuted by the society around them, they will be tempted to reject everything outside the church as indelibly tainted with evil. If so, then this list, with its admonition to look for the virtues (ex: excellence) in the wider world, reminds the Philippians that although society sometimes seems hostile and evil, it is still part of God's world and contains much good that the believer can affirm."<sup>2</sup>

Let's look at some of these virtues

And for me it is helpful to look at the virtue itself, and the negative corollary.

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<sup>2</sup> Thielman, Frank, *The NIV Application Commentary: Philippians*, p.220-1

## **Whatever is:**

**True** has a sense of what is valid, reliable accurate and honest – the opposite would be whatever is false.

This one is pretty basic. This characterizes God

Rom 3:4 says "God is true", and that verse immediately went to the fact that God did not lie, and man is often a liar. This whatever is true, can be related to truth in speech.

Proverbs 12, 13, 14 full of this concept (actually all of Proverbs could be quoted to go along with each or these whatevers.

Prov. 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.

Example of why this is important:

Plumb line when building a house or hanging wallpaper (fight starter!)

If our starting point is not true, the offset will grow exponentially.

We laid some square tiles in our playhouse a couple of years ago.

So if you are filling in your note sheet. Whatever is true, the positive is that which is truthful, honest, etc. the Negative would falseness lying or deceit.

## **Noble**

A quality in someone or something that makes them worthy of respect. Paul is the only one in the NT that uses this word, but it was a favorite of his. Often he used this to talk about church officers, like elders, deacons, and ministry leaders that were obviously respected.

Why is this important. Well as a church leader – it is very important.

A leader is to be above reproach. Not even an accusation that is flung at them could have the possibility of sticking.

Current issue at a sister church – many churches have fallen because of not enough attention to matters of guarding integrity and respect.

About things – what would be some things that would be noble to think about. Ask for suggestions.

Positive – worthy of respect. Negative – shifty, flighty, unreliable.

## **Right**

This refers to what is upright or just, conformable to God's standards, and thus worthy of his approval.

"Find out what pleases the Lord" Ephesians 5:8-14:

"<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness,

righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for it is light that makes everything visible."

Obviously the opposite is right verses wrong. But there are different types of being right.

There is the technical right and wrong, then there are the ethical rights and wrongs, and the moral rights and wrongs.

There are so many variables and so many choices in our society, that this is something to hold on to. To guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Why, because there is a slippery slope that follows if we begin to rationalize and

Now for each person there has to be personal choice, but for the good of the whole, we need to uphold a strong standard of whatever is right and wrong. We need to teach right and wrong to our children, and Paul says here to think about it as part of our daily walk.

Think about what is the right thing to do in various situations, so that when you are faced with the split second decision, we are ready to answer.

Movies – Nazism, Holocaust, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and how as a Pastor in pre-war Germany, he had to make decisions for what was right.

## **Pure**

This emphasizes moral purity and includes in some contexts the more restricted sense of "chaste"

Obviously the opposite is a mind filled with impurity and filthiness.

This is an area that we are so attacked in our day and age. TV, movies, books, internet, and just at school...

Our young people have to be so carefully taught about purity and holiness.

Are we telling our children and young people why we want them to remain pure. Are we encouraging our men and women to remain pure and holy.

All ages have to think about purity. It is very easy to fall into temptation, and even older adults are prone to this.

Pornography, internet, business affairs, I see the consequences of people's actions as a pastoral counselor, and it is very harsh.

If we want to remain pure and holy before the Lord, we need to set up hedges and

We need to think about how easy it is to fall, and it should scare us into preparing our minds ahead of time.

Think about things above, and it will help you to think about the good and the positive elements of purity, and you will remain pure. I find that

seeking the Holy Spirit to fill me daily, helps me to remain pure in both body and mind. For me, the seeking of the Holy Spirit is the anti-temptation mode.

Earlier I talked about guarding our minds, well we may need to build some hedges around our life to keep temptation out and to keep our wandering minds contained. I counsel couples that they need to value their marriage enough that they set specific hedges around their own yard. Example of Pastoral and ministry leaders policies about being with people of the opposite gender alone, and always having 2 adults in every kids room.

### ***Whatever is Lovely***

Ah yes, this is a lovely pursuit. This greek word here is only found here in this one spot in the whole New Testament. The only other similarity is in the Septuagint greek translation of the Old Testament, in Esther 5:2 when Esther was found favorable in the eyes of King Xerxes.

The thought here is that we need to think about things that are pleasing, agreeable, or amiable. Some commentaries relate this to all that is fragrant and beautiful. It should make an impression on us. All that brings with it a good word, or that speaks well.

The opposite may be that which leaves a stench or a bad taste in our mouth.

I'm talking here about righteous indignation, and not just preferences or prejudices.

We are to think about positive and pleasing thoughts. The next is similar.

