

Getting Control of Your Thinking

Philippians 4:8-9

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We are moving through the book of Philippians very quickly, but there are some verses that you just have to teach. Verses eight and nine will be what we look at this morning in chapter four. Let us begin reading in chapter four verse one:

“Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

For those of you that haven't been here for this series or perhaps last week: remember that the apostle Paul has been put into jail. He was arrested in Jerusalem for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ by the Jews, and when they were about to kill him, Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship and told the Romans soldiers who had him in captivity for the Jews that he was a Roman citizen, and that he appealed to Caesar to go to Rome and appear in the court there for his rights as a Roman citizen; not to be killed for his religion. And so now after traveling over rough seas and ship wrecks and all kinds of things, he is in Rome in a Roman jail; chained to a Roman soldier. He had been forgotten by some of the churches like the Philippians. He depended upon their goodness to give him food and clothing and medical care because the Roman jails did not do that. So, he writes this letter along with Ephesians and Colossians and Philemon (these four prison epistles) to these churches and individuals to tell them his state of mind and also to teach them some things they needed to remember and understand.

It is very important for us to understand his situation when we read Philippians, because it is a letter about joy; about having joy in life no matter your circumstances, no matter if you can't get your way and what you would prefer. He found in that Roman jail that Jesus Christ was enough. As a terrible sinner to have forgiveness of sins was enough no matter what happens to him in this world. As a sinner saved by Jesus Christ death on a cross, to have that forgiveness and that reconciliation to God and being restored to God as his father and Christ as his Savior and the Holy Spirit who dwelt within him was enough to make him happy and to make him joyful. Removed from friends, possibly suffering in health, imprisoned to a Roman guard: a profane, godless man, 24 hours a day; changing of a guard to another profane and godless man, he was content. He was not grumbling and complaining about all the things that others had done to him, about the things that he could not do because he was imprisoned. He did not grow angry at God for allowing him to be imprisoned as part of God's will for his life, nor did he grow angry at those who were in his path who contributed to his imprisonment.

And so he wrote this letter back to the Philippians to help them understand how he thinks; how to think from the viewpoint of the gospel of Jesus Christ in life and he could say anything he wanted to say to them because he was in a far worse situation than they were. And yet, some of them were

complaining about life: grumbling against each other, disputing with each other, arguing and quarreling with each other. Euodia and Syntyche, sisters in the faith, in the same church, could not get along together. So, he wrote and mentioned their names to encourage them to make peace at the feet at the same Savior; indwelt by the same spirit, having the same purpose in life: to love for His glory, to love one another as Christ has loved them, to forgive one another as Christ forgave them, and to serve each other side by side as Christ served them so humbly and sacrificially.

As part of that instruction to help the Philippians learn how to live in a fallen world as a Christian, last week we saw that they needed to pray. They needed to rejoice in Jesus Christ as their only true and lasting joy in this life. They need to quit putting hope in friends and things, and things they want to make them happy, and put their joy in Christ that they can learn to rejoice always, at all times; to have a forbearing and gentle spirit with everyone; to remember that the Lord is near, Christ is coming again soon, and the things they are so concerned about and worry about and upset them and grumble about will not even last into that new world. He tells them to pray, to not worry about anything, to not give themselves over to doubt and fear about God and anger and bitterness against others, for this is sin. To live in worry and fear and anxiety is doubt about God's goodness and power and purpose in the life of every Christian. Paul was in jail, yet he was not worried. He knew he may die there, but he was not worried. The Philippians had forgotten to send provisions for him, but he was not worried. He trusted in God.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, in every situation, by prayer and supplication to God, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; always thinking of Jesus Christ, being thankful that God the Son humbled himself and left His heavenly glories and was born of a virgin in a humble cave, in a humble stable: his first bed a manger of straw; He was a carpenter dealing with people: brothers and sisters who did not believe in Him, a father and mother who did not fully understand His mission, but He humbled himself and loved them all and sought to minister to them all. And when He went to the cross as one who had perfectly lived according to the Ten Commandments and all of God's Jewish laws, He went to that cross as an impeccable, sinless, sacrifice, for sinners: people who had broken God's law.

