

## Preparing our Heart and Mind (Part 2)

### Philippians 4: 4-9

We began to consider these powerful verses in our last study, and I hope to conclude them today. Paul was well aware of the various struggles the church faced. Society presented particular challenges and there were disagreements and struggles within the church itself. However, Paul knew one of the greatest battles any believer would face was within his or her own heart and mind. For the church to be victorious in Christ, believers need to be aware of the tactics of the enemy and prepared to face his attacks.

I am sure you will agree that many of the battles we face regarding our spiritual walk with the Lord originate in the mind. We too must prepare for the battle, guarding our heart and mind from attack. I want to resume our look at the [challenges](#) Paul offered as we consider: [Preparing our Heart and Mind](#). Quickly, let's review our last study. We discovered:

#### **I. An Appeal to Rejoice (4)**

**A. The Admonition** – This was not a mere suggestion.

**B. The Expectation** – [Rejoice in the Lord always...and again I say, Rejoice!](#)

#### **II. An Appeal to Remain (5-7)**

**A. Resilient (5)** – Remaining humble and gracious in difficulty; resilient in faith.

**B. Confident (6a)** – Not irresponsibly, but without anxiety and worry.

**C. Dependent (6b)** – [but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God](#). Paul was well aware of his dependence on the Lord for every area of life, especially when facing attack from the enemy. In order to overcome, he knew he must remain in constant communication with the Lord through prayer, being totally dependent upon Him to provide strength and wisdom to overcome.

- I know this seems elementary for those who have walked with the Lord for years, but it is impossible to overemphasize the importance of prayer. We are no match for the enemy within our own strength and wisdom. If we are to guard our hearts and minds, being prepared to face the attacks of the enemy, we must be committed to diligence in prayer. We must take our needs to the Lord while depending solely upon Him to provide and equip us for battle.

- A hurried look at this verse would miss its great importance. Paul actually provides a detailed look at the various types of prayer we must offer unto the Lord. In fact, each of these aspects should be present each time we pray. He speaks of:

- **Prayer** – This speaks of a *special time of worship and devotion* unto the Lord. We should never approach the throne of grace apart from a time of worship and devotion for the Lord, in recognition of His sovereign power and grace.
- **Supplication** – This refers to *our focus upon a special or particular need*. It involves coming before the Lord and pouring our heart out before Him, declaring our need and pleading with Him to intervene on our behalf.
- **Thanksgiving** – This is an *offering of praise and thanksgiving* unto the Lord for His great provision in our lives and the grace He daily bestows.
- **Requests** – Paul urged the church to make *specific requests about specific needs*. He desired the church to get away from casual, generic praying, and seek the Lord to meet the specific needs they or others faced. God already knows every need we have, but He desires us to bring those needs before Him, making specific requests regarding those needs.

**D. Expectant** (7) – [And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus](#). As we follow the guidance Paul has offered up to this point, we can live in anticipation of the Lord working on our behalf. We can fully expect the peace of God to flood our hearts and minds. I think we are all aware of the benefits of the peace of God, but this is quite significant. The benefits we can expect regarding the peace of God are actually two-fold.

- Paul declared that the peace of God passes all understanding. We know that God is sovereign. We know He possesses all power and is more than able to meet our needs, and yet He often works in ways that we never expected, in ways that exceed our understanding. God likes to show Himself mighty, meeting our needs in such a way that there is no doubt He has moved and answered our prayers. He is able to work in our lives beyond what we can even ask or think.

[Eph.3:20 – Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.](#)

- [The peace of God... shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus](#). As we come before God in prayer, sharing our great need with Him, He not only meets our needs beyond what we can imagine – He also keeps our hearts and minds. This is essential in obtaining victory over the enemy as he attacks our hearts and minds. The word keep is actually a military term that has the idea of “*a garrison*.” As we seek God in prayer, He provides peace that fortifies our minds, building an impenetrable wall that the enemy cannot break through. If we are to win the battle for our minds, we must spend time in prayer in order to receive God’s peace that guards our minds.

