

Anxiety, the Curse and its Cure, pt.8

This evening we will continue in our series examining anxiety. As

we get into the text this evening, I have to forewarn you.

The passage we are going to examine is really straightforward, but is perhaps the most difficult in terms of application!

The passage is easy to read and memorize!

But the application of it will require a lifetime of discipline and focus.

This passage is Philippians 4:8-9.

If you have your copy...

(We are going to read starting with v. 4 but focus our attention on vv. 8–9.)

Intro:

You will recall as we looked at the previous verses that God gave us the clear prohibition, “do not be anxious.” v. 6.

From there He gave us the prescription to pray!

Prayer is the cure for anxiety!

One of the reason prayer is the cure for anxiety is because the anxiety focuses on the your situation, prayer focuses on your Savior!

When we get this, we will be eager to cultivate the discipline of what we called “responsive prayer.”

And when we pray God gives a promise of protective peace.

God promised that He will give peace that would act as a guardian to protect us!

And what we observed is that this promise of protective peace has a specific and particular reference!

By this, I mean, God tells us that His peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ!
The significance of this truth cannot be underestimated or overstated because what God is promising is to give us peace to the very depths of our being!

As we said last time the “heart and mind”, as one brother says it is “the causal core of our humanity”.

That all of life originates in the mind.

In our culture there is a phrase that says, “you are what you eat.”

But if we think in biblical categories we could say that “you are what you think!”

This is an inescapable conclusion: Who you are is derived from your mind!

Now, do not mistake what I am saying for the positive thinking, self-help stuff that’s out there!

I am not talking about that if you think positive things then you will recognize positive things.

No, instead what I am making reference to is what Jesus makes abundantly clear when He says, for example, Matthew 12:34

“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

Or

Matthew 15:18

[18] But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.”

It is clear that the heart and mind is the central operating system for everyone!

Whoever you are in mind is who you are in reality!

It’s little wonder, then, why God exhorts us to, for example:

Romans 12:2

“2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...”

Eph. 4:22b–23

“...put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds...”

Colossians 3:2

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

The reason God exhorts us in this way is because even though we have been redeemed by Christ, the vestiges of sin still remain!

We have been fully redeemed and forgiven, but we still live out of faith in a body that is still affected by sin.

What this further means is that there is a tug-of-war that exists in the minds of believers and it is a tug-of-war between proper thinking vs. improper thinking; holy thoughts vs. unholy thoughts; biblical thinking vs. unbiblical thinking.

And the call we have as believers is to have right thinking; to have a mind that is shaped by the pattern of scripture; a mind that is to be directed and influenced by the Holy Spirit; a mind that is united to Christ!

And this is where the war against anxiety is fought! In the mind!!

And what we have in verse 8 is the call to control our mind; to practice proper thinking.

I. A Command to Proper Thinking (reread v. 8)

The wonderful thing about being in Christ is that He does not leave us in the dark concerning what He wants us to do!

So, for example, if He calls husbands to love their wife, he tell the husbands to love them like Christ loved you!

In other words, He does not just tell us what to do but how to do it!

And in this Philippians passage He does not just tell us to think, He tells us what kinds of things we are to think!

This is such a grace!

In this verse Paul uses 8 adjectives to describe the kind of things we ought to think about.

1. **True**—these are things that correspond to reality. Things that correspond to the world that God made. Things that are not hidden, but revealed and known. These are things that actually exist as they are!

So, this alone should keep us from meditating on fantasy!

Thinking about things that are true necessarily means that we are not thinking about things that are not true!

The incredibly sad reality is that some of our struggle with anxiety is with things that are true or real!

We are sometimes anxious about things that do not exist!

Thinking on true things would free us from thinking about false and imaginary things!

2. **Honorable**—this word means something that has gravity, things that are weighty and serious. Things that are significant and important. It can even have the meaning of things that inspires awe.

Then means that we are not to give ourselves to thinking about and being preoccupied with trivial matters.

And if we're honest, many of us, myself included, waste time thinking about things that do not matter!

3. **Just**—things are things that are right. These are things that rightly align with the character and word of God.

4. **Pure**—things that are holy. Things that are mixed with and diluted by anything that is perverse or corrupt. Things that are not defiled.

5. **Lovely**—things that are acceptable and friendly. I take this to mean things that delightful and pleasant.

6. **Commendable**—these are things that are of good cheer or report. These are also things that gracious and of good report.

7. **Excellence**—things that are virtuous and things that pertain to moral goodness.
8. **Praise Worthy**—these are things that can or is the grounds for praise or applause. These for which you can think and it gives you a desire to praise.

It is upon these kinds of things we are to think.

The reason this is important is because God has created us as thinking beings!

You are always thinking...and when I say always thinking, I mean, ALWAYS thinking.

We think so much, we sometimes think about our thinking!

In fact, you are probably thinking about whether you think about your thinking!!

We think so much, we think in our sleep (we call it dreaming!)

Your mind is a mega computer that thinks and processes thoughts continually!

