

Philippians 4:8 Part 1

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 10/21/2007

What Are You Thinking About: The Assault on Truth

Prayer

Father, we know because You have said so in Your Word, that our ransom has been paid. That our sins have been forgiven. Not because of anything that we have done, but because Your grace has been manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. That He gave Himself for us. We praise You for that. And Father, may we, as we look into Your Word, Your loving Word, may we respond as those who do not just listen, Lord God, but do what You say so that You will be glorified. I thank You for Your Word. We thank You for the opportunity to hear it today. We pray You would open our minds to understand the Scriptures, again so that You would be glorified. And we pray this now in Jesus' name.

Sermon

In American churches we have, I believe, an epidemic of epic proportions. It seems as though so many people claim to be evangelical Christians, yet in church after church, Sunday after Sunday, congregations cry out like babies for milk, never maturing. And even worse, they cry out for fleshly things to satisfy their fleshly desires. Now the one who cries for worldly wisdom, unfortunately, is placated by pastors and ungodly elders who submit to man rather than God, who respond week after week with the basics of the faith and a man-centered, twisted Gospel, using books, and topics, lately even animals on stage – whatever it is. Now I believe underlying these decisions on how to feed the sheep through these books and topics is a theology, a paradigm, which does not believe in the all-sufficiency of the Word of God and its ability alone to change lives. It is a paradigm that actually demeans the truth of God and elevates man's wisdom concerning God.

And folks, we need to recognize in churches today there is an assault on biblical truth. And it is coming from many pulpits and many ministries these days. Now you might think this assault is new, but there is nothing new under the sun. We have the same assault in the Garden of Eden with Satan saying to Eve, "Did God really say that?" "Did God really say..." Ultimately, these pastors will say now in their actions, "Did God really say we should 'preach the Word in season and out of season'? Did God really say, 'It is the Word that performs its work in you'? Did God really say, 'Sanctify them in Thy truth. Thy Word is truth'? Did God really say, 'The sum of Thy Word is truth'? Did God really say, 'Do not lean on your own understanding'? Did God really say, 'Friendship with the world is hostility towards God'? Did God really say, 'Pastors and teachers are for the equipping of the saints, for the works of service'?"

You get my point. There is an all-out assault in churches on biblical truth. Wicked pastors have crept in unnoticed and have assaulted the truth of God, turning the grace of God into licentiousness. You see that through their actions, Sunday after Sunday. What you do reveals what you believe. If you believe the Word alone is all-powerful and all-sufficient, that it is from God, then you will preach the Word and you will obey the Word and you will want to hear the Word of God. So many pastors say, "Well I believe

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the Word is sufficient.” But yet their actions testify to the opposite week after week. So many people say, “Oh I believe the Word of God is sufficient.” Yet our actions at times testify to the fact that we do not believe that, with the pitiful result of a malnourished, immature, worldly church.

Now with these incredible dangers assaulting biblical truth in churches, how is it that we do not allow ourselves to be conformed to these worldly ideas? I believe we are going to see part of that today, as we see the mindset of a heavenly citizen. And I think we are going to address the question, “What are we thinking about?” Would you turn in your Bibles with me to Philippians chapter 4. And again, we are now coming to the close of the book of Philippians. It has been a wonderful book. We have seen the Apostle Paul share wonderful truth from God.

Now just in remembrance, let’s remember the context. The Apostle Paul is under house arrest. He is chained to a Roman guard 24/7. The Philippian church and the Apostle Paul were very close together. They were one of the only churches that supported him. They had sent Epaphroditus to support him and encourage him. Paul has already shared his circumstances, that he is in imprisoned but the Gospel is not. He has already shared his attitude: “To live is Christ and to die is gain.” To live is Christ, and to live being Christ is to live serving His body, and specifically the Philippians there. To die is gain and that is far much better, for he would be with Christ. He has shared his understanding, that in everything he desired Christ to be magnified through his circumstances, whether through life or through death.

