

Philippians 4:8-23

"The Economy Of The Kingdom"

Adoration, supplication, appreciation. These are the elements of prayer that make for our peace. It's one thing (a *great* thing) to have peace w/God. It's another thing to experience the peace *of* God which passes understanding & forms a guard, a garrison around our *heart* (the way we feel) & our *mind* (the way we think), through Christ Jesus.

It's not a "self-help" program to aid us through our anxieties. It's an acknowledgment of the sufficiency of J.C. & our trust in Him. Worship (adoration) reminds us of the greatness *of* the Lord, that there's nothing too hard for Him, that He's greater *than* the need. In supplication we cast our cares & concerns *upon* the Lord, we let our requests be made known *to* the Lord trusting in His word that He cares *for* us & will lovingly/graciously tend *to* us. & Appreciation (thanksgiving) is the attitude that permeates our prayers knowing that God hears us & will answer our prayers to the end of our eternal good & His eternal glory... Now look at Vs 8.

Vs 8

So check it out. Paul speaks of prayer (which includes adoration as we developed last week), supplication & appreciation. Now; in Vs 8 he brings up & adds *in meditation*. But you should know that biblical meditation & secular (worldly) meditation are 2 vastly different things.

Meditation (in the worldly, perhaps eastern philosophy) is all about *emptying* your mind, *clearing* your mind, not thinking on the unchangeable past or undetermined future. True meditation (they will tell you) is effortless & leads to a state of "thoughtless awareness" ...??? How "Zen" like ☺.

Biblical meditation, however, is on the opposite side of that spectrum. It's *not* an emptying, nor a clearing of the mind, it's not a state of "thoughtless awareness". It's an intentional *filling* of the mind, it's a consideration, a contemplation, carefully thinking through & musing/reflecting on a particular thing.

Guys, you might be surprised to do a study on your own time & see how much of the Christian life comes down to *the mind*. Romans 12:2 points to the transformation of *our lives* through the *renewing of our minds*. Paul told the Corinthians, "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*"¹

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [2 Co 10:4-5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Listen, what we choose to meditate on matters! God *cares* where your head is at! How many times in this letter have we seen Paul's appeal to be "like minded" of "one mind", "Let this *mind* be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"?

What goes on in an individual's mind matters. What we believe determines how we behave. Wrong thinking leads to wrong feeling; things permeate from our head (mind) to our heart as we think on them & muse through them. Be careful of what you're willing to let occupy the space that's called your mind. David wrote, "*I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands.*"² He chose to purposefully, intentionally think on the greatness of the power & works of God's hands... He said, "*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?*"³ He thought about the vastness, the variety & the complexity of God's creation & just let his mind be blown w/how great & powerful God is & yet that He would love him & was mindful of him & had set forth a plan to redeem him...

If you're not careful your thought life will run away from you, you'll wind up thinking through things that are *unhealthy*. That add to *anxiety & uncertainty*. Yet the bible says we're to bring our thoughts into *captivity* to the obedience of Christ. Here Paul points out a practical way to do that.

He says, "Whatever things are true, whatever things are *noble*, whatever things are *just or pure; lovely or of good report, if there's any virtue or anything praiseworthy- meditate, think on these things.*"

Question; how does your thought life stack up against this list? I find too often we're in the polar opposite place. We're not focused on the truth, we're thinking about some lie someone spewed, or something we know isn't true. Something negative has its grip on us... "Noble" speaks of something dignified or worthy of respect. If it's "just" it conforms to the standards of God's word, if it's pure it's not immoral (or something lustful). If it's lovely it's gracious, it promotes peace & reconciliation rather than settling for separation or conflict. "Of good report", again, relating to what's positive & constructive rather than negative & destructive.

Paul says, "These are the kinds of things we should be setting our minds upon." Now that's not to say we bury our head in the sand & avoid anything unpleasing...

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 143:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 8:3-4]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It just means we don't focus our attention on those things so as to allow them to control our thoughts. You've heard the phrase, "Garbage in... garbage out". The opposite rings just as true. Don't focus on the negative, things that make you bitter or cynical... or lustful. Think on these things.

To the Col Paul put it this way, *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."*⁴The word of God, the ways/will of God.

