

“Sanctified Thinking”  
Philippians 4:8  
(Preached at Trinity, July 16, 2017)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we’ve seen, Paul’s benediction contains three different sections. In **Verses 4-9** Paul gives a bullet list of things to do; duties set before the Philippians as followers of Christ: Rejoice, be gentle, don’t worry, pray with thanksgiving, think on good things, practice good deeds. These are duties for us as well.
2. So far we’ve we’ve looked at four of them
  - A. Paul gives a command to be joyful:  
**Philippians 4:4 NAU** - "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"  
For the Christian our joy rises above our earthly condition. In Christ we discover joy that is inexpressible.
  - B. Paul commands us to display a character of gentleness before all men because Christ is near. As Christians we must be gracious.  
**Philippians 4:5 NAU** - "Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near."
  - C. Third, Paul addresses the subject of worry.  
**Philippians 4:6 NAU** - "Be anxious for nothing"
  - D. Then Paul commands the duty of praying with thanksgiving that will guard our hearts and minds against worry.
3. As we come to **Verse 8** Paul is continuing his list of imperative duties. He sets before us the importance of what we put into our minds. He tells us of the sort of things we should think about.
4. Paul gives six ethical terms, each preceded with the Greek word, ὅσα. Translation can be difficult – it speaks of measurement or degree, of quantity. In this verse it is best understood simply as “the whole.” In other words these six ethical terms are categories – parts of the whole.  
By saying, “Whatever is true” Paul is including the entire spectrum of things that are true.
5. By beginning the sentence with the word “finally” Paul seems to be linking **Verses 8-9** with what precedes. If we expect our minds to be filled with joy and peace we must be careful to discipline how we think, upon what do we engage our minds?
6. This morning I want us to consider the importance of our minds in sanctification and then next week I’ll set the particular elements of **Verse 8** before you.

I. The problem with lost humanity is a corrupt mind

A. With the fall, human beings lost the ability to think spiritually. Our minds became depraved. It is often referred to as a corrupt heart

**Romans 1:21 NAU** - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

**Genesis 6:5 NAU** – "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

**Jeremiah 17:9 NAU** - "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

1. The heart describes the core of our being.
2. It is linked to our mind. It is our way of thinking
3. When we say the lost man is spiritually dead, it takes place at the level of the mind

**Romans 1:28 NAU** - "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind,"

**Ephesians 2:1-3 NAU** - "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. <sup>3</sup> Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

4. Over and over the Bible describes our depravity on the level of the mind  
**Ephesians NAU 4:17** – "This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, 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;"

5. It is at the level of the mind that Satan works  
**2 Corinthians 4:3 NAU** – "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

B. The lost man has the collective mind of this world. In other words, they all think the same way.

**Psalms 10:4 NAU** – "The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek *Him*. All his thoughts are, "There is no God."

1. It is this mindset that disregards God  
It is this mindset that lives only for the present  
It is this mindset that places the satisfaction of the flesh as the highest goal  
**Philippians 3:19 NAU** - "whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things"

2. Being earthly minded is being conformed to this world.
    - a. It is a mindset that seems so right but ends in death  
**Proverbs 14:12 NAU** – “There is a way *which seems* right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”
    - b. They often flatter themselves with religion that all is well  
Matthew Henry – The way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly-mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh-pleasing, seem right to those that walk in them, much more the way of hypocrisy in religion, external performances, partial reformations, and blind zeal; this they imagine will bring them to heaven; they flatter themselves in their own eyes that all will be well at last.<sup>1</sup>
- II. God has created us as rational beings which demands the right use of the mind
- A. Sin causes a continual decline in our ability to think clearly, rationally  
**Psalms 53:1 NAU** – “The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; There is no one who does good.”
    1. The mindset of our own culture continues to degrade
      - a. We are no longer able to think deeply
      - b. Only 4% purchase and read a book in a given year
    2. Television and the internet has only increased this mindlessness. When television first came out it was hailed as a great teaching tool. It has proved the opposite.
      - a. Books demand using the imagination. Television does the thinking for you.
      - b. Television moves quickly from scene to scene, image to image. You may see something that makes you think and then the image quickly changes and your mind is distracted and your attention moves to the next image. It develops mindlessness.
      - c. With reading a book you are able to pause, to think, to consider, to go back and reread.
      - d. And the internet trains the mind towards one page blurbs void of any deep thought. Social networking sites slowly weaken our capacity for meaningful dialogue where two people sit face-to-face and interact with one another.
    3. All this means we’ve lost the ability to think deeply, to meditate carefully, to fill our minds with sanctified thoughts.
  - B. Clear thinking is at the heart of Christianity
    1. The Gospel is presented on the level of the mind – this is why Satan blinds the minds of those who do not believe.
    2. Preaching is presented to the mind. Propositional truths are applied to the mind.
    3. Even holiness involves the way we think

