

I would like to introduce our passage this morning... by having you consider with me... the human brain. Have you ever marveled at what God has created in each of us...?

A 2012 article in Scientific American... demonstrates how hard humans will try to copy God's creative power. ... A team of scientists from around the world are attempting to build a digital version... of the human brain. ... They are trying to construct a super-computer... that they say will replicate the workings of a human brain. ... They call it the Human Brain Project.

According to Dr. Henry Markram... the lead scientist on the project... the project aims to "reverse engineer" the workings of the brain... beginning with the brains of small mammals... and then culminating with the human brain. ... Dr. Markram claims... "We anticipate that the brain model we develop will have most... if not all... human cognitive capabilities."

But fellow-scientists in the same field... have severely criticized the Human Brain Project. ... First... these scientists argue that we can't possibly replicate the connectivity of the 100 to 500 **trillion** synapses.... of an adult brain. ... Second... they note that the human brain isn't just a static body part. ... Instead... our brains are constantly changing and growing. And in the words of one reporter... "**Understanding** the brain is one thing... **making** one that can run a virtual human being... is a different story altogether." ... Finally... even Dr. Markram himself concedes... that the human brain "is millions of times more powerful than the most powerful supercomputer that exists today." ... The human brain is also vastly more

efficient. ... If completed... the energy required to run an artificial brain would equal the megawatts needed to run an entire small town in the middle of winter. ... Our incredibly complex brains hum along on the equivalent of a mere 20 watts of energy... or the energy needed for a small light bulb. (...Rick will probably tell you that my brain only uses 10 watts... because the bulb is a lot smaller than everyone else's... I thought that I would say that BEFORE he had the chance...)

The brain's twelve to fourteen **billion** cells... are only a shadow of its complexity... (you see) every cell sends out thousands of connecting tendrils... so that a single cell may be connected with 10,000 neighboring cells... each of which is constantly exchanging data impulses. ... These twelve to fourteen billion brain cells times 10,000 connectors... make the human mind an unparalleled computer.

The mind's activity has been compared to 1,000 switchboards... each big enough to serve New York City... all running at full speed as they receive and send questions and orders. ... Put another way... there is more electronic equivalent in one human brain... than in all the radio and television stations of the entire world put together!

The human brain does not miss a thing. ... It is capable of developing Einstein's theory of relativity... to creating the polyphonic texture of a Bach symphony ... to the transmitting and receiving a message from God Himself... a feat... by the way... that **no** computer will **ever** accomplish.

(LISTEN)... The dizzying potential of the human mind... reaches its highest point... in the possibility of you and I possessing the mind of Christ. There is no higher peak for our mind... than what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:16...

1 Corinthians 2:16 (ESV)

“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

No computer will ever be able to think God's thoughts... nor will any device be able to know the heart of God. ... But the grey matter that resides between our ears... has this capacity. ... In fact... that is what it was created for...to have the mind of Christ.

This God-like potential points us to a HUGE responsibility... because very often... we Christians befoul the mind of Christ... that is in us. ... We muddy it and pollute it with sewage that we flood it with. ... Far more often than we will admit... our thinking is not Christian.

We are often not what we think we are... but we are always what we think. We are the product of our thoughts. ... If you do not control your thought life... you will not control your life. ... Feed material into your mind that produces evil thoughts... and you will soon lose control of your life.

William Barclay says, *“...it is a law of life that, if a man thinks of something often enough and long enough, he will come to the stage when he cannot*

stop thinking about it. His thoughts will be quite literally in a groove out of which he cannot jerk them."

A person who centers his thoughts upon the world and its things... will live for the world and its things: ... money... wealth... lands... property... houses... possessions... position... power... recognition... honor... social standing... fame... and a host of other worldly pursuits. ... A person who centers his thoughts...

- upon the flesh and its lusts... will live to satisfy the flesh through such things as pride... self... greed... pleasure... and sex.
- upon the eyes and its lusts... will live to satisfy the eyes and its lusts through such things as the immoral... pornographic images from magazines... films... books... and television... ... looking a second time... or third time to drink in as much as possible.
- upon the pride of life will live to satisfy such things as the desire for recognition... honor... position... and authority.

