

Unlimited: Doing All Things through Christ
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Text: Philippians 4:8-14

Philippians: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topics: Exhortations; Acknowledgment of the Philippians' Gift

Central Idea of Message: We cannot necessarily control the thoughts popping into our minds, but we can control what we dwell upon, and this can be done through Christ who strengthens us.

Introduction: Paul urged his readers to rejoice in the Lord always, to take all things to God in prayer with gratefulness, and then instructed them to rest in God's peace.

This present paragraph provides further advice on how to experience God's peace and joy, and comes from a man who had been beaten, stoned, hounded, shipwrecked, and was facing death; yet, his rattling prison chains could not drown out the ringing heavenly bells which inspired these words. **Herein Paul explains the grandest rule for thinking and doing and the grandest source of strength and joy.** While we cannot necessarily control the thoughts popping into our minds, we can control what we dwell upon, and this can be done through Christ who strengthens us.

I. The Grandest Rule for Thinking and Doing (vv. 8-9)

A. Christians must resist "stinkin' thinkin'" and dwell upon high and holy ideals, because character takes on the complexion of thinking (v. 8; 2 Cor. 10:5)

1. Paul directly addresses his audience as brethren
2. **Paul lists what the mind must dwell on, rather than anxiety, in order to experience peace**
3. **Right thinking is the first step toward right living, and right thinking is devoted to life's highest and holiest ideals**
 - a) Dwelling on whatever is true means thinking about that which is absolutely *authentic* in discussion, doctrine, and deed
 - b) Dwelling on whatever is honorable means thinking about that which is absolutely *reputable* in discussion, doctrine, and deed

- c) Dwelling on whatever is right means thinking about that which is absolutely *just* in discussion, doctrine, and deed
- d) Dwelling on whatever is pure means thinking about that which is absolutely *stainless* in discussion, doctrine, and deed
- e) Dwelling on whatever is lovely means thinking about that which is absolutely *love-inspiring* in discussion, doctrine, and deed
- f) Dwelling on whatever is of good repute means thinking about that which is absolutely *commendable* in discussion, doctrine, and deed
- 4. Paul summarizes the nature of these six ideals in two words: excellent and praiseworthy
 - a) Excellent means that which is best or virtuous (moral) in every area of life
 - b) Praiseworthy means that which is applaudable
- 5. **Piety and morality are two sides of the same coin, piety being love with its face towards God and morality being love with its face towards man (cf. Faussett)**
- 6. **Those who dwell on noble thoughts become more noble, while those who do not become more ignoble**
- 7. When conduct and relationships are governed by these six catalogued ideals, one will live in joy and peace!
- B. **Paul's deeds (conduct others saw) consistently matched his discussions (words others learned, received, and heard) and so should those of every Christian (v. 9)**
 - 1. A daring proposition: whatever has been learned, received, heard, and seen from and in Paul
 - 2. **Inconsistencies between beliefs and behaviors indicate cognitive confusion at best and outright hypocrisy at worst**
 - a) **Some people lack the peace of God because they lack the God of peace**
 - b) **Some people lack the peace of God because inconsistencies in their lives produce unrest and uproars within and without**
 - c) Believe the right things, behave the right way, and be a stickler for consistency, and you, too, will live in the peace of God!
 - d) **When it comes to hypocrites, decide right now not to be one!**

II. The Grandest Source of Strength and Joy (vv. 10-14)

- A. **The Philippians were concerned before, but lacked opportunity to send aid to Paul (v. 10)**
 1. Paul rejoiced at the Philippians' gifts to him
 2. The Philippians had not ceased caring for Paul
- B. **Paul's economic problems had been solved, not by more money or things, but by an applied Christian attitude (v. 11)**
 1. Paul did not speak as one lacking necessities
 - a) He had learned to be content in whatever circumstances in which he found himself
 - b) He was no complainer
 2. **It is not *what* we have but *what* we are which brings contentment**
- C. **Paul's Christian faith and joy did not fluctuate with the circumstances of his life (v. 12)**
 1. Paul knew how to rejoice and live in poverty or prosperity with equanimity
 2. Paul knew the secret of being full and going hungry, of having abundance and suffering need
 3. Paul did not abandon God when things went awry
 4. **Paul did not turn to God for what he could get in terms of material wealth, comfort, or popularity**
- D. **It is a paradox of profound truth that dependence on Christ is the key to independence from worry (v. 13)**
 1. The secret of Paul's consistent jubilation was the presence of an inner joy and strength unreachable and undaunted by outward circumstances
 2. **Through Christ, believers have *unlimited* strength for almost anything, for he is all-sufficient!**
 - a) To cope with riches and poverty
 - b) To cope with love and hate
 - c) To cope with right and wrong
 - d) To cope with truth and error
 - e) To cope with life and death
 3. Christ is our strength, companion, guardian, indweller, and empowerer!
 4. **This verse does not teach that God gives unlimited power to do anything we want to do, rather, it means that God empowers believers with unlimited spiritual unction to do anything within the context of what is best, highest, and most glorious in terms of Christian ideals!**
 5. **Christians must stop saying "I can't" and start saying "I can" through Christ!**

- a) Stop cheating, stealing, smoking, drinking, gambling, and lying!
- b) Stop being mean, rude, critical, negative, cantankerous, dwelling on what is untrue, dishonorable, wrong, impure, unlovely, of bad repute, immoral, unpraiseworthy, and carnal!

E. Cooperation among Christians is essential, effective, and exemplary (v. 14)

- 1. Paul was not disparaging the gift from the Philippians by declaring his independence from material necessity, rather, he was thanking them and implying God's provision for him through human instrumentality
- 2. We do well when we share in the affliction of Christ's servants by providing help and financial relief
 - a) As the Philippians did by sending relief to Paul
 - b) As our church does by sending financial aid to missions' boards, seminaries, children's homes, student union ministries, and much more

Conclusion: Illustration. **Have you tapped into the *unlimited* spiritual resources God has made available to you?**

Will you say "I can" through Christ and let him empower you today?