

# Philippians 4:8 Part 2

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 10/28/2007

## What Are You Thinking About?

### Prayer

Oh great and gracious God, we praise You for Your goodness towards us. We praise You for Your love, demonstrated in the person of Your Son Jesus Christ, in that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” We praise You that Your grace, as Your Word has said, “has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.” We praise You that You have opened our hearts and minds to believe the truth, to understand the great Gospel of our salvation in Christ. Father, we praise You that it is Your lovingkindness that leads us to repentance. And Father, we praise You that for Your name’s sake, those who have been redeemed, our sins are forgiven. Father, I pray as we look into Your Word today, that You would sovereignly open our hearts and minds to understand Your Word, that Your Spirit would teach us exactly what You intended from this passage, for we know that no Scripture is of one’s own interpretation, but men moved by Your Spirit spoke from You. And Father, as You open our hearts and minds, I pray that we would not only hear what You say, Lord God, but by Your power and strength, we would do what You say, so that in all things you would be glorified. Father, thank You for this time together. Again, may it bring You glory and honor. And we pray this in Jesus’ name.

### Sermon

Well if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, it will not take you long to recognize that the Christian life is played out first and foremost in the mind. And as I shared last week, the Apostle Paul goes so far as to share that what you think actually is an indication of who you really are in Christ. Romans chapter 8:5,

***<sup>5</sup> For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (And Paul goes on) <sup>6</sup> For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, <sup>7</sup> because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. [Romans 8:5-9]***

The mind set on the flesh is death. The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace in Christ. Scripture reveals ultimately too that we as believers will suffer, that bad things will happen to us during this life. There is the suffering for the glories to follow, Paul would say in that same chapter of Romans. And the real question for believers is how do we respond to these sufferings? What do we think about during these trials? What are we focused on during the things that God sovereignly allows to come? Now as pastor, I deal with many people who do not respond well to situations in their lives. They have many problems in their walk with Christ, and we all at times do not respond well to circumstances.

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Yet as I have observed some of these situations in my life, and in other lives also, that every time we have problems in relationship to what God is doing ultimately through circumstances, there is one thing that runs consistent in the mindset of those who are messed up in those circumstances. It is stinking thinking. It is thinking that does not line up with the Word of God. A mindset that is not Biblical, a mindset that bases things on one's own evaluation rather than what God has said in His Word. Now I have shared before that James says there are two wisdoms, and we are going to be looking at this this week in our Tuesday Bible study. There is the wisdom from above, which is first pure (and we will look at that later), then peaceable (and he goes on with the list), full of good fruits. And there is the wisdom from below, which is earthly, natural and demonic. No wonder so many times we are messed up in our Christian walk when we have earthly, natural and demonic, stinking, Satanic thinking.

And again, that old saying as I shared last week, "Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a life." That is a Biblical concept because what we think determines what we do. Now all of us know, those of us who are believers, that we are tempted day in and day out, that the good fight of faith is to believe what Jesus said concerning the person of Christ, or to believe our own evaluation of our circumstances or what someone else might have said about our circumstances. And as Robert read in Romans chapter 12, we are exhorted, the second application of the Gospel for believers (the first one, to offer ourselves as living sacrifices acceptable, holy), the second one is to not be conformed to this world. That will happen by default. But be transformed through the renewing of our minds. Believers are to have renewed minds.

And we are going to see today as we look at this passage, what I believe is the mindset of a heavenly citizen. Would you turn in your Bibles with me to Philippians chapter 4? Again, we will be looking and completing, Lord-willing, verse 8 today. And I believe also this passage is going to address the question for us, "What are we thinking about?" What do our thoughts dwell upon as believers?

Now again, the context of the book of Philippians – what a wonderful book! And I so appreciated Robert's prayer as he shared some of that context concerning the book of Philippians. We have seen the Apostle Paul, his attitude, that he is so thankful for what God was doing in these Philippians, that He who began a good work will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. We have seen Paul share his own very circumstances, that he is imprisoned, but the Word of God is not imprisoned. We saw that maybe the Philippians were concerned that since Paul was chained, that the Gospel was not going out, that ministry was inhibited; but he encourages them that God is being glorified through his circumstances. The Gospel is not imprisoned, and God is doing a mighty work with the Gospel through Paul's chains.

We saw Paul's attitude, that Robert referred to, "...to live is Christ, to die is gain." [Philippians 1:21] To live is to serve Christ by serving His body, and he says specifically here, by serving the Philippians, "To die is gain, for it is much better to be with Christ." "...to live is Christ, to die is gain." His understanding that whether in everything, life or death, he desired that Christ would be magnified. The mindset of someone who is thinking those things above.

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We saw Paul address the Philippians' attitudes, that they were to be united, humble in spirit. They were to consider others as more important than themselves. They were to have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, the very mind of Christ as we see is revealed in the Word. That although He existed in the form of God, He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped; but He humbled Himself, taking on the form of a bondservant and becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. The mindset of Christ: others as more important as exemplified by His obedience to God and His will.

And we saw because of that, Jesus Christ was exalted to His proper position, as Lord over all, where every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father. And we saw because of that we should be obeying. Paul said, "Therefore as you have always obeyed, work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Working out our salvation is obeying what God has said. "As you have always obeyed..." Why? Because God is at work in you. Work it out because He is at work in you.

