

July 23, 2006

Philippians 4:8 Part 2

Good morning. If you will, take out your Bibles and let's return to Philippians chapter 4. Last week we connected verse 8 to verses 6 and 7 and like I told you last Sunday, this morning I want to dig deeper into just one part of verse 8, the first phrase to be precise. So let's look at verse 8 this morning where God through Paul writes:

Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think on such things.

This morning I want us to look at this phrase "**Whatever is true.**" You might wonder why I choose that phrase out of all of them – I mean why not "whatever is pure" – after all, all you have to do is get on the internet or turn on the television to see that our society is crippled in the area of purity. Well – because I think it all comes back to what is true. Those images online, those scenes on billboards, in magazines, on television, and in movies all promise something that isn't true. Often times even the images themselves aren't real. So it all goes back to what is true. But the other reason is what I said last week – we are in a battle for our minds and God has been very clear about who the enemy is. If you will, keep your finger here in Philippians, but turn over to **John 8:44** where Jesus is talking to a group of Jews who are choosing not to believe what He says. Here Jesus tells us the reality of our enemy. He says:

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Just 13 verses earlier Jesus said that when you know the truth, the truth will set you free. If Jesus says believing the truth will set you free, then not only not believing the truth, but believing what is not true will put you in bondage.

So we need to know what this means – to set our minds on – to focus our thoughts on – to think on whatever is true.

Last week we defined this word having the sense of **VALID, reliable, and honest – the very opposite of false – it is dominated by the idea of what is REAL.**

So God's command here stated in the positive, is **think on what is true – on what is real which is the same thing stated in the negative as do NOT think on what is NOT true or NOT real.**

Now before we dig into the ways that challenges everyone of us every single day, let me just remind you that when it comes to what is true, the starting place is right here. The Word of God. There is no other book – religious or not that has stood the test of time – the test of history – the test of science – of archaeology – of literature – that has weathered every attack from doubt to destruction. There is no other book that can claim to be the inerrant Word of the Almighty God. This is not a history book – it is not a science book – it is not a story book – it is not a book of suggestions – of guidelines – of anecdotes and examples. This is the inerrant – eternal – perfect – living Word of God and as such this is the absolute truth.

That belief more than any other defines who we are and our adherence to it will make or break our success in this life. So if you don't get that today – then much of what we are going to look at is not going to help you this morning. But if you do – then this simple phrase is about to unleash freedom in your life like you may have never known.

Think on whatever is true. How? First – in your **thinking about God**. We must be sure our ideas about God are accurate, biblical, & true. **Inaccurate or UNBIBLICAL thoughts of God can block God's power in your life and rob you of the very PEACE God intends.**

God is who He reveals Himself to be in the Word. We have to guard letting our thought or feelings override the truth of Scripture.

For example, what are some common lies about God believed in the world?

God does not exist, man made him up. Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning, God...

How about “God is just one of many gods, Jesus is just one way of getting to heaven.” – The Hebrew confession of faith from Deuteronomy 6 is that “the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

1 Tim 2:5-6

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men”

John 14:6 – the words of Jesus – “I am the way, the truth, the life – no one comes to the Father except through me.”

Another common lie – “God doesn't care what I do, God won't send anyone to hell” - Heb 4:13

“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

We won't take the time to read it all, but in Matthew 6 Jesus tells us that there will be a judgment – he says in verses 31-32

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”

Then in verse 34

“Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'”

And in verse 41

“Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'”

You might say, Brett I know those things, I don't think those wrong thoughts about God. Great – for Christians sometimes it is more subtle. First John 1:9 for instance give us the truth that If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Although this statement guarantees our forgiveness when we honestly confess and repent, how often have you been guilty like me of thinking, “I don't feel forgiven”? When we do this we are allowing our feelings to take precedence over the rock solid biblical truth of the forgiveness of sins available in Jesus Christ. Other times we think “I don't see how God could forgive me for this” – again we're letting our thoughts and feelings take precedence over the Word of God. You and I are forgiven regardless of our feelings and thoughts. To think we are not forgiven is to think a lie.