Paul loved Him for that and it was a small thing to be in jail for a little while, perhaps even a few years of his life; to have such a great loving Savior and to have such a wonderful future. And he thought like that. And all through this letter he has words of thinking. He wants the Philippians to straighten out their thinking about how to live as Christians; how to think as a Christians so that we might live as a Christians. That is why he said in verse eight: "Let your mind dwell on these things." Actually it should be translated: make your mind continually think on these things. Get control of your thinking. Think on truth. Think on foundations. Think on things that don't change: things that are true: things that God has said are true. Let that be the framework of your thinking about all of life, even if you are in jail. That is how he had joy. And he gave a great promise, that if you will pray with thanksgiving of all that Christ has done and is doing and shall do for you as a sinner saved by grace, the peace of God which passes understanding about your life shall guard your heart and minds in Christ Jesus.

That was a wonderful truth that he gave them. But now he is moving on in verse eight to say: for these final words I want to say to you: this is how to think: not like the world thinks. When children are little they trust their parents; they trust others that they meet, but they learn to be cynical: that parents sometimes do not keep their word, that sometimes others do not love them as they should, and

they learn to mistrust. And as they grow in that mistrust they learn, even as they grow up into teenagers and adulthood, to be cynical, to distrust their parents and to not trust God to listen to their parents. They grow bitter against their employers and do not listen to God who said: Be subject to those who are over you.

The world offers worry and anger and arguing and quarrelling to get ones way. People are on edge. That is why there is more and more fighting in the public schools and the private schools. That is why there is more aggression on the highways today. You have to be careful. Christians are to think differently than the world thinks: loving God with all their hearts, loving their neighbor as themselves, loving the Ten Commandments that God has given, and the many more commandments that Jesus gave; and carving out a life in this fallen world that is away from God: a life that is true, a life that is honorable, a life that is right, a life that is of good report, a life that brings honor and glory to the Son of God, if you really believe He died and suffered on the cross for you. Christians need to learn how to think so they can do that: let your minds dwell on these things; make your mind think like this Paul says.

Now, in these two verses this morning, Paul describes the constant thinking of the Christian. That is, how we should constantly think and then he gives a great promise to those who are seeking to think like this. So, this morning I want us to look at those two things: how a Christian is constantly to think, continually to think, to train his or her mind to think, and then the great promise that God gives to those who will think that way.

First of all, in verse eight and nine he says, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, make your mind to think continually on these things.” We should not be surprised that Christians have to train their minds how to think. We have to train our children as they grow up how to think; that there are certain rules of the house that we have. If you get something out, when you are finished, you have to put it back. That is a rule. If you make a mess, you have to clean it up. If someone hits you on the head with a toy, do not hit them back with a toy. We teach rules to our children to try to bring some measure of order to their lives and even security.

It is so funny how children, when you teach them certain rules, when they go to the store and you have taught your child not to fuss and argue and complain and touch all the things when you are going down the aisle and they come up to the register and there is another little child that is touching everything and making a mess and crying and complaining, your own child, whom you have had to spank with the rod to keep them from doing that thing, will say to you, “Mommy they are not obeying God.” Your children know the rules. God has rules.

Paul says you have to think a certain way to live as a Christian in this world, to have joy in the Lord always, and to have hope and comfort and peace in believing. We have remaining sins in our minds as Christians. God has chosen to make it that way. Even though God’s spirit comes to dwell within us and gives us a new heart, He has allowed sin to remain in our person. We are still at times attracted to the temptation of sin. And not only that, Satan is a real being. He was an angel of God who rebelled and was cast to the earth. Hating God, he seeks to destroy this creation and all mankind with evil, and he tempts us to sin against God’s rules, against God. There are temptations that we had in our pre-Christian days that may be very powerful temptations: maybe drugs, maybe immoral lifestyle and behaviors: lying, stealing, grumbling and complaining against the commandment you shall not covet; it

may be the temptation to rebel against your father or your mother. These things come, and God calls the Christian to make himself think on other kinds of things than these. To think straight as a Christian, to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, learning how to think like God wants us to think, after God's thoughts—you have to cultivate that frame of mind. It doesn't just happen.