### ***Admirable (euphema)***

This denotes something that has genuine worth and goodness. Some commentators say that this denotes what is praiseworthy, attractive, and and what rings true to the highest standards. It really means GOOD.

I can related this to my life, when Jeff was teaching the Romans study a few weeks ago, he came upon a word that started with this same greek beginning EU- as in eulogy (a good word), Eucharist (the holy sacrament), eureka (triumphant achievement) or euphoric (a good feeling of well-being).

JRR Tolkien penned a new word that I love – **eucatastrophe** – at the end of a book when all the details come together and come into a wonderful focus or conclusion. Don't you just love to finish a good book – you don't want it to end. That is the feeling that we are to pursue with our minds – for our lives.

The opposite may be that which brings us down. That which weighs us, or worries us. We have already been told not to be anxious.

## **Excellent**

This one is pretty obvious – so Paul slightly changes the sentence structure to give it emphasis. Christians, we should pursue excellence in all things, but specifically here on what we think about.

Here Paul is exhorting us to exercise discernment and choose what is “Excellent”

I have often talked to the Worship Ministries about pursuing excellence. Micah 1 talks about bringing our very very best lamb as a sacrifice to the altar. Not our second best. Our first fruits. The best of our selves and our crops. So I guess the opposite would be to bring anything lesser or the leftovers.

Sometimes here at church, it can feel like leftovers. Do you know what I mean. We don’t think about the very best for our Lord, so our offerings and our service are also less than the best.

## **Praiseworthy**

We should be always thinking about things that will bring praise to God.

Paul knows that when we continually center our minds on Jesus Christ, we will then live for him.

The Opposite would be negative thoughts, or maybe just apathy.

One of my main roles here at Northlake Christian Church, is to lead us all in worship. You’re going to see my bent here, but I BELIEVE THAT ALL OF LIFE IS WORSHIP.

Worship is a verb. Worship is a lifestyle.

How we live and what we do with our time is potential worship of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

How you drive to work in the morning is worship. How you talk to your co-workers and family is worship. What you fill your life and your mind with is worship of God, or maybe the opposite.

Look at the Last part of verse 8.

### **“Think about these things”**

We are to think about these things that Paul said that our minds should focus on.

The verb, *think about* Logizomai, means to ponder, to give proper weight and value to, and to allow the resultant appraisal to influence the way life is to be lived.

We need to bring the best of our minds to the plate.

Motyer writes, “Just as a carnal mind is the surest passport to the downward path, so a mind drilled on the things of which God approves is

the steadiest way into practical holiness. If, in a difficult relationship, we allow our minds and judgments to be clouded by half-truth, or if we allow frivolous and damaging thoughts about the other person to simmer in our minds, we are hardly being like Christ. We should rather determine to think only the truth about the other person, to value what is attractive and praiseworthy about him, This will prove to be the way of peace."<sup>3</sup>

It is the will of God that we should give our attention to the things that God approves, and by giving that attention, we should shape our minds to be like his.

If we will live by that standard, and to those who will join us on that pursuit, God pledges to us his guardian peace and his own presence as the God of Peace.

### ***Example of Paul***

Our behavior should be to emulate Paul.

Read verse 9

**9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.**

whatever

learned from Paul

received from Paul

heard from Paul

seen in Paul

2 pairs of verbs here.

This really speaks of the authority of the Word of God., as Paul had taught them the Word of God, and they received it from him as an apostle

We now have the written Word of God.

That is what it refers to in the **learned and received**.

Paul had also lived his life before others, and he practiced what he preached. (**the 'heard' and 'seen'**)

I could say much about Paul's example.

Sacrificed, his service, his thinking, his prayers.

For us, who no longer have Paul, or any apostle, the commandment requires us to submit to the apostolic word that we have written in the Bible.

There has been much application throughout this message, but I want to bring it down to 2 things today.

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<sup>3</sup> Motyer, page 212.

## **The first is what are we going to do about it?**

Look at the way that the text in various versions puts it.

- NIV “put it into practice”
- NASB “practice these things”
- NLT “keep putting into practice”
- KJV, RSV “do”

I like this last one – the King James, the best.

9Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

DO!

Just DO IT>

Jump, take a risk, go for it.

Usually, if a change is needed – a commitment is the first step.

I want to know who will DO it.

We are talking here about Personal Sanctification.

The process by which we grow to be more like Jesus Christ by the Power of the Holy Spirit.

A Crisis and A Process.

Remember the book-ends Peace.

Do this – pursue this kind of thinking and study of God’s Word, and “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”

... “And the God of peace will be with you.”

## **2<sup>nd</sup>. is the 40 Day Prayer Adventure.**

Testimony of Trish Anderson on Prayer

Ask People to stand up for the 40 day prayer challenge.

Closing Prayer