Any time my feeling and thoughts run counter to what SCRIPTURE says I need to stop and ask – what is true? The answer is always the same. The BIBLE is true – not my feelings or thoughts. So our thinking about God must be on what is true.

How about our **thinking about ourselves**. I don't have to give you proof of the self image issues that wreak havoc on us at almost every stage of life. You know because you've seen it and you've experienced it. But **when we view ourselves through the lens of God's Word, we can replace**

those SELF-DEFEATING thought patterns with statements about God's love for us and our worth in His eyes. Truths that include the fact that

I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14)

That God has a grand plan and purpose for my life (2 Timothy 1:9)

That God has given me spiritual gifts to be used to glorify Him and benefit other believers (1 Corinthians 12:7)

That no matter what I experience, I am always loved and accepted by God (Romans 8:35)

That is what is true. So whenever you find yourself thinking of yourself as useless or worthless or as a failure or a loser – remember what is true about you. You are a child of God (John 1:12) You are God's very workmanship (Ephesians 2:10) and You have been bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:20, 1 Peter 1:19). **Your VALUE- your worth – is not up for grabs – and by thinking on what is true, you keep yourself from being robbed of the very PEACE God intends.**

What about **thinking about relationships**. This is where thinking on what is true – on what is real – becomes more difficult. See when we think on what is real, we don't spend time analyzing other people's words and actions. **SECOND-GUESSING what people say and do is negative thinking actually damages relationships.** Yet how often have you – like me – been guilty of playing mind games with people?

It is all too easy to wonder about what a person is saying and to try and read between the lines of what they do say – like "Jeff says he is fine, he says nothing is wrong, but I don't know." We come up with creative explanations for people's actions – "Adam has been grumpy lately, he must be angry with me." We draw conclusions about why people do what they do – "Allison left me a voice mail to call her. I must have done something wrong or I wonder what she wants from me now." We also apply this kind of thinking to what people do not do – "Phil hasn't called me in a while, I must have done something to offend him."

Let me give you two quick principles that can help settle a mind that is overly active when it comes to thinking the wrong thing about relationships. The first comes from 1 Corinthians 13 where Paul talks about love – he says that love thinks no evil and believes all things. This is **the principle of FACE VALUE**. Whenever I question what someone else says or does, I violate these qualifications for love. My second guessing involves interpreting and quite often distorting the words and actions of others. When I try and read into a person's words and actions rather than accepting what they say and do at face value, I am essentially making that person a liar. Instead I need to stop my wild speculative thoughts by asking myself – what is true – what is real? The answer to this question calls me to believe what the other person said.

The second principle comes from Matthew 18:15 where Jesus says If your brother sins against you, go and reprove him in private. Obviously the starting point with this verse is for you and me to do this ourselves, but when we believe others will obey it as well, we can hope that when we sin against other people they will come to us in private to talk about it. This is the **principle of CONFRONTATION**. There is huge freedom there. I no longer waste time and energy worrying about what other people think of me or what I do. You can stop wondering what others might be thinking or what you might have done wrong. Your guesses are just that – they are guesses – they aren't fact, they aren't real, they aren't truth.

Now when you know you have said or done something that hurt someone, that's different – that's not what we're talking about – but when you stop analyzing your every move – replaying every conversation and interaction looking for mistakes – second guessing other people's ideas about you – when you stop thinking about what is not true – what is not real – then you open yourself up to the peace Paul has been talking about in Philippians chapter 4.