You, yourself, have to learn to think differently and make yourself think differently in jail; in prison, chained to a Roman guard, deserted by friends, perhaps hungry, perhaps cold in the night; and Paul had learned to do this. He said, "I have learned to be content in any circumstance I am. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." That is what he is trying to pass onto these people. The word that Paul uses in verse eight is very interesting. He uses it six times. "Finally, brethren," he says, "*whatever...*" Now that word whatever has become a part of our culture and sometimes our young people may not understand the temptation to anger that comes to an adult who hears a young person say, *whatever*. It is a giving up. It is a refusal to face life. It is a refusal to take responsibility.

"I want you to take out the trash."

"Do I have to do it now?"

"Well, yes, that was implied in the command. You need to do it immediately."

"Whatever!" the child responds.

It is a rebellion. It is actually a rebellion against God, who has given that mom or dad over you and cause you to obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Whatever." But, God has "whatevers" that mean something.

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence, anything worthy of praise, make your mind to think about these things continually. What are these things? What are the "whatevers" of God? It is interesting as you get your bible concordance out and trace these six things, these six "whatevers," that every single one of them somehow leads back to God. For instance, whatever is true...this word means truth...it is especially applied in the New Testament to Jesus Christ, himself, and His words that He spoke and the things that his apostles spoke and taught. In other words, whatever is true, whatever is really true about life in this world, make your mind think about these things. Even the enemies of Jesus said to him, "Teacher we know that you are truthful and teach the way of God in truth and defer to no one and you are not partial to any." They recognize in Christ an integrity and a trueness that other men did not have. Even His enemies saw that. And Jesus said, "My words are true," to the disciples; I am the truth.

And so when Paul tells the Philippians, "Whatever is true, make your mind to continually think about these things." He is thinking about the truth that it is in Jesus Christ; that He really is the Son of God, and God the father has invaded this universe: this fallen world, with His delight: His perfect Son, to reveal God to man. Think about that. Think about His words. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Whatever it is that you would have others do for you, do so for them. Be lovers of God and man not haters of men and despisers of God. Jesus is true. Think of Him.

The Apostle John was speaking of himself and he said, "He who has seen the crucifixion and resurrection has testified and his testimony is true and he knows that he is telling the truth that you may believe." The apostles were raised up by Christ to witness his crucifixions and to see his resurrected body after the grave, so that they would be eyewitnesses to tell many others that he is the Son of God;

that this is not a fable, a legend or a myth. It is true. And John started off his first epistle, “what my eyes have seen, what my hands have handled, what I have touched, I proclaim to you.”

Jesus Christ, two thousand years ago, died upon the cross. We cannot see Him with our own eyes, but He is still alive. And those that believe are changed; changed to know God, changed to live for God, changed in the way that they love others. No longer manipulating others, selfishly, to get their way, but being transformed by the unconditional, undeserved love of the Son of God, crucified on the tree for you.

Whatever is true, whatever is lasting, whatever is real make yourself to think on these things continually as you go out into the world. When you rise in the morning, when you go to the breakfast table, when you go to school or work, or when you see your family, whatever is true, make yourself to think from the perspective of God. Don't just walk blindly through this world, reacting thoughtlessly to whatever happens. I am hungry; I am going to the breakfast table. I am going to eat and go out the door. There are people in that house: a father, a mother, a child. As you go to the breakfast table, how are you going to think about what is true and love them that morning? Love your neighbor as yourself while you are eating breakfast with them. How are you going to pray for them during the day and help them?

What is true! Let your mind be transformed by what is true, Paul said. And look for what it did for him in jail. We admire him or else think him a fool. If there is no God, and he is sitting in jail chained to a Roman soldier hoping in eternal life and the resurrection of his body from the grave one day; if there is no God he is a fool. He is just sitting there dreaming dreams. And yet, we look at his character and his life and his love for others who hated him and mistreated him, and we say, “I wish I could be like that.” Because we know deep down we were made in God's image, and God made us to love Him with all our heart and love for Him and with Him in this world.

And He made us to learn how to overcome sin and evil and love one another. There is something in the soul of man that is still there that makes him know, “This is right. Hatred is wrong. Bitterness is wrong.” Whatever is true—whatever God has revealed to us in Jesus Christ is true all the time not matter the way other people are acting, no matter where you are, no matter what is happening to you, Jesus Christ is true. And we are to think like this.

