

Notes:

Our Thoughtscape and the Realignment of our Minds

Philippians 4:4-9

Everyone in this room will at some point in their lives experience suffering, conflict, anxiety and stress, fear and eventually physical death. In fact, some of you may be experiencing some of these things right now.

Today, I bring a message of hope – taken from God’s word from a person who endured some of these sufferings. His great advice to us is how when can we face these challenges by having peace with God.

This is what he said, this is what the Apostle Paul said to the church at Philippi, *“for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the **secret** of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”* Philippians 4:11b-13

As some of you may recall my previous message: *Footwear of a Soldier and the Peace of God* Passage from Eph. 6:10-20

The focus was how the lack of peace in our lives is used by forces of evil to destabilize us. *“...peace with God (as John Eadie says) “creates blessed serenity of heart, and confers upon the mind peculiar and continuous preparedness of action and movement. There is nothing to disconcert or perplex it, or divide and retard its energies.”*

This message is a continuation of a similar theme that Paul writes about in his closing remarks to the Church at Philippi.

Our Thoughtscape and the Realignment of our Minds Philippians 4:4-9

Some terms:

Thoughtscape: our formed understanding of who we are, and the meaning of the world around us.

It is our beliefs, the values that we hold, the ideas and images and information that prompt our actions.

Thought life: what we think about – or what we dwell on.

“What a wee little part of a person’s life are his acts and his words. His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself. All day long, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his thoughts, not the other things, are his history.” Mark Twain.

Why is it important what we think about?

“As a man thinks in his heart so he is.” Proverbs 23:7

ANTS – Automatic Negative Thoughts (Daniel Amen)

Term: **Realignment:**

When you hear the word “alignment” what do you think about? (car alignment)

Realigning our thoughts so they reflect the mind of Christ. Who was the greatest thinker of all times? Jesus Christ

In Romans 12:2 Paul writes: *“and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”*

Everyone has a *Thoughtscape* and like a landscape that has a design so our thoughtscape has a basic layout.

Our formed understanding of:

- Who we are – questions of personhood
- What is our relationship to others
- What is our relationship to things
- What is the good (bad)
- Purpose and meaning in life
- Who is God

Formed by ourselves and influenced by:

- Parents, family members,
- Friends
- Teachers: Official thought formers
- Our culture: subtle thought formers
- Life's circumstances
- Revelation of God – His self-disclosure: His words, the life of Christ, His creation, and the personality of man.

“The law of the lord is perfect, restoring the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple... The commandments of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” Ps. 19-7-8

We have all fashioned our own thoughts to some degree - some more purposeful than those who have just allowed them to be fashioned.

Here is advice from Dallas Willard in his book on spiritual formation, *Renovation of the Heart*,

“Nothing enters our mind without having some effect for good or evil.”

One of the great freedoms we have is the power to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell on. To imagine, dream, contemplate. We can be anywhere – not confined to a particular place for this activity to happen.

This is both a blessing and a curse. Sometimes it is difficult to escape those things that have lodged deeply in our minds – we take them with us everywhere.

The apostle Paul talks a lot about our thoughts throughout his writings. However, in his letter to the church at Philippi he gives some of the most powerful advice on how to realign our minds, in order not only to have the peace of God, but to know better the **God** of peace. His prayer at the beginning of his letter requests of God that the Philippians *“love may abound in real knowledge and all discernment.”* (1:9)

A little background to the passage this morning.

Philippians 4:4-9

Paul was most likely in Rome when he wrote this. He was in prison and a gift from the church came to him from Epaphroditus. (stay tuned – more on Philippians by Pastor Mike in the next few weeks)

Paul was communicating to them what he had learned and exhorting them follow his example.

*“The things you have **learned** and **received** and **heard** and **seen** in me – practice these things...”* 4:9

One of those things was his joy of the Lord. We see the words rejoice over and over again in the letter.

Paul sets the stage for our minds realignment by urging us to REJOICE.

*“**Rejoice** in the lord always, again I say **rejoice.**”* 4:4

“...it is the deep-down confidence that God is in control of everything for the believer's good and His own glory, and thus all is well no matter the circumstances.” John Eadie

Paul then goes on to say a few verses later *“**be anxious for nothing.**”* 4:6

Hey chill.