And then the first real command here, negative command, "Do all things without complaining and grumbling." If Jesus is Lord over all and Sovereign over all things, and He is at work in you, what do you have to complain about? Do not complain and grumble.

And then we saw examples of humility in himself, the Apostle Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus. And then in chapter 3, we saw there would be opposition to the truth, as Paul says, **...rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. [Philippians 3:1]**

And he says, <sup>2</sup> **Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;** (there are bad guys out there, looking like sheep and leading sheep astray. And he says in contrast,) <sup>3</sup> **for we are the true circumcision, who (three things) worship in the Spirit of God,** (as opposed to worshipping in the flesh) **and glory in Christ Jesus**(as opposed to glorying in man itself) **and put no confidence in the flesh,** (as opposed to those who would trust in their own abilities) **[Philippians 3:2-3]** We are the true circumcision.

And then Paul gives a contrast from his own testimony. "If anyone could trust in the flesh, look at me religiously. I had it all." And he lists all these things that he could trust in. But he considered all those things as refuse, as dung in light of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, for whom he had suffered the loss of all things. But he gained Christ. What a wonderful passage.

And then we are exhorted to have the mindset that the Apostle Paul had, which was to press forward, not looking back. The Apostle Paul did not set his mind on his former sins. Those are not, as we will see today, whatever is worthy of praise. That is not whatever is worthy of giving thanks, anything like that. The Apostle Paul pressed forward, not looking back, to the upward call, becoming like Christ and being with Christ. And we were exhorted to imitate him and those who walk like him.

And then we were given two reasons why we should do that. One, many do not walk that way. Many are on the path to destruction. Many set their mind on earthly things. But he says ultimately that we

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have a citizenship in heaven. And ultimately we should be imitating what we see in the life of Paul here in Scripture, the life of Christ manifest in the life of Paul.

And then we came to chapter 4. Because of all that, therefore, stand firm. Stand firm in the Lord. And if you remember, we saw the three “R’s” for our daily walk. The first one, *be reconciled*. We need to have unity in the Lord. We saw Euodia and Syntyche had a problem. And Paul did not address their issues; he did not go through a counseling session. He said, “Be same-minded.” In context, the same thing, have the mind of Christ. And then we saw we are to *rejoice in the Lord*. And we are to, as believers, *rest in the Lord*, finding our peace in Him alone. Why? Because the Lord is near. The Lord is near. We are to “be anxious for nothing but in everything through prayer and supplication...” [Philippians 4:6] We are not to worry about anything because the Lord is near. We are to pray about everything in a humble mindset, supplicating before the Lord with thanksgiving, letting those requests be known to God. He knows our requests, but we let Him know them, exemplifying the fact that we cannot do it. We need Him to do it. <sup>7</sup> ***And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:7]*** A wonderful promise for the believer in Jesus Christ, a garrisoned heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

And then we began to look at what we will look at today, that we are to be continually regarding the things concerning Christ in His Word. And I believe we are going to see, again, the mindset of a heavenly citizen. Would you turn with me to Philippians chapter 4, and we are going to look at verse 8.

<sup>8</sup> ***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. <sup>9</sup> The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you. [Philippians 4:8-9]***

Now we are going to review a little bit because last week we went through the first one, “...whatever is true...” And we will review that and Lord willing get through the rest of the list today. But he says, “Finally, brethren...” And that does not mean this is the last thing he has to say. Literally, he said it before actually, “Finally, brethren,” what it means is “there is more to say.” “As for the rest.” And remember as we saw last week, he is speaking to brethren. He is not speaking to those who are not in Christ. Those who are not in Christ cannot obey these commands. They do not subject themselves to the law of God, they do not subject themselves to the Word of God for it is impossible for them to do so. He says, “Finally, brethren...” These are believers in context, who have faith in Jesus Christ, who are of the same spiritual family, a spiritual family based on faith in Jesus. We need to not forget that these commands are given to believers.

Now before we continue, we need to recognize the structure of this passage, verse 8 and verse 9. Again there are two commands, and everything is centered around these two commands. Middle of 8 – “let your mind dwell on these things.” Middle of 9 – “practice these things.” Two commands. The rest is all

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centered around those two commands. With that in mind, let's review this idea of this command of letting our mind dwell on these things.

Again, he says, "<sup>8</sup> 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, (and here is the command) let your mind dwell on these things." [Philippians 4:8] Do you remember we saw last week, we saw this phrase "let your mind" is one Greek verb, *logizomai*? And we will see this word *logizomai* means "thinking according to logical rules." Taking into account, making a mental record of something, reckoning or considering – it was an accounting term that had no emotion to it. They would consider this amount and that amount, and there was no emotion. It was reckoning something to be factual or true. Now as I shared before, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, we recognize that the Christian walk is played out in our minds.