Hey; if you're struggling about what to think on, then just think on Jesus. This has been called the briefest biography of Christ. He's the One who's "true, noble, just, pure, lovely, gracious, virtuous & praiseworthy..." You can go to Him, think on & worship Him anytime, anywhere.

Vs 9

So not only will you have the *peace of God*, but the *God of peace* will be w/you ☺. I suppose we could look at Vs 6-9 as a recipe for peace in the child of God's life.

But don't miss, this is at least the 2nd time (in this small letter) that Paul has called us to follow his example... So again (as before) I confront you w/a question. Can you call people to follow *your* example? Could you say, "Just do as I do & God will be w/you"? **Not putting forth some pious attitude that seeks to show itself as sinless or having somehow arrived at a place of super sainthood... But simply, "Hey, I love Christ, I seek to lead a life of obedience to Christ, therefore you can follow my lead."** If you can't say that, why not? & **Once you land on the "why" you couldn't say that, what do you plan to do about that?**

But I want you to see here how the inward attitude that Paul points to in Vs 8 is directly connected to his outward action in Vs 9. We can't separate the 2. If we think we can just think lovely thoughts & then do whatever we want, we're gravely mistaken. **It's purity that results in peace, sin will leave our heart/soul unsettled (unless our conscience is seared).** Isaiah said it like this, *"The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."*⁵Inward attitude, outward action, they're connected.

Paul speaks of learning & receiving, hearing & seeing. It's one thing to *learn* truth. It's quite another to *receive* it.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Col 3:1-2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 32:17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We can *learn* the word, but it's not shaping our lives & molding who we are until we *receive* it in our heart. Facts in the head aren't enough, we need truth in the heart.

But Paul didn't only give the message, he modeled the method. His walk & his talk were on par w/one another. They heard his word & *saw* it lived in his life. So the Christian life involves right thinking & right doing.

& Really this is how discipleship works. Things are learned & then they need to be received. People can learn the gospel & never receive it, they can learn the word & not receive it, never allow it to really impact them in a practical, applicable way... But not only learning & receiving, people need also to hear it (faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God) & then *see* it modeled for them.

But ultimately it comes down to personal responsibility & accountability before God. Paul says, "I've taught you, I've modeled it *for* you. But you have to *do* it." He says, "These *do* & the God of peace will be w/you." It's not the hearer of the word who is wise & has a strong foundation (Matt 7:24-27). It's the...*doer* of the word.

Vs 10-14

Family, there's more than enough here to spend our entire time together on... This little paragraph contains much on Paul's attitude toward the Philippians & their support of his ministry & there's a lot here about the attitude of the Philippians toward Paul, they're love *for* him & desire to invest *in* him & his work in the Lord.

Paul says (back in Vs 10), "I rejoiced in the Lord *greatly* that now your care for me has *flourished* again." It's a reference to their financial support brought by Epaphroditus (2:25) to Paul in Rome.

& He's careful to acknowledge that it wasn't that they didn't care previously, only that they lacked opportunity... It was certainly *in their heart* to stand w/him & be supportive of what God was doing through him. But hey, this is the ancient world we're talking about. You didn't wire resources through a moneygram, or pushpay your gift via debit card or what have you. You searched the person out & had it delivered *personally*. & We don't know, perhaps there was a time when they lost contact w/Paul, they didn't know where in the prison system he was. Or it could be that they were struggling to find a volunteer to travel hundreds of miles by land & sea to deliver it.

Whatever the case may be, we need to see that their heart was to support his ministry & as soon as they had opportunity, they sent their support.

& He says in Vs 11, “Not that I speak in regard to need.” In other words, I wasn’t so stoked because I’m needy (though trust me, he needed it), but that wasn’t why he was so excited to receive the gift.

The reason he was excited wasn’t because it was good for *him* to receive it, but because it was good *for them* to give it. Did you see that there in Vs 11? He says, “For I have *learned* in whatever state I am in to be content.” Btw, that’s worth pointing out as well. Contentment does not come *natural* to us (the flesh is *never* satisfied), contentment is something that is “learned” ... (We’ll see the secret of his contentment in just a minute, it’s something we learn in God’s school of spiritual growth).