And at this point, he addressed the Philippians’ attitudes. They were to be united in spirit. They were to have the same mind, they were to be humble, they were to see others as more important than themselves, they were to have the mind of Christ. And after giving the perfect example of humility, the Lord Jesus Christ, who obediently submitted Himself to the point of death, even death on a cross - we see that He was exalted alone to His rightful place as Lord of all. And because Jesus Christ is Lord of all, we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God at work in us. We should be obeying. “Just as you have always obeyed... work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” [Philippians 2:12]

And then he told us not to complain and argue. Ultimately, if He is the Lord, He is sovereign over our circumstances; and complaining and arguing is a denial of His lordship over our lives. Then in chapter 3, we saw that we would face opposition. Paul encouraged them to rejoice in the Lord. To heed the warnings,

² Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;
(And then Paul said) **³ for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God**
and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. [Philippians 3:2-3]

“Bad guys do that. We do not do that.” And then Paul gave his example of how he used to be a bad guy, how he used to put his confidence in all those things, a long list of religious accomplishments. But he said basically, “All of that is dung in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things.”

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Then we saw the mind of Christ in the Apostle Paul. We saw the Apostle Paul pressing forward, not looking back, reaching towards the upward call, the goal, the Christ-likeness and being with Christ. We were exhorted to do the same thing. We were exhorted to mimic Paul, to imitate him and those who are like him, those who by faith are pressing forward in the midst of these circumstance, to what God has ordained for us as believers – Christ-likeness. And Paul gave two examples of why we should do that. Because we are not like the many. There are many who are on the road to destruction. There are many who set their minds on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. Therefore, we should be focused on the things of heaven and pressing toward those things. Then in chapter 4 we saw we should stand firm in the Lord. Therefore, because of where we are being taken by the Lord Jesus Christ, what He is doing in us now, stand firm in the Lord.

And the last few weeks, I don't know if you remember, we looked at the three "R's" for the daily walk. We need to be *reconciled*. We saw that Euodia and Syntyche had a problem. And Paul did not address the issues. He did not say, "Ok, let's go through this issue, let's go through that issue." But instead, "I exhort you to be harmonious" or literally that same word, "same-minded." The mind of Christ. In conflict, when believers have the mind of Christ, there will be unity.

We saw that we are to *rejoice* in the Lord, "and again," Paul says, "again, I say, rejoice!" Rejoice in the Lord! Not "Rejoice in your circumstances" but "Rejoice in the Lord" in the midst of those circumstances.

We saw we are to *rest* in the Lord, to trust Him, to rely upon Him, to find our peace in Him alone. You remember how we are to overcome worry and anxiety? "Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men." Passive voice. Let it be manifested. Why? "The Lord is near." The Lord is near! The King of kings, Lord of lords, He is near. Let it be known to all men.

And we saw in the wonderful passage we looked at in depth last week that we are commanded to be anxious for nothing, that worry is a sin. It is at the core of our relationship with Christ; it attacks that core because we trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation. And we trust in Him for sanctification. We trust in Him. Faith is at the core of our relationship with Christ, and when we worry, it eats into that core. It is a terrible, awful sin. It is a lack of faith.

So what is the solution? God is a gracious God. He does not just say, "Don't be anxious. Get over it." He says,

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶ 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 your minds in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:4-7]

Instead of worrying, pray. And I hope this week, every time you were tempted to worry after hearing the Word last week, you prayed instead. That you prayed instead, you made your requests known to the Lord concerning those issues. You cast your cares upon Him concerning those things. You were thankful

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in the midst of those circumstances. And I pray and hope that you experience truly the peace of God which surpasses comprehension, which garrisoned and guarded your heart and minds in Christ Jesus.

It is at this point Paul continues, I believe, in the same thought. So again, would you turn in your Bibles with me to Philippians 4 and we are going to look at verse 8.

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. (And he says in verse 9,) ⁹ The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice (or literally “do”) these things; and the God of peace shall be with you. [Philippians 4:8-9]

The first thing we need to note in our passage today is he says, “Finally, brethren,” but he said, “Finally, brethren” before right? Is this the last thing that Paul has to say? Basically the term in Greek means “as for the rest.” He is simply saying, not “it is all over,” but “I have more to say.” “As for the rest, brethren.” Notice who he is speaking to. He is speaking to brethren. We saw this earlier in Philippians, that they are brethren. They are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul relays clearly that they are in the same spiritual family, a spiritual family based on faith in Jesus Christ. “Finally, brethren...” It is to believers. It is to those who know the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to brothers and sisters in the faith. It is to his children because of faith in Jesus Christ.