And folks, our thinking determines what we do. And Scripture throughout, parallels the heart and the mind in thinking together. And if our hearts are bad, our behavior will be bad. Mark 7:18, as I shared last week, Jesus says,

**<sup>18</sup> And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? (these Pharisees were all caught up on the externals) Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; <sup>19</sup> because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.) (by the way, food is clean) <sup>20</sup> And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. <sup>21</sup> For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, <sup>22</sup> deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. <sup>23</sup> All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." [Mark 7:18-23]**

Folks, our behavior begins in our thought life. Our thoughts determine ultimately what we do. Now, we saw earlier that those unbelievers in chapter 3, who were on their way to destruction, those who are playing the Christian game, who set their mind on earthly things – they are on the road to destruction. And Robert read in Colossians chapter 3, that if we have been raised with Christ, we are to keep seeking the things above. The mindset of a believer, the things where Christ is. So then we have the command here, "...let your mind dwell on these things."

In the Greek, it is in an imperative mood, present tense. What does that mean? It is a command, and it is a continual, habitual action. "Continually let your mind be dwelling on these things." That is the command for us. "Continually, habitually be reckoning or considering these things." We are to take this information, these things listed and run them through our mental computers in our brains and make determinations about them. And these determinations about them, as we will see later, will affect the way we live.

Folks, it is absolutely crucial that we think biblically. I am not talking about a bogus biblical thinking where you have all doctrine be rote, but your life is a wreck. Real, true biblical thinking where the Word

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of God is affecting your life. It is imperative that we pay attention and learn from this passage. Now as I shared earlier, we cannot divorce this from its context. Conflict, lack of joy, anxiety are all indicators that one's thought life is not right. Those are symptoms. When I have a runny nose and I am coughing, it is a symptom that I have a cold. Conflict, lack of joy, anxiety, those things indicate that my mind is not continually dwelling on those things.

Now this is an amazing verse here. Paul gives us as believers categories in which we should think. And here in verse 8 we have some very practical categories of where we should be thinking. Now before we get into this portion here, I need to remind us as I did last week, Paul is not simply speaking of positive thinking here. He is not simply thinking of the power of positive thinking, as such teachers would do, twisting the Word of God. This passage is speaking about ultimately, as we will see, the things of Christ as contained in His Word.

Ok, what then are these things? Let's take a look at them. <sup>8</sup> Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute..." [Philippians 4:8a] Six things, and it is modified by this term "whatever is." It is present tense. Not "whatever was" or "whatever will be" but "whatever is" consists of these descriptions. "...whatever is true..." Remember we took the whole time last week and looked at what I believe was sovereignly one of the most important ones because it is the basis for the rest – "whatever is true." God in His sovereignty gives us this one first.

And again I have to warn us as I did last week. We need to cast aside our preconceived notions of what truth is. There is a tremendous battle on truth ultimately in the church, but ultimately it began in the garden. "Did God really say that? Did God *really* say that?" That is a battle against truth. We need to recognize that worldly influences have crept into the church. We have churches that believe that things are true if they work. We have counselors that say, "All truth is God's truth." Folks, we will see that much truth that we claim to be truth is merely man's wisdom, which as James says, is earthy, natural and demonic. The truth is being assaulted on all sides, but the church should be the pillar and support of the truth, as Paul would tell Timothy.

Therefore, it is crucial to have a biblical understanding of truth. And that is why we spent so much time on it last week. And now let me review this. Remember we saw that truth is a characteristic of the living God. Jesus declared that the Father is true, John 3:33. <sup>33</sup> **He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true.** [John 3:33] Jesus, multiple times, spoke of the Spirit of God as the Spirit of truth, John chapter 15. And in John 14 Jesus declared that He is Himself (verse 6), "I am the way and the truth and the life..." John earlier said that Jesus was full of grace and truth.

So then, when we dwell on whatever is true, obviously part of that would be God Himself, right? We saw that it is impossible for God to lie – Titus 1:2 and Hebrews 6:18. And therefore, if it is impossible for God to lie, everything He says is true. And we saw that there were a myriad of Scriptures concerning His truth in the Word. Let me review some of them. Psalm 119:142,

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**<sup>142</sup> Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Thy law is truth. [Psalm 119:142]**

Psalm 119:151,

**<sup>151</sup> Thou art near, (wonderful) O LORD, And all Thy commandments are truth. [Psalm 119:151]**

Psalm 119:159-160,

**<sup>159</sup> Consider how I love Thy precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Thy lovingkindness. <sup>160</sup> The sum of Thy word is truth, And every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting. [Psalm 119:159-160]**

John 17:17, Jesus praying to the Father says,

**<sup>17</sup> "Sanctify (set them apart) them in the truth; Thy word is truth." [John 17:17]**

It is the Word of God that sets the believer apart to be more like Christ. It is not "All truth is God's truth." It is not the truth of generalities that people will share in a worldly sense. It is God's truth that is truly true. God is true, His Word is true, and the Scripture says, "Whatever is true, let your mind be continually dwelling on those things." Obviously we need to let our mind continually be dwelling on the Word of God because the Word of God is true.

