



*The notes in this series were written by Rev. Philip Dunwoody (RPC).  
They have been slightly modified.*

## Monday – Philippians 4:7b-9: Think About Your Thoughts

Some people are fond of saying, "You are what you eat", emphasising the importance of a healthy diet. Today, Paul tells us that "You are what you think about". Our thoughts determine our actions and our priorities in life. So, we need to think about what's going on in our minds.

Paul emphasises the importance of guarding our hearts and minds (see end of verse 7). In Scripture the heart is the inner person, the centre of who we really are. The word "heart" often refers to the same thing as "mind". Countless influences and experiences form that inner being. Many people in our culture do not realise how much their thinking is shaped by what they look at on their phones or TV screens. Some of these things might even have become idols in their lives.

We must therefore be careful about what we allow our eyes to look at, our ears to hear, our minds to think about. This leads to the practice of godly thinking (verse 8). Christians are often accused today of not being great thinkers - sometimes, that's a fair accusation. Ask the average Christian why the Old Testament matters, or what worship is or isn't, and they probably won't give a very good answer. But Christians should be thoughtful, careful, curious people. First and foremost, we should think about what is true (verse 8). The first thing we need to think about each day is God's Word - truth itself. There, we will see what is "honourable" and "just" and "lovely". Indeed, in Jesus, we will see all these things perfectly displayed. We may even find what is "honourable" or "commendable" in the world around us - an honourable way to farm, or work, or take care of money - but we must always sift the practices of the world through the sieve of Scripture. We must think: what does Jesus want from me in my work, my family, my church? What actions or words today will bring most glory to God? We must avoid filling our minds and hearts with the deceptions and vanities of the world.

### Questions:

1. What does Paul say we are to guard?
2. Why are we to guard our heart?
3. How can we guard our heart?

## Tuesday – Philippians 4:10-13: Christian Contentment

Apparently, people in Canada the UK are slipped from seventh to ninth out of 156 in 2019 World Happiness Index. Happiness though isn't the same as contentment. True contentment is not about holidays or money or possessions; in fact, if you speak to those who have the most, by the world's standards, they'll often say they just want more, or that whatever they have doesn't make them truly happy. We need contentment, not just happiness. So, what's the secret?

Paul says that contentment starts with gratitude. For the remainder of this letter, Paul is expressing his profound gratitude for all that the Philippians have done for him during his imprisonment (see verses 10, 14, 18). Believers, saved by God's grace through Christ, always have something to be thankful for. Christians should be the most grateful people - and gratitude leads to contentment.

Paul also says that contentment is something to learn (see verse 12). There were times in Paul's life when things didn't go the way he'd hoped they would - to put it mildly (see 2 Corinthians 11:24-27). Paul had learned how to be content in both "abundance and need". Notice, by the way, there is such a thing as being content whilst having "an abundance". More and more money will not lead to more and more happiness; contentment is needed whether we are princes or paupers.

Lastly, Paul says that to be content requires supernatural power. He says in verse 13: "I can do all [these] things through him who strengthens me". Paul is speaking about Jesus, our mighty King. He's not saying that Jesus will take all the obstacles out of our lives; he's saying that Jesus empowers us to be content in all circumstances, whether pleasant or painful. We can grieve through him who strengthens us; we can go to the mission field, we can cope with unemployment, get married, go to prison, lead a Bible study, all through the power that Jesus Christ provides. He will never leave us nor forsake us. In that, we can rest content.

### Questions:

1. Is happiness our goal in life?
2. What does Paul say we are to seek after?
3. How do we experience contentment?

## Wednesday – Philippians 4:14-23 - Joyful Generosity

Paul began his letter giving thanks to God for the Philippians (see chapter 1:3). He does the same thing as he brings his letter to a close.

Paul speaks with great admiration and thankfulness for the generosity of the Philippian church. Acts 16 tells us about Paul's time in Philippi, and you can read on to see where he went next. As he travelled through the wider region, he says here in verse 15 that only the Philippians supported him financially. Wherever he was, the Philippians sent him practical help.

But not only were they generous to Paul, they were sacrificially generous - in verse 18 Paul says that he has received even more than he needed from them. He describes their generosity as a sacrifice pleasing to God. Paul, one of Jesus' greatest ever servants, was funded by the tiny but generous church of Philippi.

The Bible is very clear that generous giving is both commanded and rewarded by God (see Proverbs 11:17, Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15). Generous giving shows a heart marked by appreciation of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ - who generously gave his very life for us on the cross. This is one way that you might be able to serve God in a wonderful way. You may not be called to be a preacher or missionary, but you can partner with those who are by giving generously to their work.

As Paul closes his letter (verses 21-23), he gives us a fascinating glimpse of his situation: he says that "those of Caesar's household" send their greetings to the Philippians. God's Word was being preached to and believed by soldiers and Romans and even those who spent time with Caesar himself! What an encouragement for the Philippians: "every saint" in Philippi was contributing to the work of Jesus in the capital city of the world. Jesus the generous and gracious Saviour was building his church - and he still is today.

He deserves all that we can give him in return.

### Questions:

1. How does Paul describe the Philippians generosity?
2. What does such generosity speak of?
3. What does the fact that greetings are being sent from Caesar's household tell us?