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 985.

4. To denigrate the importance of engaging the mind is great evil.
  - a. This is why the rejection of expository preaching by some is nothing less than conformity to this world—and friendship with this world is hostility towards God.
  - b. There is even an anti-education, anti-study mentality among some. This is an anti-Christian mindset.
5. John Stott said in his book, *Your Mind Matters—The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life*

“Perhaps the current mood (cultivated in some Christian groups) of anti-intellectualism begins now to be seen as the serious evil it is. It is not true piety at all but part of the fashion of the world and therefore a form of worldliness. To denigrate the mind is to undermine foundational Christian doctrines. Has God created us rational beings, and shall we deny our humanity which he has given us? Has God spoken to us, and shall we not listen to his words? Has God renewed our mind through Christ, and shall we not think with it? Is God going to judge us by his Word, and shall we not be wise and build our house upon this rock?”<sup>2</sup>

III. Paul’s solution is always the same. Give attention to the mind

A. Paul says here we must fill the mind with virtuous thoughts

**Philippians 4:8 NAU** - "f there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things"

**KJV** - "think on these things."

1. Our minds need to be transformed  
This transformation begins at salvation
2. God transforms our mind. God enables us to see clearly, think rightly. We are given the ability to commune with God.  
Our actions are transformed because our minds are transformed. He changes our way of thinking.
3. Paul is saying our minds must become a storehouse of good things. Our minds must be continually be renewed which will affect our way of thinking and affect the way we live.

**Ephesians 4:22 NAU** – “that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,<sup>23</sup> and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,<sup>24</sup> and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

B. In **Romans 12** Paul stresses the renewing of the mind.

**Romans 12:2 NAU** - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

1. How is it that our minds are renewed? By filling them with good things, the chief being the Word of God, the source of all truth.

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<sup>2</sup> Stott, John, *Your Mind Matters: The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2006).

- a. The Bible transforms our minds  
**Hebrews 4:12 NAU** – “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”  
**Colossians 3:16 NAU** – “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom . . .”
- b. Our minds are renewed as we daily read, study, and meditate upon the Word of God.
- 2. Paul’s point here in **Verse 8** is we have to fill our minds with good things. We have to train our minds to think
  - a. Through limiting those things that are mind numbing. Why were the Puritans so rich and systematic in their thinking?
  - b. Through reading and study. Paul says here that we must be aware of the importance of whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and of good repute—of things excellent and of good repute.
  - c. We must give ourselves to meditating on good things.  
**Philippians 4:8 NAU** - "dwell on these things"  
 This means we must apply them to our mind.

#### Conclusion:

1. In **Verse 4** Paul commands that we rejoice always. In **Verses 6-7** he commands us to put aside worry and set our hearts towards God in prayer with thanksgiving which sets our minds and hearts at peace.  
 This joy and peace fades quickly in the mind filled with earthly things.
2. We must fill our minds with good things: things of excellence and praise.
  - a. In the previous chapter Paul said of his own life:  
**Philippians 3:13-14 NAU** - "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"
  - b. Such heavenly mindedness demands carefully guarding our minds from being overrun with earthly things.  
**Colossians 3:2 NAU** - "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."  
**Romans 8:6 NAU** – “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace”
3. What are you filling your mind with? What are you listening to? What are you watching? How much time are you spending filling your mind with God’s Word?  
**Philippians 4:8 NAU** - "if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."