I want to ask you, does your mind dwell continually on what God says? Are you meditating on His Word? Does it flow through your heart? Does it dwell richly in your heart or dwell poorly in your heart? This is the first category our mind should be dwelling in. Everything should be bracketed by this. Our thinking should be bracketed by God's truth, right, as believers? As I shared in the beginning on this message, many people have stinking thinking, and I have talked to many believers whose minds are not bracketed by truth; they are bracketed by lies. They are bracketed by their own observations of their circumstances rather than what God has said. *Whatever is true. Whatever is true.*

Let's take a look at the rest of these things. Secondly we see the second category, whatever is honorable. Now this term "honorable" speaks of that which calls forth for respect. It is translated in the New King James "noble" or "reverent." *Whatever is honorable.* The word is used three other times. In Titus 2:2 older men are commanded to be honorable, or dignified. First Timothy chapter 3, deacons (male and female we see there) are to have the quality of being dignified. It speaks of that which calls forth respect. Now obviously, older believing men are to be dignified and certainly deacons are to be dignified, right? They are to be worthy of respect. But obviously, this is a characteristic of a life that is yielded to the living God, right? We are to be thinking of things that call forth for respect.

Are your thoughts in your mind worthy of honor? Respect? Are they worthy? So often ours aren't, right? So often ours do not meet this criteria. How easily we do not think of that which is honorable. How easily we think of that which is not worthy of respect. Think of the TV shows we are tempted to

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watch on TV. Are the people portrayed as honorable and dignified? Worthy of respect in a biblical context? If not, we should not be watching it, right? *Whatever is honorable.*

Let me digress for a minute here. Television is a powerful media of men. The images that we see play over and over again in our minds. So much so that children are warned, "Do not watch this show," for certain ages because kids will play things over and over again in their minds. We are to be looking at and thinking about whatever is honorable. Now I realize folks, we are going to come across things that are not honorable. The world is full of things that are not worthy of respect, right? Yet, we do not hide our heads in the sand or go to the monastery so that we can only see or think about those things worthy of respect.

What Paul is saying is that we are not to dwell on those things at all. We are to dwell on that which is honorable. Folks, I deal with stuff all week that is not honorable. Spiritual issues in people's lives, which to be honest are very undignified. But folks, my mind should not dwell on these things. My mind should dwell on the truth that applies to the circumstances, which is honorable, which is dignified, which is worthy of respect. I need to take every thought captive, and we need to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. We need to make sure the things we dwell upon are honorable.

And where do we find these things? Primarily we find them in the person of Christ, who is worthy of all honor and all respect. And we find it in His Word which is worthy of all honor and all respect. And we find it in the things that He is doing, which should bring Him glory and honor and respect. I want to ask you, is your mind continually dwelling on that which is honorable? This should be convicting for us. These things should be running through our minds throughout the day. "Oh boy that is not honorable. I am sorry, Lord. I'm sorry, I'm sorry." God is faithful. He will forgive us.

Now continuing, we see the next category, "Whatever is right." "Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right." The word translated "right" here is *dikaios*. It speaks of that which is right, righteous or upright. "Whatever is right" are those things which conform to God's right standards, as revealed only as we see in His Word. Now folks, Scripture is clear that God *is* righteous. He perfectly conforms to His own righteous standards. Remember Jesus' petition in John 17? He says, "Oh righteous Father." And in Acts, three times Jesus Himself is called "the righteous One." Second Timothy 4:8, Jesus is called the "One who will reward him on that day, the righteous Judge."

Now we know from Scripture that man apart from Christ is not right. That man is not righteous. That no man conforms to God's righteous standards. That we have all fallen short of the glory of God. Romans chapter 3, verse 10, as Paul summarizes his case against religious and irreligious man. He says, "There are none righteous, not even one." No one meets God's righteous standards. No one! So how then do we meet His standards?

I praise God that through faith in Christ we can be declared *dikaios*, righteous. You see, Jesus Christ was the only one who perfectly executed God's standards righteously. And He then became a sacrifice for us. God accepts His sacrifice because He is righteous and right. "He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." It is by faith in Jesus Christ that we

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become right in God's sight. Nothing else works. Nothing else works. No religious things you can do make you right. It just exemplifies the fact that you are wrong and prideful because you think you can be right in your own wisdom and abilities. There are none righteous.

But the gracious gift of righteousness through Christ now enables us to have a relationship with the living God, who is right and righteous. God is righteous. And we see His righteous characteristics manifest in those who have been declared righteous, who are trusting Him and obeying Him. *Whatever is right. Whatever is right.* By nature, this includes God and His Word and His work in His people. His work that brings Him glory, not us glory. *Whatever is right.* And folks, the Word of God is our only gauge to tell us what is right, what God deems as right.

The world says that sex apart from marriage is ok. God says it is only honorable and right in marriage. The world says it is ok to be angry! God says, "The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God," James 1:20. And we are to put it away, put it aside, Ephesians 4:31 and Colossians 3. The worldly so-called Christian counselors say we need to explore and understand our past to be healed. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says he presses on, not looking back, toward the upward call. The worldly church says it is right to allow sin in the congregation because they are seeking. Scripture says, "There are none that seek after God, not even one." And it says to "remove the wicked one from your midst." Hopefully that their souls would be saved, 1 Corinthians 5 and Matthew 18.

God's Word declares what is right. If I want to be thinking about whatever is right, the Word of God needs to be in my heart and mind, right? And I could go on for hours about whatever is right. Our thoughts need to be guarded by whatever is right. And so often we think wrong! We have that stinking thinking that is not right. It is not right what I am thinking about my spouse. And it is not right what I am thinking about my job. It is not right what I am thinking about some circumstances. That is not "whatever is right." We need to confess it, and God is a gracious God. *Whatever is right.* "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right."