Whatever is honorable we are to think about. This word honorable is a little hard to translate. It means dignified and worthy of honor. The way this word is used in the rest of the New Testament is of deacons that are dignified men. They are men of dignity, not double tongued or addicted to much wine or fond of sorted gain. They are men who are thinking about God and how to live in this world. It is used of older women: older women who are to be dignified not malicious gossips but temperate or self controlled and faithful in all things. In other words, there is never a time as an older woman that you can give up or quit trying to be faithful to the Lord, but you are to be dignified and honorable, showing for the honor of God in your life.

Older men, it says in Titus 2:2 are to be temperate: that is self controlled, dignified or honorable, or sensible, sensible, self controlled, sound in faith, in love, and perseverance. There is never a time that an older Christian man may say that, “I am retiring from life, I am retiring from God's people, I am retiring from the church, and I am retiring from love. I have put in my time. I have put up with a lot. Now it is time for me, me, me.” Even in physical retirement we must love with the last breath and be

dignified men who are witnesses of the truth of Jesus Christ living in honor of Him that others may say, “What makes that older man dignified and honorable like he is?”

We are to be in a frame of mind as Christians of thinking: whatever is honorable, whatever brings honor to God in my life, for God himself is honorable. He has kept his word to me and now I must keep my word to Him and live for His glory. Whatever is right; that word actually can be translated righteous, and is in many places; it is especially talking about whatever is right in God’s eyes. What does God think about this thing in my life? What does God think about my behavior, my words, my thoughts and my deeds? Whatever is right—continually make your mind to think about these things. Don’t go out the door to work or school without thinking about what is right. How shall I live rightly for God in this world today? How shall I honor my father and mother? How shall I not commit murder and hate others? How shall I not commit adultery and use my eyes and my body sinfully and immorally? For it is in that framework of what is right that God guides us and protects us in this world. And the thing is you have to think about it. You have to make your mind continually think about those things.

The bible uses this word “right” of Zacharias and Elizabeth who were the parents of John the Baptist in Luke 1:6. It says that they were both right or righteous in the sight of God. In other words, they were faithful believers even though Christ had not yet been revealed to them in His birth. They were doing all that they were suppose to do as believers from the Old Testament. Here is how Luke describes them: they were both right in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. There is no such thing as right and wrong unless God says so.

We have lived during the hundred years of the decline of right and wrong in America, and part of that is because of different movements in universities both in philosophies and theology where those who do not like being bound by God’s Ten Commandments in the way they live have decided, in theology, that those rules of God really do not apply to us today. In fact we are manmade, so there is not absolute truth and those whom philosophy who deny the existence of God or the absolute standards in this world have no foundation. They have undermined our thinking in this world.

A man or a woman who have promised before almighty God and covenanted with Him and before eye witnesses that they would love one another till death do us part decides one day I am tired of this, I don’t want this. And God’s thinking of what is right is ignored or rejected, and so we find families broken apart by unbiblical divorce. Children are raised in difficulty because both parents would not commit to what is right.

The commandments and requirements of the Lord, Paul said in Romans 7:12, “So then the law is holy and righteous and good.” The commandment is holy and that means the Ten Commandments. He was talking about the tenth: thou shalt not covet. God used that commandment to show him that his heart was unprincipled; that he coveted other men’s wives and possessions. Even though outwardly he was a good man, his mind was always thinking, always coveting, always wishing for this and wishing for that he did not have, and how things could be if he could only get what he really wanted. God slayed him with his sins against the law and taught him how to be a virtuous man: content with God, joyful in Christ all the time instead of complaining and grumbling and coveting, envious and jealous.

The law of God is good. The commandment is holy and righteous. It is used, this word right, is used of masters or employees, “Grant your slaves right and fairness (or justice and fairness) knowing you too have a master in heaven.” Be right in the way you treat your employees, because God is your

employer. He says to children: “Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.” Whatever is right let your mind continually dwell on these things.