Oh lord, my computer was hacked. Then I thought about the suffering of Paul and the church at Philippi.

“But in everything by

Prayer

Supplication with thanksgiving

let your requests be made known to God.

Then there is a promise:

“AND the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” 4:7

Was this easy for him to say? He had experienced all kinds of sufferings.

And now he gives some of the most significant advice related to how we can better realign our minds to experience better that joy and peace that Christ promises.

Here are the 8 things for your mind to be constantly occupied with:

Whatever is:

- True
- Honorable
- Right
- Pure
- Lovely
- Good Repute
- Excellent
- Worthy of Praise

Practices for realignment:

Let your mind ***“dwell on these things”***

This word **dwell** means:

A process of careful study

Arriving at a conclusion

Think about something in a logical manner

Meditate

Ponder

Continually take inventory

Deliberate and prolonged contemplation as if one is weighing a mathematical problem

Carefully and continually.

CONTINUOUS ACTION

Always be pondering these things.

As a process of careful study, with a deliberate and prolonged contemplation

Warm-up: rejoicing and prayer

Warm-up: Rejoicing and Prayer

“Rejoice in the Lord always”

A time of quiet rejoicing in your heart.

Now a time of silent prayer for those things that you are anxious about. “Be anxious for nothing...”

The next exercise: When I read these and give the definitions and a little of information towards the end of each one I will ask you to try to think of something related this word/idea. I will pause for a moment before I go to the next one. Ok, let’s go to the first word. You will see that the Christ fits all of these so it is good place to start - however we can think of persons, things that may be appropriate

Let’s begin

True

That which conforms to reality – fact

Actuality of something

Two poles

GOD – truth
Real

satan – lies
deception
“hath God really said?” Gen. 3:1ff

Christian Truth: God loves me. I am a sinner. Christ died for me. I am made in God's image and have worth. God has a plan for me.
Capital T's

Lower case T's:

Creations truth: mathematical laws, laws of gravity, how the world works, science is built on these trues.

What happens when someone lies to you? What do you think of the person who is truthful.

Honorable

Worthy of respect – entitled to honor
That which inspires reverence and awe.
Whatever evokes special respect.
“*That which has the dignity of holiness upon it.*” Barclay
God is worthy of all honor and glory.
“*To think of God as he is, one cannot but lapse into worship... Worship is at once the overall character of the renovated thought life and the only safe place for a human being to stand.*” Dallas Willard
Christ's work on the cross.
Small H.
Those who we respect because of how they have lived their lives for Christ.
Those who have sacrificed for others.
Those who have made great accomplishments. Michelangelo
Who are our heroes today.

Right

Whatever is in perfect harmony with God's eternal unchanging standards as revealed in scripture.
Righteous
Innocent
Who is right

Upright
Virtuous
Just
Keeping the commands of God.
Well ordered
Civilized
Fitting
Real, genuine
Observing divine laws
The person of Christ
The Holiness of God
The life of the apostles.

Pure

Free from defilement
Stainless
That which will not contaminate
Free from sin
Chaste
Innocent
Pure
Is cleansed to the point it is fit to be brought into the presence of God and used in his service.
The purity of Christ
The purity water (small p)

Lovely

That which is admirable or agreeable to behold or consider
Conduct which is dear to someone which is pleasing in its motive and action towards others.
Not positive thinking. “think happy thoughts”
Our thoughts are grounded in real substance.
Only occurs once in the NT.
Beauty

Good Repute

Something or someone that deservedly enjoys a good reputation.

Refers to that which is well spoken of.

Praiseworthy

Laudable

Highly regarded

Well thought of.

Concentrating on the good things we see in others and not dwelling on their faults and shortcomings.

Excellence

Virtue which is demonstrated in life

Fulfillment of a thing

When anything in nature fulfills its purpose, that fulfillment was referred to virtue or moral excellence.

Land produces crops

Tool that works correctly

Believer living the way he now has the potential to live.

Worthy of Praise

Something which is worthy of being commended

Act of expressing admiration or approval

Recognition

Something that deserves to be praised

What happens when we dwell on these things – really study and meditate on them daily?

“...and the God of Peace will be with you.” 4:9

How will these practices, “dwelling” on these thoughts, help you realign your thoughtscape?

What would that look like in your life right now?

Let’s pray.