Next category – "whatever is pure." Now immediately what comes to mind is sexual purity. And certainly this word has an element of that. But I think the concept of purity, biblically, extends farther than this. The idea of purity here, the word is *hagnos*. Although it can represent ceremonial purity certainly, but ceremonial purity in Scripture always represented the reality behind it, right? But it also is used consistently in Scripture to speak of moral purity, to speak of that which is free from sin. It is pure from sin. That which is unstained, unblemished. It speaks of that which is genuine in that sense. Let's take a look at some of the passages in Scripture which contain this word *hagnos*.

First of all in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, but there was a Greek translation a few hundred years before Christ. In that Greek translation, we have in Proverbs 20:9, and I will read this for you.

**<sup>9</sup> Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart, I am (*hagnos*, or) pure from my sin"?**  
**[Proverbs 20:9]**

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The idea of being pure from sin. The writer of Proverbs is saying, “Who can say they could do that?” No one can obviously right? We cannot purify ourselves. And what is that purity? It is purity from sin. Into the New Testament, you can turn there with me to 1 Timothy chapter 5, as Paul has just gotten done dealing with the issue of widows indeed, and now he is going to deal with issues within the elders. First Timothy chapter 5, verse 19,

**<sup>19</sup> Do not receive an accusation against an <sup>a</sup>elder except on the basis of <sup>b</sup>two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup> Those who continue (now this is the issue of sin) in sin, <sup>a</sup>rebuke in the presence of all, <sup>b</sup>so that the rest also may be fearful of sinning.** (Do not take an accusation just from one person, but from two or three people against an elder. It is a serious charge. “And those who continue, rebuke in the presence of all, that all would be fearful of sinning” – that is a clear command for the church. And there are a lot of elders that are sinning, and there are a lot of churches that do not do this. He says,) <sup>21</sup> **<sup>a</sup>I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.** (and then he talks about bringing an elder on too early) <sup>22</sup> **<sup>a</sup>Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and <sup>1</sup>thus share <sup>b</sup>responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself (hagnos) <sup>2</sup>free from sin. [1 Timothy 5:19-22]**

Pure from sin! Keep yourself pure. Do not sin. Do not be that way. Do not get caught up in that. Now certainly in 1 John we know that if we say we have no sin, we are liars. But he is talking about a continual, habitual sin. He is talking about getting caught up in sin. We are to confess it right away; we are not to get involved in it. We are to stay pure. *Hagnos* speaks of that which is free from sin. We see the same concept, the same verb in James chapter 4. And let’s turn there also. I have mentioned it a couple times. But James chapter 4, verse 8. There were those who had adulterated their friendship with God by being friends with the world. Friendship with the world, adultery towards God, right? The world hates Christ. Friendship with the world. And here is the solution to a worldly mindset. Here is the solution. James 4:8,

**<sup>8</sup> <sup>a</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. <sup>b</sup>Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and <sup>c</sup>purify (hagnos) your hearts, you <sup>d</sup>double-minded. [James 4:8]**

Repent of your sin. Get pure. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We are pure. Folks, we see the church is to be devoted to Christ in a pure manner, not deceived by the ways of Satan. Second Corinthians chapter 11, verse 2, and I will read this for you. Paul is dealing with those false apostles who have deceived the Corinthians, and he is trying to lovingly come alongside and share his love for them through the Word of God and win their hearts to the Word ultimately and to Christ.

**<sup>2</sup> For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I <sup>a</sup>betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might <sup>b</sup>present you as a (hagnos) pure virgin. <sup>3</sup> But I am afraid, lest as**

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***the <sup>a</sup>serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. [2 Corinthians 11:2-3]***

It is simple. You trust Him and you obey Him. Simplicity and purity of a devotion to Christ. We saw in James chapter 3 that the wisdom from above is first pure. It is unstained by evil. God's Word is not stained by wickedness. God's wisdom has no wickedness in it. No sin in it. And where do we find God's wisdom? The pure words? Psalm 12:6, again from the LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

***<sup>6</sup> The <sup>a</sup>words of the LORD are (hagnos words) pure words; As silver <sup>b</sup>tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times. [Psalm 12:6]***

It is pure. God's Word is pure. And folks, ultimately because Jesus is pure, because His Word is pure, because He has come to purify us from our sins, this should motivate us to be pure. First John chapter 3,

***<sup>1</sup> See <sup>1a</sup>how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called <sup>b</sup>children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because <sup>c</sup>it did not know Him. <sup>2</sup> <sup>a</sup>Beloved, now we are <sup>b</sup>children of God, and <sup>c</sup>it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He <sup>d</sup>appears, we shall be <sup>e</sup>like Him, because we shall <sup>f</sup>see Him just as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this <sup>a</sup>hope fixed on Him <sup>b</sup>purifies (hagnos) himself, just as He is pure (hagnos). [1 John 3:1-3]***

Christ is pure and a relationship with Christ motivates us to be pure because He is going to ultimately make us pure when we are glorified. That is what is going to happen. We still mess up. We still sin. But that day is coming. "Oh that day, when freed from sinning," the songwriter writes.