A mind set upon the world and the flesh... is what leads to anxiety and worry... emptiness and restlessness. ... This was the stress of last week's passage in Philippians... (Philippians 4:6-7... to be exact). ... A worldly mind can never know peace... not true peace... not the peace of God. ... God will just never allow a worldly mind to have peace. ...And here is the reason why. ... It is the restlessness of the human soul... that He uses... to draw men and women to Himself. ... And even as I mention these things... I have no doubt that some people who are listening to me now... are being drawn to Christ. ... They know that they are restless ... and have been pursuing satisfaction in the wrong places.

May God completely draw you to Himself this morning... as we turn now to His Word. ... Our passage this morning is just two verses. But they pack a mighty wallop!

Philippians 4:8-9

I read a quote from psychologist/researcher... Dr. Elinore Kinarthy... who stated "The average person has more than two hundred negative thoughts a day — worries... jealousies... insecurities... cravings for forbidden things... etc. ... Depressed people... she reports... have as many as six hundred.

You can't **eliminate** all the troublesome things that go through your mind... but you can certainly **reduce** the number of negative thoughts. ... God's Word... here... instructs us to be careful what we think about... and what occupies our minds... because our lives are a product of what we think.

That is why it is imperative... that we invite Christ to take over our minds.

Proverbs 4:23 (NASB)

Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

Every Jewish male is taught to recite the Shema of Israel. It comes from Deuteronomy 6:5...

Deuteronomy 6:5 (ESV)

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

But when Jesus quoted Israel's great Shema... He said...

Mark 12:30 (ESV)

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

What do you notice that is different...? ... "Mind" is Jesus' addition to the ancient Shema... that the Israelites had been reciting for hundreds of years. ... We have to know that there must have been several gasps... among the crowd when Jesus said this. I am sure everyone noticed. It would have stood out. It would be as if I were to sing... "God bless our president... man that I love... stand beside him... and guide him..." Several of you would gasp... and not just because of my singing voice.

Jesus wanted it to stand out. He wanted to make a strong point... as Paul is doing in our passage this morning. ... Are you loving God with all of your mind...? That is what our Lord wants... and demands. ... He wants us to love God with our entire thought-life...? ... Every idea... every notion... consideration... deliberation... reflection... meditation...! "All of our minds."

Paul re-issues this command of Jesus in the context of doing away with worry... which undoubtedly was at the heart of a church fight in Philippi... being led primarily by Euodia and Syntyche. ... Now... last week we saw that Paul gave four imperatives that... if obeyed... would bring them the peace of God — namely: 1) Be constantly rejoicing... 2) let your

reasonableness (or your being unflappable... even when wronged) be known to all... 3) be alert to God's constant nearness... and 4) pray correctly. ... We spent time with each of these last week... and if these are implemented... Paul promised... "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (in verse 7).

Now... in today's passage... Paul exhorted the Philippians to embrace exalted thought patterns... that will enhance God's presence and peace.

Several commentaries point out that these six... rhythmically arranged virtues... are qualities that the 1st Century... Philippian... Greco-Roman culture itself... held high. ... Paul took the values of their own culture and used them in his Christian exhortation. ... He took terms that were current in moral philosophy... and pressed them into service for Christianity.

Paul is calling Euodia and Syntyche... and the entire Philippian church... to a life that is not only **Christian** ... but a life with a broad moral appeal... to their contemporary Greco-Roman culture.

You know whenever a non-believer falls into immoral behavior... our culture hardly even takes notice... but when a Christian behaves immorally... attention is immediately called to it. (This is how it should be... by the way.) Our culture knows from it's own sense of right and wrong... when we stumble and sin. Our culture has a moral comprehension that **we** must meet... with the intention that "in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation" we would "shine as lights in the world" (as Paul writes in Phil

2:15). ...Then... as now... a winsome ethical testimony is a powerful evangelistic force in an unbelieving culture.