But suffice it to say that contentment isn’t centered in our circumstances. If that were true, he probably wouldn’t be too content being in a filthy (not given to modern amenities) Roman prison. But look what he says in Vs 12. (Read)

Paul didn’t feel the need to beg people for support; or compel them through guilt. He simply made the need known & then trusted in the sufficiency of the Lord to meet the need in whatever manner God saw fit.

Our attitude toward giving shouldn’t be, “We give because the church needs money” (even though the need may be legitimate). We give because it’s good for us to be givers, because we need to be givers. Because God is in us & He so loved us that He “gave” & if He’s in us there will be something stirring in us that leads us & encourages us to give.

As long as we’re on the subject allow me to impart to you something that I’ve learned as well. I’ve learned that *comparison* is the killer of contentment. You know; “I used to think my vehicle was pretty nice, got me where I needed to go, didn’t guzzle too much gas... then I saw that new ride that someone else is in & mine’s junk...” “I thought my house was fantastic...till I went to so & so’s house, now I don’t like mine anymore...” On & on it goes, you liked your (fill in the blank) purse, your jacket, your shoes, your annual income, things were fine, until you saw what they have, or heard what they made & now what *you have* isn’t enough... We error when we compare ourselves amongst ourselves.

Paul told Timothy, *Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.*⁶

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Ti 6:6-9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So Paul says, "Look, I know how to be abased." & Most of us do ok (though we don't like it) when we're in a state of having little. Because we're constantly crying out *to* & depending *on* the Lord. But more difficult is learning how to *abound*. I've seen it again & again, when people begin to abound, they no longer depending on the Lord, or seeking *after* the Lord. It's like they have God on the "don't call me, I'll call You" list. They don't go, "Wow, God has really blessed me, now I can give even more, I can be a blessing to ministry & lay up more treasure eternally!" Too often it's onward & upward & I'll see ya when I need ya...

Paul says, "I've been reduced to poverty, I've abounded in prosperity, doesn't matter either way." Contentment isn't found outwardly/circumstantially. What's the secret? It's in Vs 13 (Read).

It's the power of Christ that makes for our contentment. Because our lives are contained *in* Christ, connected *to* Christ, we can be content. It's not your acclimation to asceticism, or your ability to show restraint w/more than enough, it's the strength of J.C. in your life.

Now I should say that Phil 4:13 is probably one of the most often misquoted scripts out there. There is context around it. It doesn't mean you can go jump off a building. Satan actually tried to talk Jesus into doing that if you remember right... Supplied scripture to Him & everything. But Jesus reminded him, "*It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'*"⁷ Context is everything. & The context here is that if God brings you *to it*, He will see you *through it*. If He calls you He will *equip* you, if He enlists you He will *enable* you, you can do all things *through Christ who strengthens you*.

God will strengthen you for what he brings you to. Whether (in this case) abounding or being abased. So let's not abuse the word. If you're going to the gym thinking you're going to dead lift 450 lbs & you're my size & you've never worked out but you're chanting to yourself, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" you're walking out of the gym (if you're lucky) w/your back completely jacked.

The power in your life to do whatever God calls you to comes from Christ *in* you. Remember what Jesus said? "*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*"⁸ But through Christ, you can do anything He calls you to do...

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mt 4:7]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 15:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“Nevertheless; you have done well that you shared in my distress.” Paul was grateful. But here’s the kicker, he’s was grateful *for their sake*. Listen, (& we’ll see this more plainly in a moment) godly giving actually does more good for the *giver* than it does for the one to whom the gift is given...

It’s true, ministry operates primarily on money. It’s just a fact of life. Ministry (in large part) is made possible through the generosity of the people of God who give to God in order to move the ball of ministry down the field (if you’ll allow me such a term). & The Philippians understood that. That God will use His people to bring to pass His purposes upon the earth. Yes, He could use angels. Yes, He could do a miracle. But more than not He chooses to partner w/His people in pressing forward His will.

However, your (& my) primary purpose for giving shouldn’t be because the church needs money (though that’s relevant). But the truth is that I should give because I need to be a giver, *for more than one reason*. Not the least of which is its evidence of God’s work in me. *For God so loved the world that He gave*. God is a giver, & if He’s in me, I will grow in that capacity as well. When I give, it’s an aspect of my worship of God (which we’ll see), it’s a tangible way in which I crucify my flesh which selfishly wants to cling so tightly to all that’s “mine” (even though all we have is by the grace of God).