Where do we find whatever is pure? It centers around the person of Christ who is pure and His Word, which is pure, which should be manifest in His people. And folks, there is a tremendous amount of impure things in this world to think about, right? Tremendous amount of impure things. Everything in the world has been stained by sin right? Folks, our minds are to be dwelling in the sphere of purity. Does your mind dwell in the sphere of purity? I am not saying we ignore those things that are not pure. Sometimes we have to deal with that. But we do not dwell upon that, right? We do not ignore people who are struggling with issues of sin, just because it is not pure. We do what is right and we deal with those issues, but we do not dwell on that. We dwell on whatever is pure as it applies to their circumstances. Our minds should be dwelling in the sphere of purity. If it is not, we need to confess it. "Lord, I am sorry. That is not right. I am sorry."

I want to ask you, are you focusing on things that are stained by sin? If it is not pure we are not to be regarding it, to be considering it, to contemplate it, to focus on it. If we are, we are sinning. We need to confess it and God restores us immediately.

Four things so far, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure..." Next one we see is "whatever is lovely." *Prospihilés*. *Pros* – towards. *Philés* – like we get the word *phileo*, speaks of love. *Philadelphia* – that is brotherly love, right? This speaks of the love of a friend. Towards

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love. Towards love. We are to be thinking of things that are towards love. What does he mean by that? What drives us towards love? What drives us to love one another? What drives us to think of love between one another? What drives us to do that? First Thessalonians chapter 4, I will read this for you.

**<sup>9</sup> Now as to the (phileo, philadelphia) <sup>a</sup>love of the brethren, you <sup>b</sup>have no need for anyone to write to you, ("You do not need anyone to tell you about this." He says,) for you yourselves are <sup>c</sup>taught by God (to agape one another) to love one another. [1 Thessalonians 4:9]**

God teaches His believers to love one another. It is a characteristic of someone who is truly saved, to consider others as more important than themselves. That is love. We are to be thinking of the things that draw us towards love. What draws us towards love? Things of Christ. The things of His great love for us. The things that focus us on Him and thus His character, which is love. God is love. He loves us. So often our thoughts and our closest relationships are not lovely. They do not draw us towards love. They draw us towards conflict, right? We dwell on failures and inconsistencies of those around us rather than whatever is lovely about them. We are all guilty of that right? We dwell on those things that are not lovely about those we relate to in church or whatever it might be. Again, I am not saying we ignore sin. God says deal with it. Matthew 18. God says deal with it. First Corinthians 5. I am saying, in general love covers a multitude of sins.

Folks, are you dwelling in that which is lovely? What draws you towards love? All the stuff that gets in the way concerning our own selfishness draws us away from love, right? Toothpaste cap is not in the right place. That is not lovely, right? The heat is not set right in the house. That draws me away from loving that person. My own selfishness draws me away from love. But a focus on Christ draws me to those things that are lovely.

So often our thoughts drive us away from love. Irritation. Anxiety. Anger. And even hate. These thoughts are not acceptable for the believer. They are not lovely. They do not enter the sphere of whatever is lovely. And we need to confess them. Confess them and be restored. This should be convicting us in our thought life. It certainly convicts me. *Whatever is lovely*. First Corinthians 13, so often used in unbelieving marriages, and it is just about a general love in those situations. But in Scripture the context is these are the things of Christ. First Corinthians 13:4,

**<sup>4</sup> Love <sup>a</sup>is patient, love is kind, and <sup>b</sup>is not jealous; love does not brag and is not <sup>c</sup>arrogant, <sup>5</sup> does not act unbecomingly; it <sup>a</sup>does not seek its own, is not provoked, (when you are provoked, you are not going towards love) <sup>b</sup>does not take into account a wrong suffered, <sup>6</sup> <sup>a</sup>does not rejoice in unrighteousness, (there is the holiness and purity of this love) <sup>b</sup>but <sup>b</sup>rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup> <sup>1a</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [1 Corinthians 13:4-7]**

Towards love. Towards love.

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Lately, Hillary has been reminding me of whatever is lovely about her. She said every once in a while, "Greg, remember you are to honor me, I am a daughter of the King." She is right! She is absolutely right! That is lovely about her! She is a daughter of the King, 1 Peter chapter 3. We can find all sorts of things about one another that are lovely, concerning what Christ has done in us.

Here is the gauge, do your thoughts drive you towards love or away from love? Do they drive you towards it or away? Again, I am not saying we ignore sin. God addresses that. "Whatever is true" ultimately. And also true love, 1 Corinthians 13, rejoices with the truth. But this should be love, truth and love together.

So we get five categories. "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, and whatever is lovely." And lastly here we see, "whatever is of good repute." The word is translated in Greek actually, it is *euphēma*. We get our word "euphemism" from it. It has kind of strayed from its original meaning when it gets that idea of euphemism. You know, euphemism is speaking better of something than it really is basically. Here it actually speaks of well-speaking, good news. Literally means *eu* – well or good. *Phēma* – report or news or information. It is a good report, it is good information, it is good news. It is something that is well-spoken, calls for admiration. Something that is commendable or virtuous.