Now before we look at the commands here, we need to recognize that if you have not placed your faith in Jesus Christ, this is not for you. It is not, “Finally, those of you who do not believe in Jesus.” It is, “Finally, brethren...” These commands, you see, you cannot do. And they do not make sense to you. You do not understand them. They are for believers - those whose, as we have seen, citizenship is in heaven. They are the redeemed in Christ.

So then we have the command to believers in here. And notice there are actually two commands in verses 8-9, which we are going to look at in the next week also. End of verse 8, “...let your mind dwell on these things.” Middle of verse 9, “...practice these things...” There are basically two commands in the text here that the rest of the text is centered around. The first command we are going to look at today is “...let your mind dwell on these things.” And Paul initially gives the things first and then the command. Again verse 8, “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, (here is the command) let your mind dwell on these things.” [Philippians 4:8]

The word in Greek is *logizomai*. Now if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, it will not take you long to realize that the Christian life is played out first and foremost in the mind. You have heard the old saying, “Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a life.” Folks, it is clear from Scripture that our thinking determines what we do. In Romans chapter 8, Paul goes so far, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to say our thinking determines who we are. Romans chapter 8, let me read that for you. Verse 5,

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⁵ For those who are according to the flesh (what do they do?) set their minds on the things of the flesh, (that is why fleshly churches do fleshly things) but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ 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; ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ However, you are not in the flesh (your identity is not a fleshly identity) 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]

See, what you think is an evidence of who you really are! Now this passage says, “Let your mind dwell...” *Logizomai*. Now you are saying, “I think about stuff, I believe I am a believer. But I think about things that are bad. Things come into my mind. And I do not always dwell on the Word of God.” That is why the Apostle Paul shares later that we are not to be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). We as believers can have renewed minds. And here is the command. *Logizomai*. “...let your mind dwell on these things.” This word in its basic meaning speaks of thinking according to logical rules. It was actually an accounting term. It does not have a sense of emotion in any way. Usually accountants are seen as not very emotional. Why? Because they are not in a very emotional business. They are adding and subtracting. They are just doing things. They are making judgments. They are making reasonings concerning numbers and things like that. *Logizomai*. Think according to logical rules. Take into account, keep a mental record, reckon (it is translated) or consider. And it speaks of objective reckoning. Thinking something through carefully and logically. A.T. Robinson, a 19th century Greek scholar, in his word picture says, “It means a deliberate and prolonged contemplation as if one is weighing a mathematical problem.” *Logizomai*. And folks, the things that we have listed to reckon about certainly do evoke emotion. They do. But this term does not carry a sense of emotion. It is an accounting term. Reckon. It is in the first command in Romans 6. “Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God.” Make these facts clear in your mind, apart from emotion. This is who you are in Christ. Dead to sin and alive to God.

So here we have the command concerning a list of things. Let your mind dwell or reckon or think about. And also this verse is in an imperative mood. This verb, it is a command from the living God. It is also in the present tense. We are to be continually reckoning, thinking about, considering these things. This list of things. Continually, habitually reckoning, considering. Continually, habitually running these things through our minds.

Remember, as I shared a few minutes ago, that non-believers or those who are of said faith or make believers who are on the road to destruction – Philippians 3, what does it say? They have set their mind, at the end of Philippians 3:19, “¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.” [Philippians 3:19] That is what they think about – earthly things. But we are commanded as believers to reckon, as we will see, things that are not earthly things.

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Colossians 3, we have been through that before. Colossians 3:1-4,

¹ If then you have been raised up with Christ, (Paul is saying, “If you are saved; if His death, burial and resurrection have been applied to you; if you are raised; if you are united with Christ; if that has happened...”) **keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed,** (we see) **then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. [Colossians 3:1-4]**

Jonathan Edwards wrote, “The ideas and images in men’s minds are invisible powers that constantly govern them.” Now Edwards is right. But we do not need Edwards to tell us this. Romans chapter 8 says that, along with Romans chapter 12. Folks, it is absolutely crucial that we learn to think Biblically in every area of our lives, and ultimately, that we bring our thoughts into submission to the Lord Jesus Christ through His Word. That we think like Christ, as His Word dwells richly in us. That we apply His truth to everything. And as we will see I believe, we do not do this if we are living in falsehood.

Each and every one of us knows that our sin begins with our thoughts, right? And in Scripture, often the term “mind” and “heart” are used synonymously. Jesus made it clear that our actions come out of our hearts. Mark 7:18.

