

HOW TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH GOD

God's Presence With Believers

Philippians 4:8-9

If *courage, conviction, integrity*, and *uncompromising character* are *commendable qualities* for people of the world ...how much *more essential* are they for *Christians*. The very name *Christian* identifies believers with Jesus Christ...the most perfect model of *uncompromising* and *courageous integrity* who ever lived. The New Testament repeatedly commands believers to follow Him by *surrendering to the Lordship of Christ* and following His example of *absolute obedience* to God.

I. HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST: (vs. 8) Dwell on Godly thoughts.

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 and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things (vs. 8)...

Finally...indicates that Paul has *arrived at the climax* of his teaching on *spiritual stability* and *consistency*. The principle that he is about to mention is both the summation of all the others and the key to implementing them.

Dwell on these things...introduces an important truth... *spiritual stability is the result of how a person thinks*. The **imperative** form makes it a *command*...*proper thinking isn't optional* in the Christian life. Gk. *logizomai*, means *more than just entertaining thoughts*...it literally means to *take inventory*. It means *to evaluate, to consider, to calculate*. Believers are to *consider the qualities* Paul lists in this verse and *meditate* on their *implications*. The verb form calls for the *habitual discipline of the mind*...to *set all thoughts* on these *spiritual virtues*.

The Bible leaves no doubt that people's lives are the *product of their thoughts*.

"For as he thinks within himself, so he is..."

~Proverbs 23:7a

The modern counterpart to that Proverb is the computer acronym...**GIGO**...*garbage in, garbage out*. Just as a computer's *output* is dependent on the information that is *input*...so people's actions are the *result of their thinking*. We may or may not be able to choose what our minds are *exposed to*, but we can control what *dwells in our minds*. What we *keep in our minds*...what *dwells in our minds*... determines *what comes out*.

"That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

~Mark 7:20-23

Today's culture focuses on *emotions*...how one *feels*. The importance of *serious* and *deep thinking* about *biblical truth* is *downplayed* or *out right rejected*. People no longer ask if something is *true*...but *how does it work for me? Is it relevant? How does it make me feel?* These questions reject the concept of *absolute truth*.

Whatever is true...this phrase focuses on the *Word of God*. The *Word of God* is *true* because the *God of truth inspired it*. **Whatever is true** means *reading, analyzing, and meditating* on the *Word of God* (**Psalm 119**).

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."

~John 17:17

The remaining *five virtues* are all *based* on *the truth of God's Word*.

Whatever is honorable...comes from a word that means *to revere* or *to worship*. It emphasizes what is *worthy of respect*...whatever is *edifying* or *exalting*. Believers are to think *heavenly*...whatever is *worthy of awe, adoration,* and *praise*. That which will **honor both** God and others.

Whatever is right...an **adjective**...describes *righteousness*...whatever is in *harmony with God's eternal* and *unchanging standards*. Believers are to *think* and *dwell* on matters that are *consistent* with the *eternal law of God*.

Whatever is pure...describes what God defines as *holy, morally clean,* and *undefiled*...whatever is *free from sin*.

Whatever is lovely...means whatever is *pleasant, gracious, generous,* or *patient*. Believers must focus their thoughts on what the Bible says is *pleasing* and *agreeable* before God...what is *beautiful* and *attractive* to God.

Whatever is of good repute...describes what is *highly regarded* or *well thought of*. Believers' *thoughts* are to be *preeminently* fixed on *character* and *reputation*...maintaining one's *good name*.

In summary, **Paul** exhorts...**If there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things...**the key to *godly living* is *godly thinking*.

“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”

~Proverbs 4:23

Salvation involves the *transformation* of the *mind*.

“For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on

the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.”

~Romans 8:5-6

“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

~I Corinthians 2:11-16

II. PUT INTO ACTION GODLY DEEDS: (vs. 9) Practice righteousness.

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 (vs. 9)...

This verse introduces a final element that is *essential* for *spiritual stability*. The preceding attitudes must not be viewed as mere *abstract principles*. *Godly thinking* cannot be divorced from *behavior*. When all is said and done, *spiritual stability* comes down to *living a disciplined life* of *obedience to God's standards*. People in whom the *Word of God richly dwells* (**Colossians 3:16**), and who therefore live *obediently*...*stand firm* when *difficulty, temptation,* and *compromise* surround them.

Practice...Gk. *prasso*, refers to *repetition* or *continuous action*. It means to *repeat* or *repeatedly duplicate something*. Do it *over* and *over again*.

Holy living takes place only when *right attitudes* and *right thoughts police the flesh*. That's why **Paul** confronted the *priority of thoughts* (**vs. 2-8**) before *exhorting the church* to *righteous behavior* (**vs. 9**). *Knowing, understanding, and embracing* God's law *comes first*. It's then followed by the *behavior* that is *habitually controlled* by that *devotion to the truth*.

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things...Paul *modeled* the *standard of Christian behavior* for the **Philippians**. Now he *exhorts* them to *walk* and *live* according to that *same practice*.

And the God of peace will be with you...the God whose *character is peace* is the *giver of peace*. When a person has *peace with God*...he then has the *peace of God*.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **Take every thought captive.** Believers must *discipline* their *eyes* and *minds* in order to have a *true heart* for God. It's only then that we can **take every thought captive**. We must add to our *faith* the *proper attitudes, thoughts, and actions* described in this passage. Only then will we develop *spiritual stability* and *consistency* in our lives.

This isn't the *power of positive thinking*. It's much deeper than that. It's the *power of the Holy Spirit* at work *in* and *through* us *constraining* us.

- **Live a life based on Biblical truth.** Read about the lives of any saint that has ever adorned the life of the church. You will see *great character...spiritual stability...spiritual consistency* that expresses characteristics in their lives such

as *discipline* and *order*. Consistently, it's the *universal characteristics* of all the outstanding men and women of God. Read about **Hudson Taylor, David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, the Wesley brothers ...Charles and John, George Whitfield, Lottie Moon, Billy Graham, Donald Grey Barnhouse, John Bunyan** and others. *Read their journals*. It doesn't matter what denomination, or what branch of the Church they belonged to...they have all *disciplined their lives and minds* to that which is *thoroughly scriptural* and *absolutely essential*. They *dwelled on God's truth*...they *dwelled on the Word of God*.