Have you noticed whenever you watch the news on TV it is almost always bad news? I mean, almost *always* bad news. That is not *euphēma* here. Seldom if ever do we hear of good news being reported on TV, right? Seldom if ever. In our sinful state, the bad news titillates and excites and draws our attention. It is the dirty laundry that people want to hear, but this should not be the way with believers. So often we are guilty of not setting our mind in the sphere of those things which call forth for admiration. Good repute. Those things well-spoken.

Now you ask, "What things are of good repute? What things are well-spoken?" Obviously things that speak well of God, His Word, and His people. Later on we are going to see that we are to proclaim His excellencies. That is well-speaking, those are well-spoken, those are good things concerning God. And folks, here we tend to fail a lot in this area; we all do. We tear people down. We focus on the bad news rather than the good. And again I am not saying we do not address sin. Please recognize that. I am saying in general, we do not focus on the things that call forth admiration in the lives of one another. The admirable things of Christ manifest in believers. We should be thinking about that, right? We should. *Whatever is of good repute.*

Let me illustrate this. I was so blessed this Tuesday when you all surprised me. And you did surprise me for my birthday! That was a surprise! You surprised me completely. I was totally, totally surprised. I was in the middle of a sentence in the book of James, and you cut it off and thank you so much! It was just such an incredible blessing to me. And as you spoke, you all chose to speak of things that were well of me. You did not choose to speak of my short-comings. You spoke of things that we were well and it was a blessing to me. But the things that you spoke of were not about me by myself. It was about what

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Christ was doing in me. Not me. That is well-speaking. That is well-speaking. That is the area of good repute. Thank you.

We need to do that with one another, don't we? We do. This should be a sphere in which our thinking is. The sphere of that which is well-spoken. The things Christ is doing in us. The things of Christ. And again, I am not saying we do not lovingly come along. Some people will say, "Ok, you are not speaking well of me. You are talking about my sin. That is not speaking well of me." We need to do what God says concerning sin because we love those people, right? But often times we do not think well of people. We choose to think bad of people. We should not be doing that. Do you choose to dwell on those things of good repute? If not, we need to confess that and be restored.

So then we have the categories that our mind should dwell on. Categories that our mind should habitually dwell on. Paul does not leave us in the dark here. God does not leave us in the dark. <sup>8</sup> Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, (and now we have a summary) if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, (the command) let your mind dwell on these things." [Philippians 4:8] This is where the mind of the believer should be at all times. This is the mindset of a Christian. As I shared, my heart breaks when I talk to people and they do not have the mindset of a true believer. They have a mindset of the world concerning all the stuff that is going on around their lives. Here we see the categories, and now a summary. "If there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise..."

Now these two terms, as you notice, start out with the term "if." And it makes it sound like maybe there is not anything excellent, maybe there could be, maybe there might be. Well in Greek, there are different ways to say this "if" statement. There are different conditions, and this is a first class condition, which means as we saw earlier in chapter two, "if and it is true." "If there is any excellence, and it is true." If you read that in Greek, you would go, "Yes, it is first class, it is true." "If there is anything worthy of praise, yes and there is, let your mind dwell on these things."

So then we have two statements. The first one, "If there is any excellence." And this word speaks of moral excellence. It speaks of the best. The best. We see it first described in God's excellencies. First Peter, turn with me to first Peter chapter 2. Those who do not know Christ stumble over Christ to their own destruction, but not so the believers here who have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. First Peter 2:9,

**<sup>9</sup> But you are <sup>a</sup>a chosen race, a royal <sup>b</sup>priesthood, a <sup>c</sup>holy nation, <sup>d</sup>a people for God's own possession, (why did God save you?) that you may proclaim the excellencies (same word) of Him who has called you <sup>e</sup>out of darkness into His marvelous light; [1 Peter 2:9]**

One of the reasons God saved you and me is to proclaim His excellencies. "If there is anything excellent." Any excellence. Well what does that have to do with? It has to do with God, right? These are things that have to do with God. Later on, 2 Peter, just move forward into 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 3. What a wonderful verse!

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**<sup>3</sup> seeing that His <sup>a</sup>divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true <sup>b</sup>knowledge of Him (that is Christ) who <sup>c</sup>called us <sup>1</sup>by His own glory and <sup>2</sup>excellence. [2 Peter 1:3]**

He called us to His excellence. He called us to His excellence. Excellence is a characteristic of the living God. And then later in on in 1 Peter 1:5, now this is what a believer should look like if he has not forgotten the former purification from his sins.

**<sup>5</sup> Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith (truly, diligently trusting God) <sup>a</sup>supply <sup>b</sup>moral <sup>1</sup>excellence, (there should be moral excellence, there should be moral excellence in your life) and in your moral excellence, <sup>c</sup>knowledge; [1 Peter 1:5]**

It should be manifest in the believer. All the categories that we saw that are bracketed in our thinking are now bracketed by this term, "if there is any excellence." If it is excellent, think about it. How often do you think about the excellent things of God, as it relates to your life? In a day in and day out moment. Moment by moment, how often do we think of the excellent things in His Word concerning Him and His people? Our thoughts need to have an element of this all the time.