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

It all starts from in our hearts, where our thoughts are at. And if we are going to be more like Christ, we need to recognize that our sins begin in our thought life and that is where the battle for the Christian life is fought – in our minds. We must allow Christ to be victorious over our thinking as His Word dwells richly in us, as we will see, as we look at and contemplate and think about and consider whatever is true.

Now remember what I shared earlier. This passage is not divorced from its context. Conflict, a lack of joy, anxiety are all indicators that one’s thought life is not in its proper place, right? Therefore it is imperative that we pay attention to this passage. Now this is an amazing verse because Paul shares the categories that our thoughts should be in. Categories that our thoughts should be in. And we see six very practical categories with two statements at the end that kind of summarize those categories. Now before we get into these categories specifically, I need to give one more caveat.

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This passage is not simply speaking about positive thinking, as many would say. We will see that everything on this list has to do with Christ and is found in His Word. Unlike those who twist and distort the Scriptures in the past, like Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller and now Joel Osteen, who teach positive thinking with a verse thrown in here or there – unlike their twisted message of positive thinking, today I believe we will see this list is all centered around the person of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Word.

Ok, so what are these things? What are these things we should be reckoning? I was going to attempt to go through all these things and actually go through verse 9, but as I was preparing, I found out that we are only going to do the first one today. So we are going to look at *whatever is true*. The first thing. Whatever is true. Ok, so it is clear here we are commanded to be continually regarding, thinking about, calculating in our mind, concerning certain things. And the first one here is *whatever is true*.

Now as you see here, there is a list of whatever's. There are six whatever's. "...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute..." And then there are two summary statements. "...if there is any excellence." And it is in a first class condition. "If and there is any excellence." "...if there is anything worthy of praise (and there is), let your mind dwell on these things."

Now it is important to realize that Paul does not say, "whatever was true" or "whatever will be true." He actually puts in the verb one time, "whatever (present tense, continually) is true." And then the rest are "whatever..." There is no "is." It is implied. Whatever is true. And so why is that so important? Whatever *is* true. Well take for example, if I was to say, "My shirt is brown or blue," or whatever it is. Green. I would be describing a characteristic of my shirt. *It is* this, right? If I was to say, "Bob is a police officer," I would be describing a characteristic concerning Bob right now, right? Not he was, but he is a police officer. Not he will be a police officer. And in our text, I believe Paul is characterizing these things. "...whatever *is*..." Whatever has the characteristic of truth, as we will see. Whatever has the characteristic of being honorable. "...whatever *is*..."

Now as I have shared, I think this first statement here, *whatever is true* is sovereignly – I know it is sovereignly put there by the Lord as the first statement. And I believe everything else hangs on this statement. Now again, before we look at this idea of *whatever is true*, I think we need to cast aside our preconceived notions based on erroneous teaching, when confronted with truth from Scripture. What am I saying? Again, I believe worldly influences come into the church concerning "truth." I shared it in the beginning of this message. Churches in general now believe it is true if it works. That is pragmatism. "It is true. It is the true way to do ministry if we have results. That is whatever is true! It is true if it works!" We have Christian counselors that say, "All truth is God's truth;" who use observations from psychology and nature and put them on the level of revealed truth. As we will see, not all truth is God's truth. Some truth is merely man's wisdom. As James would say in James 4, the wisdom from man is earthly, natural and demonic.

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Folks, the church is to be, as we will see, the pillar and support of the truth. Not the pillar and support of worldly pragmatism – whatever works to save souls. The pillar and support of the truth. Satan has effectively been saying through many pastors through their actions, “Did God really say that? Did He really say that is how we should be doing church? Did He really say that is how you should be living? Did He really say that?” Therefore it is crucial we have a Biblical understanding of what Biblical truth is. What is this truth that is being spoken of in our passage? *Whatever is true*. It seems like a pretty open-ended statement.

The world translated “true” in Greek is *alēthē* here. It comes from the word *alētheia*. It speaks of and refers to that which is reliable and valid, that which is real and genuine. It always speaks of truth. And it is always in the context as opposed to error and that which is false. Now I believe, when we look at this idea of Biblical truth in Scripture, we need to see first and foremost that truth is a characteristic of the living God Himself.

