

“Think on These Things”
Philippians 4:8
(Preached at Trinity, August 6, 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. For the last two weeks, we’ve been looking at the importance of the mind. As I’ve continued to point out, Christianity is a religion of truth and truth is presented to the mind. As Christians, we need to give careful attention to our minds.
2. In **Verse 8** Paul sets before us the importance of *what* we put into our minds. He tells us of the sort of things we should think about. These are things that should occupy the Christian’s thoughts.
3. Again, this is at the heart of Christianity. We must not underestimate the importance of the mind.
Paul began **Chapter 2**
Philippians 2:2-3 NAU - "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves"
4. Paul is saying here in **Verse 8** that we must fill our mind with virtuous thoughts
Philippians 4:8 NAU - "if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things"
Paul’s point here in **Verse 8** is we have to train our minds to think
 - a. This means we must limit empty things that cloud the thinking.
 - b. We must be cautious not to fill our minds with things that are defiled.
 - c. We must be intentional about meditating on good things.**Philippians 4:8 NAU** - "dwell on these things"
This means we must apply them to our mind, to ponder them.
5. In **Verse 8** Paul gives a list of six ethical virtues as examples of things we must fill the thoughts of our mind. It is not an exhaustive list and we need to remember they are categories of thought:
“true things, honorable things, right things” etc.
6. Last time I gave particular emphasis to the element of truth. Truth finds it’s substance in God. All reality is in God. God is the epitome of truth. Satan is the father of lies. This world rejects truth in favor of Satan’s deceptions.
Paul tells us to fill our minds with truth; to reject the lies which our generation holds to so tenaciously.
7. This morning I’d like us to examine the remainder of **Verse 8**.

I. Whatever is honorable

- A. This word is unique to Paul – He uses it four times. It means “serious” or “dignified” – it points to maturity.
1. Believers should be dignified, serious, sober. We shouldn’t see our lives as frivolous and we shouldn’t continually engage our minds on what is frivolous.
The word is used as one of the qualifications for deacons and their wives.
1 Timothy 3:8 NAU - "Deacons likewise *must be* men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,"
 2. Paul is saying we must be serious minded. We must fill our minds with serious things, things worthy of respect.
 3. This doesn’t mean the Christian can never enjoy good humor or engage in laughter. Paul is telling us to be on guard against having a mind that doesn’t take into account the seriousness of this life.
 4. As we consider the Gospel; as we look to our Kingdom work; as we consider doctrinal truth; as we consider worship we must be dead serious. As we consider the Christian life we can forget what it means to live before God. We can forget what it means to come into the presence of God.
- B. If we continually fill our minds with that which is frivolous we will find ourselves continually speaking that which is frivolous.
Ephesians 4:29 NAU - "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification according to the need of *the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear."
1. We should live in a manner that is worthy of respect. We should fill our minds with those things that are honorable and noble.
 2. It is good to read good books. We should study the lives of men and women before us who lived their lives seriously.

II. Whatever is right –

- A. These are things in accordance with what God requires
1. It is from the word δίκαιος which refers righteous things, good things
 2. Paul is telling us to think on things just, honest, upright.
 3. This is why we must continually fill our minds with the Word of God. It shapes our minds with right thinking.
Psalms 119:97-104 NAU - "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. ⁹⁸ Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. ⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. ¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts. ¹⁰¹ I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. ¹⁰² I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, For You Yourself have taught me. ¹⁰³ How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, *sweeter* than honey to my mouth! ¹⁰⁴ From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way."

- B. We are often called upon to make judgments. We are continually forming opinions about other people.
1. We should fill our minds with thoughts of equity, thoughts of moral excellence.
 2. This mindset will protect us from treating people unjustly or holding opinions contrary to what is honest and upright.
 3. It will protect you from receiving gossip
 4. We are also called upon to make judgements affecting the direction of our lives. The mind fixed on upright things will protect you from compromise. What is the right thing to do? What does God's Word have to say about my decision? We can be guilty of justifying our actions according to our own desires. We must fill our minds with God's ways.
- III. Whatever is pure
- A. This points to holiness—that which is sacred.
1. Here the focus is primarily upon chastity or modesty.
2 Corinthians 11:2 NAU - "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin."
 2. John Eadie writes: "These are things which are neither tainted nor corrupt—free from all debasing elements, clear in nature, transparent in purpose, having no blot on the conscience and not stain on the character."¹
- B. We are bombarded with the corruption of our generation
1. As much as we are able we need to shield ourselves from such things. To guard our minds from consuming them. Instead, we need to fill our minds with those things that are pure
 2. We can't control every thought that enters into our mind but we can surely control those things we dwell upon.
 - a. A man might catch a glimpse of a beautiful woman but to lust after her is sin.
 - b. You might appreciate another person's possessions but to covet them is sin.
- IV. Whatever is lovely – another hapax legomina (3465 single use words in the NT)
- A. We can understand this in a couple ways.
1. First, it refers to that which has intrinsic beauty. We should fill our lives with lovely things, beautiful things, things of moral or spiritual excellence.
 2. Second, it is a compound word meaning "pertaining to love." It refers to that which evokes love. We should fill our minds with thoughts that inspire love for Christ and for one another.
- B. Are you able to discern those things which are lovely?
1. Can you appreciate a beautiful piece of art?
 2. Can you distinguish between the intrinsic beauty in different kinds of music?