Boys and girls and children and young people the Lord Jesus Christ’s will for your life is to obey your parents in the Lord, to honor them, to speak well to them and about them. Because if you love Jesus Christ, you will keep His commandments, and if you are unwilling to do that it proves that you don’t love Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus Christ and that which is right go together. You can’t have Christ and then keep living a godless and disobedient life to His commandment. For if you love me said, you will keep my commandments. So, whatever is right, whatever God approves, whatever God has given to us to live by, continually make your mind think about those things. It is not just something you do when you go over the catechism or come to church and read the commandments of God. These are the foundations of righteousness, of goodness, of justice. They come from the mouth of God and from the heart of God. All of these commandments are the summary of what it means to love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.

And Paul says to the Philippians: whatever is right, discipline your mind, make your mind think continually about these things everywhere you go: when you rise up in the morning when you walk by the way, when you go to bed at night. What does God think is right? He continues with other things: whatever is pure. This word pure is a word that is spoken about Jesus Christ. He was pure. He loved God with all His heart, He loved His neighbor as himself, and therefore He lived purely with men.

Everyone who has this hope on Christ purifies himself just as He is pure. When Paul was trying to describe purity for the Christian he said to the Corinthians: “For I am jealous with a godly jealousy, for I betrothed you to one husband so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.” The idea of purity is almost gone in our society. Fewer and fewer of our young people when they approach their lifelong marriage partner are pure virgins. They have obeyed God and kept themselves pure in thought and body to give themselves wholeheartedly for a lifetime for the great love of their life.

Whatever is pure make your mind think about these things. The wisdom from above is first pure then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering and without hypocrisy. Another translation for the word pure is sincere. Not duplicitous, but committed to certain ideals and virtues of purity and living faithfully according to them. Whatever is pure continually make your mind think on those things. How does God want you to live today? How does he want you to be pure? We need to be pure in thought and word and deed.

Wives are called to be sensible or self controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands so that the word of God will not be dishonored. There is a purity in marriage for wives and for husbands to be committed only to each other for life as gifts of God to each other. And they are committed to that. They think about that, and it continually frames their treatment of each other.

These “whatevers” are given to us to learn how to think as a Christian and to guard our minds and our hearts to live faithfully to the Son of God. If we love Him we will do that, and if we don’t it will be too much trouble.

Whatever is lovely...now this word is only used once in the New Testament. It is made up of two words: the prefix is (?) and the suffix is *philes* where you can hear *phileo* or love. Whatever is loving toward others: make your mind continually think like that. How can I be loving to my spouse when I get out of bed this morning and go to breakfast? How can I be loving to my child? How can I be loving to

the guy that picks me up for work or my classmates at school? How can I be loving to the person at the fast food counter and the grocery store clerk, the gas station attendant? How can I show them the love and kindness of the Son of God who loved me and was kind to me and gave himself up for me? Whatever is lovely; loving toward, make your mind think that way. Make your mind continually dwell upon those things.

Whatever is of good report—again this is a word that is made up of two words and it means: well spoken; whatever is of good reputation spoken about let your mind dwell on these things; both your own reputation, that you would be of good report when other people speak of your life; that they would give honor to the Son of God when they think about you. Whatever is of good report make your mind think about that; that everywhere you go your building a reputation for the glory of Christ, not just for self and pride, but for Christ with every word and every deed.

Paul tried to get this across to the Ephesians at the same time that he wrote this letter, and he said in Ephesians 5:3, “But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you as is proper among saints, and there must be no filthiness and silly talk or court jesting, which are not fitting, but rather the giving of thanks.” You don’t have to talk like the world to live in the world. You don’t have to laugh at filthy jokes. You don’t have to tell them to be part of the group. You don’t have to be given to coarse jesting which is not fitting. But whatever is reputable, whatever is of good report, be thinking about that and what you say and what you do everywhere you go. Instead of giving a bad report of your testimony in Christ, give thanks in all things.

Then he adds: if there is anything of excellence or worthy of praise let your mind dwell on these things. This word *excellence* is used of God; that we are to proclaim the excellencies and the virtues of God as we go out into the world. We ourselves are to add to our faith: moral excellence—those things that are like God: the love, the justice, the mercy, the character of God. Whatever is of excellence let your mind dwell on these things. Whatever is of good report and worthy of praise—God is worthy of praise—be thinking of Him and what He has done for you and how He gave you the food you ate at the breakfast table, how He created the man that made the cereal that fills your bowl, how He made the dad who went to work at a job that he struggles with to buy you the cereal that you enjoy. If there is anything worthy of praise to God, think like that both comprehensively of all of you life and specifically of each occasion; if there is anything of excellence, if there is anything worth of praise—the middle voice of this voice means: make your self do it! Don’t sit back and wait for God to just take you over—make your mind to continually think and reason on these things. Logic, think: what is God like? How does He want me to live? How does He want me to open my eyes and see that He does everything for me and that He is worthy of thanksgiving, and He has sent His Son for me, and that He is worthy of praise? Learn to think like a Christian.