Why don't you turn with me to John chapter 3, and we are going to look at verse 33. Jesus says in this passage, and actually we will start at verse 31,

³¹ He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.³² What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness; and no man receives His witness.³³ He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true.” [John 3:31-33]

Psalms 57. We sing the song “Be Exalted, Oh God” and it is from this Psalm. Psalm 57:9,

⁹ I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to Thee among the nations. ¹⁰ For Thy lovingkindness is great to the heavens, And Thy truth to the clouds. ¹¹ Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Thy glory be above all the earth. [Psalm 57:9-11]

Psalms 31:5, we have this prophetic word concerning what Jesus would say.

⁵ Into Thy hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth. [Psalm 31:5]

God is a God of truth. One of His innate characteristics is truth. And we see in Scripture that every person of the Trinity is identified as true. In John 7:28, in John 8:26, Jesus speaks of the Father. He says, “He Who sent Me is true.” Concerning the Spirit of God, we have many verses. As Jesus shares in John 14:16-17,

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth...” [John 14:16-17a]

John 15:26,

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²⁶ "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me..." [John 15:26]

John 16:13-14,

¹³ "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you." [John 16:13-14]

The Spirit of God will glorify Christ by taking His Word and disclosing it to us. That is why whenever I hear, "Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit," or "Church of the Holy Spirit," I say, "Not from God." The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ through the Word. "For He shall take of Mine and shall disclose it to you." Innate characteristic of the Spirit of God is truth. What did Jesus say in John 14:6?

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." [John 14:6]

John writes concerning Jesus, 1:1,

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [John 1:1]

John 1:14,

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. [John 1:14]

Ephesians 4:20, as Paul is exhorting the Ephesians not to live like the Gentiles, those who are unsaved. "Do not live that way! Their minds are corrupted, their hearts are hardened. Do not live that way!"

²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus. [Ephesians 4:20-21]

God is characterized in Scripture by truth. He is true. And notice because God's very nature involves truth, it is impossible for Him to lie. Titus 1:2 says God cannot lie. Hebrews 6:18 says, "...it is impossible for God to lie..." Everything He says is true because God is true. It is impossible for Him to lie, and everything He says is true. And folks, as we will see, His Word is true. He is the source of all truth. And now we really did not need to go from the point that God is true to the point that He cannot lie to the point that His Word is true because Scripture declares that His Word is true over and over again. I am going to run through a list of verses; you can note them down and look them up later. Psalm 119:142,

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¹⁴² Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Thy law is truth. [Psalm 119:142]

Psalm 119:151,

¹⁵¹ Thou art near, O LORD, And all Thy commandments are truth. [Psalm 119:151]

Psalm 119:159-160,

¹⁵⁹ Consider how I love Thy precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Thy lovingkindness. ¹⁶⁰ The sum of Thy word is truth...[Psalm 119:159-160a]

As Jesus is praying to the Father in His High Priestly prayer, we see in John 17:17, He says,

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

We are sanctified by God's Word, not by man's understanding of truth.

Second Thessalonians 2:13, Paul says,

¹³ But we should always give thanks to God for you, (these are the Thessalonians) brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. [2 Thessalonians 2:13]

The Gospel is declared to be the truth. Ephesians 1:13, he talks about the message of truth. And he says it again, "...the gospel of your salvation." Colossians 1:3-6. Since we are going back to Philippians, let's turn there to Colossians 1:3-6. And Paul says,

³ We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; (that is someone who is really saved. Faith in Christ, evidence and love for the saints.) ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; [Colossians 1:3-6]

Second Timothy 2:14-15, in contrast to those who are wrangling about words, who are getting all into the verbiage, Timothy is told,

¹⁴ Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God (really important right? "Solemnly charge them in the presence of God.") not to wrangle about words, which is useless, and leads to the ruin of the hearers. ¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. [2 Timothy 2:14-15]

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I have alluded to this passage earlier, 2 Timothy 4:1. Paul in his last words to Timothy we see. He says,

¹ I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: (this is pretty important) ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; ⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. [2 Timothy 4:1-4]

“Preach the Word, it is the truth. The time is going to come when they do not want to hear the truth. They are going to accumulate teachers according to their own desires.” The Word of God is true. God’s Word is true. Whatever is true. God is true. God’s Word is true. It is the only thing we can absolutely affirmatively say is true. You cannot obey this command subjectively. Whatever is true. Whatever is true.