¹ Eadie, John, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, reprint 2005), Page 255.

3. Is your heart stirred by thoughts of eternity? Can you contemplate and appreciate the intrinsic excellence?
Colossians 3:1-2 NAU - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, 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."
4. Are you able to discern those things that draw your mind to love? This demands a mind void of bitterness, anger, gossip. To maintain an unforgiving heart poisons thoughts of love.
5. As we fill our minds with good things lovely thoughts will prevail
 - a. We'll have hymns running through our mind.
 - b. We'll look at God's creation and have our minds filled with thoughts of His glory. We'll be able to appreciate God's intrinsic beauty.
 - c. We'll look at other people in terms of image bearers; of possessing intrinsic value.

- V. Whatever is of good repute – also a hapax legomina
- A. These are things which are commendable
 1. These are things we that we would not be ashamed of
 2. Would you be ashamed if others peeked into your thoughts
 - B. We should seek to maintain thoughts that draw people rather than thoughts that are insulting.
 1. One expositor writes: "It is used of expressing what is kind and likely to win people, and avoiding what is likely to give offence."²
 2. This demands that we give regard to others. That we care what effect our words and actions have upon others and so we are always considering, always thinking about things that are commendable.

- VI. Things of excellence and Praise –
- A. These are matters of discernment
 1. Examine your heart. Consider the things that occupy your thoughts.
 2. Are you putting excellent, praiseworthy things into your mind?
 3. Paul's point here seems to be that we can find beauty and loveliness all around us – We have to be able to discern those things that are excellent and praiseworthy.
 4. We can find these things even in the so-called secular world.
 - a. As Christians, we do not draw a distinction between the secular and sacred as if to say there are religious things and then the rest of our life. For the Christian everything in our life has a focus upon Christ. We see God as the author of all the beauty around us.
 - b. We can appreciate beautiful architecture even if the architect is an unbeliever, or fine art, even if the artist is an unbeliever.
 - c. Paul says, "Whatever is lovely . . ."

² Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), 43:251.

- B. If there is any excellence . . .
1. This refers to moral excellence or virtue
 2. Peter uses this word in **2 Peter 1** to describe one of the elements of genuine conversion. He describes us as being partakers of the Divine nature
2 Peter 1:4-8 NAU - "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. ⁵ Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, ⁶ and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, ⁷ and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 3. We are to fill our minds with thoughts consistent with being a child of God—consistent with one who has escaped the corruption of this world.
- C. If anything worthy of praise . . .
1. Is it praiseworthy – in other words, is it worthy of God’s praise; things that reflect the glory of Christ.
 2. Paul says in **1 Cor. 10**:
1 Corinthians 10:31 NAU - "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"
 We can add our thoughts to this charge. Do our thoughts glorify God?

VII. Dwell on these things

- A. Paul uses an interesting word here translated “dwell” - λογίζομαι
1. Paul is fond of this word, using it 34 of the 40 times it is found in the NT. It means to recon or take into account.
 It is the word Paul used in **Galatians 3** to describe imputed righteousness.
Galatians 3:6 NAS - "Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."
 2. Paul is saying here in **Verse 8** to take into account right thinking – consider those things that are praiseworthy. In the context Paul has in mind the idea of pondering or letting one’s mind dwell on something.
 3. Paul is telling us to consider carefully what we put into our minds, what we think about, and choose those things that are excellent.
- B. We must train our minds with sanctified thinking
1. We must fix our minds on thoughts of love and humility; thoughts of modesty, thoughts of submission to the Lordship of Christ.
Philippians 2:3 NAU - "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves"
 2. Paul calls such thinking thoughts of excellence, virtuous thoughts.

Conclusion:

1. As I pointed out at the beginning, Paul knows that what we have in our thoughts will soon flow forth to our actions.
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, to do those things which are not proper"
2. We must give careful attention to our minds. If we put that which is defiled into our minds we shouldn't be surprised to find defilement springing forth in our lives. But when we fill our minds with thoughts excellent and praiseworthy we find the beauty of Divine grace flowing forth in our lives.