**III. An Appeal to Reflect (8-9)** – In a final appeal, Paul challenged the church to reflect on certain aspects of life. Paul knew it would be much easier to resist the attack of the enemy, and be victorious against his attacks, if our minds were filled with good thoughts. He mentioned:

**A. The Attributes to Consider (8)** – *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* Paul offered a list of positive attributes for our consideration and challenged the believer to think on these things. If our minds are filled with positive thoughts, focused on the Lord, there would be very little room for negative thoughts and attacks from the enemy.

- I really like the thoughts of John Butler on this verse, and I have adapted the application of his commentary – **First, honest** thoughts. *"Whatsoever things are true... honest."* Keep untruth out of your mind. Gossip, political propaganda, and false religion needs to put in the trash can. **Second, holy** thoughts. *"Whatsoever things are just... pure."* "Just" here means righteous. Holy thoughts keep the mind clean. A dirty mind is a sick mind and will defile you. **Third, harmonious** thoughts – *"Lovely."* The meaning of the word translated "lovely" involves harmony. A person needs to have thoughts that promote harmony instead of unnecessary division and schism. **Fourth, happy** thoughts. *"Whatsoever things are of good report."* These are not discouraging, depressing thoughts. This does not mean to stick your head into the sand of unreality, but rather to fill your mind with happy thoughts. *"Rejoice in the Lord" (Philippians 4:4)* will do that. **Fifth, healthy** thoughts. *"If there be any virtue."* We speak here of the health of your spiritual life which is more important than the health of your physical body. Dirty books and magazines—things without virtue—do not stimulate healthy thoughts. **Sixth, heavenly** thoughts. *"If there be any praise."* This should motivate thoughts of God, Who is certainly most worthy of praise. <sup>i</sup> I think you will agree that such thoughts, occupying our mind with these, will aid in our battle within the mind.

**B. The Admonition to Conform (9)** – *Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.* Again Paul used himself as a godly example to follow. He had taught them of righteous living; he had modeled such a lifestyle before them. Now he admonished the church to imitate the life he lived before them. In doing so, they would be guaranteed the presence and power of God in their lives.

- I have said before that I have more trouble with the passages I do understand than those I don't. Most of us have been in church the majority of our lives, or at least long enough to have an understanding of what is expected for Christian living. We know how we are expected to live, and we know where to find the strength and wisdom necessary to live an upright life. Mere knowledge is not enough though. We must be willing to strive for a life of righteousness. We must be willing to

flee the flesh and resist the devil. We must fill our minds with thoughts that stimulate and promote spiritual growth. We are more than conquerors in Christ, but we must be willing to engage the enemy in battle instead of opening the door, inviting him, and providing him a place of residence. We must strive daily to conform to the image of Christ. [Rom.12:1-2 – I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>\[2\]</sup> And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.](#)

**Conclusion:** This has been a very practical and relevant study. We live in what has become known as the information age. We have access to a wealth of material, both good and bad, at our fingertips. The enemy continually seeks to fill our minds with the filth of this world, while planting seeds of fear, worry, and doubt. The battle within our hearts and minds will continue to rage as long as we live, but we do not have to surrender in defeat. It is possible to have victory over the enemy. Look to Christ for the strength and wisdom you need. Rejoice in Him, apart from fear and doubt. Spend time in prayer on a continual basis and occupy your mind with spiritual thoughts.

If you are struggling in this area, make your request known to the Lord. He can provide peace that passes all understanding, exceeding your expectations. If you are unsaved, you don't have the benefit of the Lord's assistance. Satan wages war in your mind as well, but you must deal with him alone. Come to Christ for salvation so that you can receive forgiveness from sin and enjoy a constant Companion and Guide.

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<sup>i</sup> Analytical Bible Expositor - Analytical Bible Expositor – Galatians-Colossians.