Now we also recognize that God’s works in Scripture are true also. A wonderful passage, in which we see Nebuchadnezzar being humbled from his great pride. Seven years. And as he gets his senses back, he praises the God of heaven. Daniel 4:37,

³⁷ "Now I Nebuchadnezzar (now I believe he is saved, as you hear this) praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride." [Daniel 4:37]

All His works are true. Psalm 111:7-8,

⁷ The works of His hands are truth and justice; All His precepts are sure. ⁸ They are upheld forever and ever; They are performed in truth and uprightness. [Psalm 111:7-8]

God declares truth and action results. All His works are in accordance with truth. Now here we need to be careful because false shepherds will come along and point to the natural sphere and say, “That is God’s truth. Set your mind on that. Look at the beautiful sunset. It is true. Focus on that. Look at the marvelous way we are created. That is true. Focus on that.” Folks, it is very subtle. But we need to recognize the works of God should draw us to give God glory, not to the works themselves for that is idolatry. We are drawn to what God has done and we give Him praise. And apart from that it is idolatry. Do not be deceived by those who say, “All truth is God’s truth.” We are told in Scripture to not lean on our own understanding, but in all our ways acknowledge Him. And in Proverbs we have a great picture of the Christian life in Proverbs chapter 3. I am going to read that for you. Solomon writes to his son,

¹My son, do not forget my teaching, (that is the Word of God) But let your heart keep my commandments; ²For length of days and years of life, And peace they will add to you. ³Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of

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God and man. (now you have the truth and now you have the faith) ⁵**Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding.** ⁶**In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.** ⁷**Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. [Proverbs 3:1-7]**

Are you binding it on your heart, are you hiding in your heart the truth? "Do not let kindness and truth leave you." Continually let your mind dwell on whatever is true. Whatever is true. Where do we find truth? It is in God's Word. It is what God says. *Whatever is true.*

Let me ask you. Are you dwelling on whatever is true? Or do you analyze your circumstances based on your own wisdom? That is not truth; that is falsehood. What does God say about your life? What does God say about your circumstances? What does God say about your suffering? What does God say about your sin? What does God say about forgiveness? What does God say about Christ? "Whatever is true, let your mind dwell on these things." Continually, habitually, whatever is true.

Are you dwelling on what is true? Are you dwelling on what is true? Are you meditating on His Word? Are you not letting kindness and truth leave you? Folks, we will become like the world by default, Romans 12. "Do not be conformed..." It is passive. It will happen by default. If you are not renewed in the spirit of your mind, you will be like the world. You will be thinking falsehood. You will be seeing things through your own wisdom. But be renewed! Do not be conformed to this world but renewed. Whatever is true.

Now we need to recognize the opposite of truth is error and falsehood. Whatever is true, not whatever is a lie or false. God is true, but in opposite contrast we have an enemy, the god of this world. Second Corinthians 4:4, who epitomizes the opposite of truth. Listen to John chapter 8, as Jesus is addressing the Pharisees who are like their father. John 8:42, let's turn there. John 8:42,

⁴² **Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.** ⁴³ **Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.** (those who are not saved cannot hear the Word; they cannot understand it) ⁴⁴ **You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand (in what?) in the truth, because there is no truth in him.** (he has no truth) **Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.** ⁴⁵ **But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.** ⁴⁶ **Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?** ⁴⁷ **He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."** [John 8:42-47]

You see, if you do not understand the Word of God, you do not hear it, you are not getting it every Sunday, it is just not making sense – you are not of God. You do not hear the Word of God. You are of your father, the devil. And the Lord Jesus Christ is gracious to deliver us from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son, through faith in Christ. Simply put, I believe we can be focused on

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truth as revealed from God or error and falsehood; and there is no in between. There is no in between. There are no half-truths. Whatever is true.

God is the source of truth. God gives us the only verifiable truth in His Word. We have a worldly wisdom, James 3, which is earthly, natural, and demonic. And the truth of God is revealed in God's Word alone. And it concerns God. What was Jesus' rebuke of Peter when he was thinking man's thoughts? What are man's thoughts? That is man's wisdom, earthly, natural, and demonic. What was His rebuke? Matthew 16:21,

²¹ From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. ²² And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." (sounds like a pretty good idea, right? "No one should die." That sounds like a true statement, "You should not have to die!") ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." [Matthew 16:21-23]

Where are God's interests revealed? Through the Word of God. Man's interests, our own hearts and desires. Folks, the phrase, "All truth is God's truth," used by so many so-called Christian counselors who analyze your psychological state, concerning your so-called sins, is erroneous and sins. It is twisted because it causes us to perceive through our own understanding and not through the truth of God. Whatever is true, whatever is true.