But you should know that God keeps record of our giving (& lack thereof). & He will not fail to repay in huge dividends eternally. You will not (in fact you cannot) out give God. He will not be a debtor to you... Look at Vs 15.

Vs 15-18

Not everyone was as mindful regarding giving as was the Philippian church. As a matter of fact when Paul began to pioneer the gospel throughout Europe (Acts 16) he says that Philippi was really the only fellowship that was faithful to support him. Vs 17 (Read)

Guys, this is the economy of the Kingdom. When you invest in the work of the ministry, God repays in dividends eternally. Think about this, because of their gift, Paul wrote this letter back to them & we’re profiting from what they did. They had “stock” in the apostle Paul & they’re still reaping dividends to this day!

Listen, each one of you have an “account” in heaven. & God keeps track of what we do & how we invest. Maybe you’re not out there doing “ministry” personally, but as you support those who are, your partnership will be rewarded. & Paul was excited for them because He knew what this meant for them eternally. Because you will never out give God.

Just as David taught his troops, those who guard the supply lines will share equally w/those who do the battle, both are important (1 Sam 30:24).

He says that their gift was a “sweet smelling aroma” “an acceptable (notice) *sacrifice*”. This is O.T. talk isn’t it? He likens their gift to an offering upon the altar. We don’t think about it much but when a man offered a bull, or a ram upon the altar (being a primarily agricultural people) there was significant financial sacrifice involved w/that. God sees the heart in that, & it’s received as a sweet aroma... Notice “well pleasing” to God.

When you give (not because the church needs money) because you *love* God, you want to honor, ascribe worth, value & worship to God, when it’s because you want to bless God & move the ball of ministry down the field for the glory of His name... that’s an acceptable sacrifice, like a sweet aroma to His throne, well pleasing to Him. **Which is in & of itself more than enough motivation to do anything, to give anything, because it’s well pleasing to God. In another place Paul said, “God loves a cheerful giver.” One who supports His work gladly, not because he feels guilty...**

Vs 19

Another Vs taken frequently from its context. Paul isn’t saying, “To anyone out there (or even any believer out there) God will just meet your every need.” The context is applied to those who are faithfully, gladly, sacrificially giving to propel ministry. He’s saying, “You’ve supplied my needs, *my God* shall supply yours.” “You’ve given according to your limited supply, God will give according to His unlimited riches in glory...” **Now; God wouldn’t supply all their *greeds*, but all their *needs*. I’m going to give you a little list of Vs to read that time forbids us to get into that underscore this principle (that as you give, God will repay, however if you give to get you’ll never get, remember that).** But write these down; **Malachi 3:8-11, Proverbs 3:9, Proverbs 11:25, Proverbs 22:9.** If you’re miserly toward the kingdom, then as far as I can tell, this promise is not for you...

& Notice it’s not “as God has supplied your need, you’ve given to me.” It was, “You’ve given to the ministry, now God will supply your need.” You see? There’s a measure of faith there, apart from which it’s impossible to please God. Jesus said it like this, **“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6:38** If God is using a ministry to bless you & help you grow, it would benefit you to support it...

Vs 20-22

Paul's time in prison wasn't wasted. As he was in Rome even those who were in the household of Caesar were coming to Christ!

Vs 23**Prayer Points:**

God we're so grateful for Your word to us through Paul's letter to the Philippians. Help us to set our minds on the things that make for our peace, not our unrest & anxiety. & May we be those who model what godly living looks like that others might grow & be encouraged, teaching others as well... God as we are challenged w/the touchy topic of giving. Help us to receive Your word for what it is. Not look for excuses because of what others have done, but just to concern ourselves w/what You'd have *us* to do. Increase our faith, be glorified in our lives.

God is a giver. & He gave His only begotten Son to die on a cross because the wages of our sin is death. & Jesus paid that penalty (a penalty He didn't owe) because we owed a penalty we couldn't pay. He loves you & wants to forgive you of all your sin. Believe on Him today.