So let's look closely... now at the kind of thoughts that invite peace into our lives... I will briefly touch on each of these six elements... and then encourage you to consider what is required... to make them your mental focus.

First, the Philippians must contemplate "whatever is true," which here means truth in the broadest, most comprehensive sense.

Keep untruth out of your mind. ... Gossip... political propaganda... what our culture says is good (but we know is not.) ... Put it in the trash can. Hit the delete button. Activate your anti-virus... or junk mail... against it.

Truth includes facts and statements that are in accordance with reality (not lies... rumors... or embellishments)... sincere (not deceitful or with evil motives)... and loyal... faithful... proper... reliable... and genuine. Truth is a characteristic of God.

For the Believer... truth begins with God... and His embodiment of truth. He is all truth... and his gospel is truth. In John 17:17 — God's word... He says "is truth"... Therefore... a mind that contemplates what is true... settles a lot of their mind on Christ... the Word... and the gospel. But it isn't just the Bible that we are to think about. No... we are encouraged to interact with God's creation... to rationally engage God's creation... in every

avenue of life... from faith... to science ...to relationships... to public life... to business... thinking and speaking the truth in each of these areas.

Second... Paul's readers must focus on "whatever is honorable." ...The Greek word here... translated *honorable*... is used elsewhere by Paul... in his letters. He used it in the Pastoral Epistles as a description for Timothy and for Titus... to select men to hold office in the church. ... The word signifies a personal moral excellence that is dignified and worthy of honor... And this is the meaning here. ... The Philippians are to focus on whatever is dignified... and noble... and honorable.

There are many things that are not respectable... and Christians should not think about these things. ... This does not mean we hide our heads in the sand and avoid what is unpleasant and displeasing... but it does mean we do not focus our attention on dishonorable things and permit them to control our thoughts. ... We may not be able to prevent birds from flying over our heads... but we can certainly prevent them from building nests in our hair... ... We will have dishonorable thoughts. But we don't need to let them stay and ferment.

Third, they were to concentrate on "whatever is just." ... He used "just" or "right" ... in the sense of right thought... or action. ... The Philippians were to contemplate the things that make for just living — doing the right thing. ... It has to do with right behavior toward man... and God. ... The believer is to keep his thoughts upon his duty toward men and God — upon doing what is right toward both.

Fourth... the readers were to focus on "whatever is pure." ... Free from contamination... or blemish... unmixed and unmodified... wholesome. ... Paul probably was speaking of moral purity... often very difficult to maintain in thoughts. ... But... this is not limited to sexual purity but extends to all areas of moral purity in thought and speech and actions. ... They were to focus on that which is not tainted with evil.

Fifth, the Philippians were to contemplate "whatever is lovely." ... The meaning of the word translated "*lovely*" involves harmony. ...A person needs to have thoughts that promote harmony... instead of unnecessary division and schism. ... murmuring... criticism... and reaction. ...The believer's thoughts are to be focused upon things that are lovely — that build people up... not tear them down.

But "lovely" also means those things that put themselves forward by their attractiveness. ... "Lovely" includes not only what is harmonious... but what is aesthetically pleasing to the eye... "all that is beautiful in creation... and in human lives." ... And of course this would include such things as a sunset... to a symphony... (or a Christian Rock concert) ... to someone showing love to widows and orphans...— all things beautiful.

Sixth, Paul's readers were to consider "whatever is commendable," which refers to the kind of conduct that is spoken of highly by other people. ... These are not discouraging... or thoughts that will bring you down... into depression. ... But rather they fill your heart with happiness.

They also speak well of the thinker — they are thoughts that reveal positive and constructive thinking.

(Listen) Every believer's thoughts... if heard by others... should be admirable - not embarrassing.

These six qualities of thinking... together form a portrait of the mental focus and aspirations... that... we... as believers... are to have. ... And then offers a comprehensive summary and command: "if there is any excellence... if there is anything worthy of praise... think about these things"

And notice that the command is ongoing: "Think [continually] on these things"—let your mind continually dwell on these things. Ponder them without ceasing.