So how do we obey this command? To obey this command, we need to be like the blessed man in Psalm 1 who is meditating on the Word day and night. Colossians 3:16, (And by the way it is not a suggestion. It is an imperative command in the text), ***¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you. [Colossians 3:16]*** And I have shared this many times. Some of you, the Word is not dwelling richly, evidenced by your response to your circumstances. And we need to confess that, when we respond that way. And we need to renew our minds with the Word of God. God is a gracious and loving God. "Let the word of Christ dwell richly..."

Psalm 1, very familiar,

¹ How blessed is 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! ² But (in contrast to that) his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. [Psalm 1:1-2]

It is running through his mind day and night. It is not verses on a card separated from God. It is the living Word, spoken by the living God, the truth of God that we can count on, trust in, believe in because God Himself said it.

Romans 12:2, I shared it before,

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² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, (that is where the battle is) that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. [Romans 12:2]

And I have already shared Colossians chapter 3. ¹ “If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above.” [Colossians 3:1a] Keep seeking the things above. There are those who would criticize the Lord and His people and say, “How can you take care of your family? How can you deal with your financial problems? How can you deal with abuse? How can you get through school or work without focusing on those things? They might say things like, “You are spiritualizing. You are too heavenly minded to be any earthly good.”

In light of this passage and the rest of Scripture, is that accusation valid? No. Paul never denied the temporal reality. He just never trusted in it or focused on it. He saw it all in the context of God’s truth as revealed in the Word of God. *Whatever is true.* So often folks, we are not thinking about whatever is true. We really are not. We are analyzing things through our own wisdom. That is not true. That is not true. That is not Biblical truth.

Let me bring this down to a practical level. Last women’s Bible study on Thursday, I shared a letter (which I received) to the women’s ministry in our church, (which is the women’s Bible study basically). And I was appalled when I saw the assault on Biblical truth in this letter. I shared it with the women. It is very subtle. But let me read it to you.

“We would like to introduce you to Café Parakaleo, an inter-denominational, multi-church ministry for women beginning in East Clark County. The heart behind Café Parakaleo is to bring women from local churches together once a month to unite and ignite one another through the common bond we have in Christ. We will exalt the Lord in worship and exhort and encourage one another through stories of salvation, healing, transformation and beauty, the things we women celebrate.”

What’s wrong with that? It is exhorting and encouraging through our own experiences! Not God’s truth. It is the Word of God that encourages us and exhorts us. Romans 15, “It is God who brings encouragement and perseverance through the Scriptures.” It is very subtle. *Whatever is true.*

Let me continue to share here. When we are in conflict with others, irritated by a spouse or someone in our lives, we are choosing to focus on falsehood rather than truth. You see, if we were looking at the truth, we would consider others as more important than ourselves. We would see our spouses, (for example, the wives) we would see them as joint heirs of the grace of God (as Peter would write in 1 Peter 3:7). So many other truths. When we are not joyful, rejoicing in Christ, grumbling instead, we are living in falsehood, not seeing the true reality that the Lord is near! What the Lord has done for us, that He is the Lord and in His presence is fullness of joy. We are not rejoicing over the Lord of our salvation. We choose to mourn over our circumstances. And that is falsehood. It is not the truth, it is not true, it is not the complete picture, it is not God’s truth, it is not *whatever is true.*

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When we are worrying, we are choosing to dwell on falsehood rather than the truth of God concerning His sovereignty and goodness over us and our circumstances, the wonderful promise that He is near and that through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, we will have guarded hearts, and peace. That is true. That is whatever is true. Now to do this, to be continually regarding whatever is true, we need to be transformed. We need to be in the Word of God. We need to do what He says. Verse 9, we will look at it Lord-willing next week,

⁹ The things you have learned and received and heard (that's God's truth, right?) **and seen in me**, (that's what Paul did. He practiced the truth) **practice these things** (do these things); **and the God of peace shall be with you. [Philippians 4:9]**

Are you lacking peace? I bet you are not regarding or considering whatever is true. I think the rest of the list really falls into line with whatever is true. Where do we find true honorability? Where do we find these things that are of good repute? Where do we find the things that are worthy of praise, as we will see? *Whatever is true* describes the living God, His characteristics and His Word. I want to ask you, what do you meditate on? God's truth or man's falsehood? What do you meditate on? It is so subtle. It is happening all around us. It is very subtle.