And what God is calling us to do with the mega computer we call our minds is to download into a biblical hard drive, whereby our minds are programmed to think biblically about all things at all times!.

Now, all leads us to the point of application that will change the entirety of your life, if you believe it:

And that is this: **You can, by the grace of God, and must, by the Spirit of God, control of your thinking!** (Let me say it again cause this might set you free...2x)

To state it negatively, **You are not a victim of your thoughts!** (Did you hear me? Repeat point)

Some people (and maybe you have done this) play the victim of their thoughts!

People like to express this idea of being a prisoner trapped in their own minds unable to break free from bondage of unwelcomed and unsolicited thoughts.

Beloved, that's not true!

Oh, it is true that at times we may have improper or unbiblical thinking.

But, it is not true that we can't help but to have such thinking!

And sure there are times when we have thoughts come out of nowhere; thoughts where we cannot trace its origin.

But to conclude that we cannot control our thinking is a false conclusion.

And the reason we know that we can control our thinking is because God is commanding us to think!

And this necessarily means that this is something we can do. (We can control and are in control of our thinking.)

And the reason why we can think spiritually is because we have been made alive by the Spirit!

The Spirit has given life to our dead minds and enables them to thinking spiritually because of the work of Jesus!

Let me say it this way, **Upon the cross, Jesus purchased your mind!** (2x)

In other words, when Jesus gave His life, He not only purchased your soul, so that it would be free from the penalty of eternal Hell!

He also purchased your mind, so that it would be free from the bondage and decay of sinful, and corrupt thinking!

SO, HERE ME WHEN I SAY THIS TO YOU:

YOU ARE NOT A PRISONER TO YOUR THINKING!!!

For spiritual thinking Christ has set you free!

Be longer bound to the shackles of ungodly thinking!

By the power of the Spirit, you must throw off the chains of sinful thinking and take control of the things that you are thinking about!

By the power of the Spirit, on the basis of the powerful work of Jesus, you can think properly!

This is what God is calling us to do!

He is calling us to redemptive thinking.

That is, He is calling us to a kind of thinking that reflects the fact that we have been purchased by the blood of Christ!

This is a call to **crucifix thinking**; that is thinking patterned by the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus upon the cross!

And again, this is not some cheap, worldly “positive thinking” nonsense.

We are not talking about the kind of thinking the world is promoting; the kind of thinking that is inward focus; that is focused on yourself, that is geared toward changing your mood! We are not talking about mood ring thinking!

NO! NO! NO! We are talking about the kind of thinking that is heavenly! The kind of thinking that Christ-centered!

The kind of thinking of Colossians 3:2 where we are called to set our minds on things upon this earth.

And so, another point of application is this: **if we are going to think spiritually, we must know the bible!**

I know this is the obvious truth, but as I said early obvious truth is not always obviously applied!

Because you would be amazed at how many Christians know this but do not apply this.

As a matter of fact, let me now apply this directly to you.

Answer this these questions in your mind:

1. Do you know that in order to think spiritually, you must know the bible? (Now watch this)
2. How much time or how often do you study the bible in order to grow in your ability to think spiritually?

And if you're honest, you're thinking, “Yeah, I can do more of it!”

The point is this, beloved: The only way that we will be able to think biblically/spiritually/properly is if we know the bible!

And the only way we will know the bible is if we take the time to study it!

There is no shortcut to this!

There is a no microwave/Hot-N-Ready solution to this!

You must take the time to immerse yourself in the word of God!

Hear me when I say this: Your maturity (and biblical) is directly tied to time you spend studying and meditating on the word!

You should not wonder why you are immature or struggle with biblical thinking if you are not saturating your mind with biblical truth!

Another way we can say it is this: You will only have the mind of Christ if you study the mind of Christ revealed in the scripture!

This is the only way to have the mind of Christ!

And, beloved, you must know that God is not going to do for you what He has called you to do for yourself!

If God calls you to renew your mind according to the scripture, then He is expecting you to do and HE WILL NOT DO IT FOR YOU!!

Please get this!

YOU MUST IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE STUDY AND MEDITATING OF GOD'S WORD, IF YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE PROPER BIBLICAL THINKING!

One more insight about this command to think biblically that I want you to see:

I would have you notice that this command to think spiritually or biblically comes after the command not to be anxious.

In v. 6, Paul says, (read.) Then in v. 8, he commands us to think spiritual.

This is significant because I think a connection can be made between your anxiety and your thinking.

Because anxiety is nothing more than being overwhelmed by a thought or a set of thoughts.

So, catch this: **Anxiety is not a “feeling” problem, it is a “thinking” problem (2x).**

The reason you feel anxious is because you are thinking anxiously.

“Because as a man thinks in his heart...”

So, God gives you two ways to deal with your anxiety:

1. By Praying
2. By thinking spiritually

So, if you, by the grace of God, faithfully do what He commands for you to do (pray and think biblically) you will live a life free from anxiety!

Let's pray!