No doubt Euodia and Syntyche... while immersed in their conflict... had not been thinking elevated thoughts. ... However... as they likely took Paul's injunction to heart and began to think thoughts that were "true" and "honorable" and "just" and "pure" and "lovely" and "commendable," they were infused with positive aspirations that facilitated their reconciliation.

And twenty centuries later... we who make the decision to continually think only of such things... will become more effective agents of grace.

As we apply these truths to ourselves... we must understand that this text has always been relentlessly demanding.

No one needs to convince you that contemporary media overwhelmingly presents the **antithesis** (the exact opposite) of Philippians 4:8... It shouts... "*Finally brothers, whatever is untrue, whatever is dishonorable,*

whatever is unjust, whatever is impure, whatever is unlovely, whatever is uncommendable, if there is anything not morally excellent, if there is anything unworthy of praise, think about these things."

Thinking as we ought to demands that we be counter-cultural... it demands the discipline of refusal.

How sad... that reports are that there is virtually no distinction between the viewing habits of professing Christians... and non-Christians. ... The minds of countless Christians have become increasingly eroticized... and blasphemous — which is to say... sub-Christian.

Today more than ever before we need to heed the psalmist's advice:

Psalm 101:2-3 (ESV)

I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.

Do you have problems with impure thoughts and daydreams? Examine what you are putting into your mind through television, Internet, books, conversations, movies, and magazines. Replace harmful input with wholesome material. Above all, read God's Word and pray. Ask God to help you focus your mind on what is good and pure. It takes practice, but it can be done.

There is the energy and power of self-effort and discipline. Note the words, "Those things...do." The believer is expected to control and discipline his

mind. He is to struggle against all sinful and negative thoughts, and fight to think only positive thoughts.

Along with the discipline of refusal... there is the ancient God-given remedy of spending much time reading and meditating on the Scriptures. ... The greatest danger in our busy... increasingly post-literate... technology driven world... is that we make little or no effort to think God's thoughts after Him... to hide His word in our hearts... so that we might not sin against Him. ... We cannot be profoundly influenced by that which we do not know.

We must hide God's Word in our hearts. ... We must make time for quiet meditation whenever our minds are the freshest... in the early morning... or in a specially designated place in the home for that purpose... at noon... or in a corner of the house... or at night. ... We must read and reread passages... listening to the Spirit... turning the thoughts over in our minds... praying over a word or a phrase. ... We must acquaint ourselves with all of God's Word by reading and listening to it.

Philippians 4:9

Paul was no armchair coach... He lived out each of these six qualities of thinking... and he exhorts them to imitate what he did.

It's not enough to hear or read the Word of God or even to know it well. We must also put it into practice. How easy it is to listen to a sermon and forget what the preacher said. How easy it is to read the Bible and not think about how to live differently. How easy it is to debate what a passage means and

not live out that meaning. Exposure to God's Word is not enough. It must lead to obedience.

During the Civil War," writes author Tim Riter, "President Lincoln attended Wednesday evening services at a church close to the White House. Accompanied by Secret Service agents, Lincoln would sit in the pastor's study during the message; then they would walk back together. One evening, after the service, an agent asked Lincoln, 'What did you think of tonight's sermon?' Lincoln replied, 'It was brilliantly conceived, biblical, relevant, and well presented.' 'So, it was a great sermon?' 'No, it failed. It failed because Dr. Gurley did not ask us to do something great.'" Lincoln was right. God wants us to put truth into action. As we put God's truth into action in our lives, we will enjoy the peace that comes from the Prince of Peace in our hearts.

This morning... I believe that God would have me ask you to do something definite. ... Have you been polluting the mind of Christ... that God has placed inside of you...? Are you loving the Lord... your God with all your mind...? Do you struggle with an impure thought life...?

Confess your sin! Admit your struggle. Get the help you need. Humble yourself... and come tomorrow night to Celebrate Recovery. I believe that God had us develop this open and honest accountability ministry... for a lot more people in our church... and he is calling some who are here this morning to humble themselves and overcome a long-time struggle. ... Is that you...? Overcome! It is the only way you will find God's peace...