So we have seen today that we believers are to be setting our mind, considering, reckoning, on whatever is true. Sitting down and logically thinking through the truth in our minds. Every circumstance, logically thinking through the truth of God concerning those circumstances. Renewing our minds with those circumstances. Now if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, again it does not take us long to realize the walk is played out in our minds. As I shared before, Scripture makes clear that what you think is an indication of who you really are. Who you really are. Let me make this clear. If you do not ponder on the Word of God, you do not think about it, you never have thought about it, it is not something you focus on, it is not something you think about, examine yourself to see if you are in the faith. If you have the mind set on the flesh, you do not have the Spirit of God. Paul said that those who set their mind on earthly things are the many headed to destruction.

And some of those earthly things can be very churchy and very Christ-y. But they are about "me." Your lack of a desire to be in the Word of God can be an evidence that you do not have the Spirit of God. First Corinthians 2:14,

¹⁴ But a natural 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. [1 Corinthians 2:14]

First John 4:4-6,

⁴ You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ⁵ They (these are the people who had been with them and had left, in context) **are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.** (the world listens to worldly people who are

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from the world.) ⁶ **We are from God; he who knows God listens to us** (that is the Apostles, those who saw and touched and held Christ, the beginning of 1 John); **he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. [1John 4:4-6]**

If you do not listen to the Word of God, you do not submit yourself to the Word of God, you are not from God. John 8:44, I have shared it earlier,

⁴⁴ "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? ⁴⁷ He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God." [John 8:44-47]

Some of you here are not from God. You are not saved. And God is a gracious God. He sent His Son Jesus Christ to bear the penalty of your sins on the cross. And you need to come before the Lord of the universe and cry out for mercy to have Him save you. "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord," that is the Lord Jesus Christ, repenting of your sin, that forgiveness, repentance of sins for the forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed for the Lord. "Lord, I have sinned before You. I am wrong. Forgive me. Forgive me." God will forgive you. Examine yourself to see if you are in the faith. If you do not have a heart for the Word throughout the week, throughout the day, something is wrong.

Now sometimes we believers are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We have been evaluating things through falsehood and we need to confess that, right? We need to confess that. We all are tempted to do that. God is gracious.

Now likewise, churches that do not preach the Word, teach the Word of God, live the Word of God, need to examine themselves too. First Timothy 3:15, Paul says, "The church of the living God is (not "will be") the pillar and support of the truth." The pillar and support of the truth. The church is believers, right? It is not a denomination. It is not a name. It is believers in Jesus Christ. We are the pillar and support of the truth. We by God's grace and mercy uphold and support the truth in the midst of a perverse and dying world. And unfortunately lately, many churches are the pillar and support of that which works rather than the church being the pillar and support of the truth.

Whatever is truth, whatever is true. Have you been living in falsehood? Just confess it. "Lord, I have not been seeing my circumstances in accord with whatever is true. I am sorry. You are so gracious, Lord God. You are such a great God." Prioritize the Word of God. Get out of the church that does not teach the Word of God. Listen to sermons on your CD or radio or player. Get into Bible studies. Get into the Word of God. Memorize the Word of God. Hide it in your hearts. And apply it by His power and strength to your life. *Whatever is true.*

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Prayer

Lord God, I thank You for Your Word. Thank You for Your truth. And Father, forgive us for not seeing things in light of Your truth at times. Forgive us for analyzing our circumstances based on our wisdom. Forgive us, Lord God, for doing that. Lord, convict us next time we are confronted with our own sinfulness, leaning on our own understanding, that we may confess it, Lord God; be forgiven, graciously restored. And help us to think about, to regard whatever is true. Father, I pray that this body here would truly be the pillar and support of the truth as You have said. That we would see everything in light of what You have said, Lord God. That we would not analyze and think about life or anything or You apart from what You have said. Thank You for loving us so much You would send Your Son, who is the way and the truth and the life. Thank You for loving us so much You would sanctify us through Your truth because Your Word is truth. Thank You so much that it is Your desire and Your command for us to continually be thinking whatever is true. Father, I pray that we would do that for Your glory. Thank You for Your Word now. In Jesus' name.

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