Now there is a wonderful promise attached to this, and the promise is in verse nine: “The things you have learned and heard and received in me practice or continually do these things, and the God of peace shall be with you.” In the previous verses he said if you pray like this with thanksgiving with your request, the peace of God will be with you. Now he says the God of peace will be with you. If you cause your mind to continually think about whatever is true and honorable and of a good report and all these things: that which is excellent, that which is best, that which is true, the God of peace will be with you.

Now the bible teaches that God is everywhere; that He is immense and He is omnipresent by His Spirit. This means that you can’t fly to a corner of this universe by any kind of rocket ship and get away

from God's full presence there. It means that God is as fully present here in this assembly as He is in any church in the world today. If you are a Christian, God is as fully present with you and in you by His Spirit as any other Christian in the world today. God is here. God is there. So what does he mean: the God of peace *will* be with you, future tense? He wants them to understand that if they will make their minds to dwell on whatever is true and whatever is honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, any excellence, anything worthy of praise, that the God who is with them spiritually will manifest himself to them spiritually; that there is a special experience of the presence of God for the Christian who is walking faithfully. Jesus taught this in John 14 and He said, "If you will believe in Him and walk according to his commandments, the Father shall disclose Himself to you."

And Paul said in Romans 8, "The Spirit of God testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." There is a sensible presence of God to those who walk faithfully with Him. If you have put God out of your mind, and you walk through the day, and you go to work, and you bring Him back into your mind when you read to your bible and pray before you go to bed, it is unlikely that you will have a sensible experience of the presence of God: the God of peace being with you all the time. Because you have put Him out of your mind for the rest of the day, but if you will make your mind to dwell on whatever is true and honorable and lovely and of a good report, worthy of praise, all those things that are excellent about God, all those things that are true, a promise is attached to this: that the God of peace will be with you!

Adam and Eve walked with God until they sinned and He pushed them out of the garden, out of His presence. Man by nature does not know the presence and fellowship with God. But Jesus Christ came to earth and the Word was made flesh, and His name was Emmanuel: God with us, that we could see God again. Now, Peter said, "Though you do not see Him you love Him, and though you do not see Him now you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory because you know that you will see Him." It is in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ that He is alive and His Spirit dwells within you—He will never leave you nor forsake you—and you set your mind upon the things of God: that God manifests His fellowship and presence with you.

Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved completely without blame at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Corinthians 13:11, "Finally brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like minded, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you."

The communion with God that we talked about at ARBCA last week, that fellowship and oneness with the God who made us: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, is maintained by faith in the truth and living according to the truth. Whatever is true and lovely and honorable and of good report make your mind to dwell on these things. The things you see in Paul here in prison: live like that. He was always thinking about God. He was always thinking about Christ's love for him. He was always living knowing that God's Spirit was with him and in him. And he was trying to bear witness where he was and do what he could for the glory of Christ. He knew God's presence in jail, not just in the knowledge that it is true but in the heart.

"Not that I speak from want. I have learned to be contented in whatever circumstance that I am. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Look at me, Paul said. I am seeking to think like this, and I am trying to teach you to think like this, and God has strengthened me in jail. And you are

depressed and I am not. You are worried and I am not. You are bitter and I am not. You are complaining and grumbling and I am not. Why is that? It is not because Paul is better than they are, but he sets his mind on better things. Paul has set his mind on things above where Christ is: the things that are true, and honorable and pure and lovely. Not only did the peace of God that passes understanding guard his heart, but he fellowshiped with God in jail. And that is a promise to those who will make themselves think continually, who will disciplined themselves for the purpose of Godliness, who will set their mind on things above where Christ is, who will be transformed by the renewing of their mind and the way they think from the perspective of truth and that which is good and right and honorable; the God of peace will be with you.