If you were here when we looked at verse 6, you'll remember that we talked about a study that showed that 40 percent of what we worry about are things that will never happen – things that will never come true in our existence. When it comes to **our thinking about the future**, God tells us to think on what is true – on what is real, that applies to our thoughts of the future as well. How often do you find yourself thinking these two words – **WHAT IF?** That little question has the ability to rob you of all peace about the future. Yet Philippians 4:8 commands us to think on what is true and real and events in the future are neither. Questions like:

What if I
Never find a girlfriend
Can't get into college
Never get married
Lose my husband
Get cancer
Lose my job
My children rebel

All those **what if questions** are **GUESSES at best – and as such they are not real** – yet they can too easily fill out minds and rob us again of the peace that we've been talking about. We've got to eliminate that kind of negative thinking about what is not true – what is not real.

And remember from last week – the only way to push out the negative is to pour in the positive. You can't just stop focusing on what is not real unless you start focusing on what is real. God's promises are what are real. Let me remind you of a few:

Nothing will ever happen to you

That God does not already know about. **Nothing will ever happen to you that is a MISTAKE.**

(Psalm 139:4,16)

Nothing will ever happen to you **that you cannot HANDLE by God's power and grace.** (2

Corinthians 12:9-10)

Nothing will ever happen to you **that will not eventually be used by God for some GOOD purpose in your life** (Romans 8:28-29)

Nothing will ever happen to you **apart from God's PRESENCE** (Matthew 28:20).

Yes we need to plan for the future and set goals for ourselves, but we suffer when we worry about things which might happen. See "what if questions fail to acknowledge God. So Paul tells us to think on what is true – what is real instead. Having planned for the future as best we can and then leaving it in God's hands, we do better when we draw close to God in the present and think about things that are real.

The last area I want us to look at is our **thinking about the past**. The same study that showed us 40% of our worries are about the future showed us that 30% of our worries are about the past – things we can't change anyway. Where the future problem question is "what if" – the past problem question is "**IF ONLY.**" If only I had done that differently. If only I hadn't done that. If only that hadn't happened. If only I had been better informed.

Like our what if questions about the future, our **if only thoughts** about the past can rob us of peace because **they too are COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.**

First it **doesn't address what is REAL.** The past is gone. It is beyond repair or restructuring. What is real is what is happening today. And that is what God tells us to focus on.

What good would it have done for Daniel to get caught up thinking "If only I'd closed the curtains before I prayed" or Joseph to think "If only I'd kept my mouth shut" or David "If only I hadn't gone up on the roof that night" – none of that changes what is real in the present – and secondly

“If only” thinking **breeds REMORSE**. The backward gaze can produce regret and sorrow. It is impossible to return to the past so what value is there in rehashing it?

You probably know the story of the lion king. How a lion cub named Simba thinks that he is responsible for his father’s death and so he runs away and lives in the grip of that guilt as he grows up hiding from but controlled by his past. Then one day when he is older this blue baboon shows up to knock some sense into him. Take a look.

Movie Clip

Pretty good advice from a looney blue baboon. **Either you look at the past to LEARN from it and move forward in what is real today or you stay TRAPPED by regret in what is not real** – the if onlys that do you no good.

You see when Paul says think on whatever is true – it is very easy for us to miss how powerful that simple phrase is because it gets buried in a list of other adjectives. But when you stop and realize how much of our thinking is dominated by what is not true, what is not real –

Wrong thoughts about God

Wrong thoughts about ourselves – our self image – our value.

Wrong thoughts about others – second guessing their motives, their thoughts, their view of us and what we say or do

Wrong thoughts about the future – what if

And wrong thoughts about the past – if only

And we understand that **every one of those thoughts that focuses on what is NOT TRUE robs us of the peace that God intends**, then we understand why this is not just a suggestion from Paul. When Philippians 4:8 says think on whatever is true – it is a command from God because He knows what is best for you and for me.

And what is true is we can train ourselves to obey this. Remember from last week – just like when you drop a handful of change on the side walk or in the mall, everyone within hearing distance stops and turns to look to see if it was their money that fell – **we will see and hear and think on what we TRAIN ourselves to see and hear and think**.

The CHOICE is up to you. Do you want worry and stress and insecurity. Or do you want peace.