Secondly we see if it is anything worthy of praise, "if there is any excellence (and there truly is), if there is anything worthy of praise (and there truly is), let your mind dwell on these things." This phrase, "worthy of praise" really cuts through everything and cuts out a whole bunch of stuff in our thinking, right? We have a lot of thoughts that are not worthy of praise, right? I am not saying we do not deal with issues that God sovereignly brings in our lives. We do not focus on those things. We focus on those things that are worthy of praise as they are laid forth over those issues. And only the Lord is truly worthy of praise, right? The things that He has done are only truly worthy of praise, right? Each and everything on this list must be encompassed by around what the Lord is doing through His Word. Is it excellent? Is it praise worthy? If not, it is stinking, Satanic thinking. It is just Satanic thinking. It is earthly, natural and demonic.

Do you want to think the way the devil thinks? I don't. But we do, right? We need to confess that. We want to think the way God thinks because God has revealed His mind in His Word. He wants us to think that way too because He loves us. <sup>8</sup> 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." [Philippians 4:8]

So we have it today, the categories in which we should be thinking, right? I mean it is pretty clear. And it is pretty clear as we read this, that we recognize our thinking is probably not that good. I mean, this morning we probably zapped out of those categories many times, right? And we need to say, "Lord, I am sorry. I have not been thinking this way. I am wrong." Now some of you might be sufficiently frustrated at this time. You are saying, "Ok I recognize this is the case, but how do I do it? How do I think this way?"

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First and foremost, if you do not know Christ, you cannot think this way. You cannot think this way. It is impossible for you to obey Him. It is impossible for you to understand His Word. If you do not know Christ, you have no control over your thinking. You cannot control it. You cannot place a paradigm that is for believers over your thinking when you do not know Christ. You need a renewed mind. You need a saved mind. You need to be born again. This is the first step in being able to think this way. Tell the Lord you are sorry – “I have sinned. I have fallen short of the glory of God. I have not made it. I have trusted in myself. I am wrong. I believe that Jesus Christ is God, that He rose from the dead, that He died for my sins, that He is Lord.” Believe in Him! “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” And you will notice right away your thinking is changed immediately, when you are truly saved. All of a sudden you realize, “Wow, how could I think that way?”

And then for us who are believers, we need to realize we should not be thinking like we used to think. We should not be thinking like non-believers. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 17, Paul says,

***<sup>17</sup> This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, (and listen to all the things that have to do with mind and thinking here) in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup> being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; (all about their thinking, right?) <sup>19</sup> and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. <sup>20</sup> But you did not learn Christ in this way, <sup>21</sup> if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as the truth is in Jesus. [Ephesians 4:17-21]***

We should not be thinking the way we used to think when we were not saved, right? And if we have then we need to confess that. First thing to do when we catch ourselves with stinking thinking, the first thing to do is just say, “Lord God, I am sorry.” Just acknowledge it. “Lord, I have been looking at my life not through these characteristics, and I am sorry.” If you try to dwell on whatever is holy, whatever is right, without having said you are sorry, without repenting of your sin, you are going to be very frustrated. Just confess it. “Lord, I am sorry.” We should be doing that throughout the day. Thoughts pop in, “Lord, I am sorry,” and move forward.

Proverbs chapter 4:23, ***<sup>23</sup> Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs (or literally the “issues”) of life.*** Watch over your hearts, believers, just as Solomon tells his son. Second Corinthians 10:5, Paul says in the context of the bad guys, ***<sup>5</sup> We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*** Do you let thoughts run in your mind, just free? This passage says, “Whatever is, whatever is, whatever is, if there is, if there is...let your mind dwell on these things.” It is what God tells us to do.

So how do we hold every thought captive? How do we do this specifically? Obviously to be obeying these commands, we need to have the Word of God dwelling richly in our hearts. It is all centered

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around whatever is true, the person of Christ. We need to be meditating on the Word day and night, Psalm 1. And we need to be renewing our minds, being transformed not conformed, Romans 12. We need to be setting our minds on the things above, not the things of earth. And actually it is pretty simple, not complex. "The simplicity and purity of a devotion to Christ." We trust the Lord, His Word dwells richly in us, it affects our thinking, it affects our behavior. It is simple. God does the work.

What is your thinking like? Where does your mind dwell? We need to be dwelling on these things, the things of Christ and His Word and His work.

### **Prayer**

Father, thank You for Your Word. And Father, we all recognize how we fall short. But I hope we all have a desire to do this and to obey this command, Lord God. You have told us in Your Word that You have given us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Your Son. That we have Your precious and magnificent promises. That by them we may be partakers as Your Word says, of the divine nature. That we might become like Christ. That His life would be manifest. Father, I pray that we would recognize apart from Christ we can do nothing. And I pray that we would allow Your Word to dwell richly in us, that we would be convicted throughout the day of thoughts that are not right, that we would use this Word as You have given it to us through Your servant Paul, as a guide to think exactly what You command us to think about. Help us to do that, Lord God. I pray for anyone here who really feels convicted and recognizes their thinking has been so wrong – I pray they just repent and confess it to You and rejoice, rejoice in the joy of their salvation. And I pray we would fight the good fight of faith, we would believe what You said, rather than what we see, that we would renew our minds with Your truth, whatever is revealed in Your Word, those things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Thank You for Your Word. May we be encouraged to walk in a manner worthy of this great calling. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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