

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, August 17, 2025

Think on These Things

Philippians 4:8 *“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.”*

To think on these good things is not some vaguely pleasant, airy thought of religiosity; we’re not talking about the “power of positive thinking”. To think on these good things is a difficult work of the spirit; it is violent and continual warfare: *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: ... Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;” (2Corinthians 10:3,5)* In order to consider the matter more fully, it is instructive to take in the context of Philippians chapter 3 and 4.

Philippians 3 *“1 ¶ Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 ¶ Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 ¶ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 ¶ Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. 17 ¶ Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I*

have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

Philippians 4 “1 ¶ Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. 2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 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. 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.”

I’m not going to break this down verse by verse, but rather we will consider the themes that the Holy Spirit has laid out for us, by the pen of our brother Paul. Our topical headings are these:

1. We have nothing in our flesh; We have everything in Christ (ch. 3 vv. 1-11)
2. We have not yet attained the end of our faith; So Run! Press! (ch. 3 vv. 12-14)
3. Be of the same mind (ch. 3 vv. 15-21)
4. Avoid tripping hazards! (ch. 4 vv. 1-4)
5. Think on these things (ch. 4 vv. 5-9)

We have nothing in our flesh; We have everything in Christ (ch. 3 vv. 1-11)

- We won’t spend a lot of time on the details of this section, because the heart of the matter is clear: the law cannot produce justification, and any attempt to produce it by our own hand will always fail. Our hope rests in Christ Jesus, and the merciful salvation that He wrought. All else is dung. Our best righteousness is as filthy rags. (**Isaiah 64:6**)
- **Matthew Henry:** “True knowledge of Christ alters and changes men, their judgments and manners, and makes them as if made again anew. The believer prefers Christ, knowing that it is better for us to be without all worldly riches, than without Christ

and his word. Let us see what the apostle resolved to cleave to, and that was Christ and heaven. We are undone, without righteousness in which to appear before God, for we are guilty. There is a righteousness provided for us in Jesus Christ, and it is a complete and perfect righteousness. No one can have any benefit from it, who trust in themselves. Faith is the appointed means of applying the saving benefit. It is by faith in Christ's blood. We are made conformable to Christ's death, when we die to sin, as he died for sin; and the world is crucified to us, and we to the world, by the cross of Christ. The apostle was willing to do or to suffer anything, to attain the glorious resurrection of saints. This hope and prospect carried him through all difficulties in his work. He did not hope to attain it through his own merit and righteousness, but through the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ."

We have not yet attained the end of our faith; So Run! Press! (ch. 3 vv. 12-14)

- Seeing that we have this hope in Christ, we must now turn from this world, and follow after our Lord. We are still in this flesh – we have not yet attained! Our faith has not yet become sight; Our hope has not yet become possession; Our cross has not yet been replaced by our crown. It is ours to run this race with patience. (**Hebrews 12:1**) It is ours to press violently into the kingdom of Heaven (**Matthew 11:12**), enduring hardness as good soldiers. (**2Timothy 2:3**) It is ours to diligently add to our faith, and thereby make our calling and election sure. (**2Peter 1:10**) It is ours to edify and encourage one another, striving together in the Spirit to overcome, so that we may eat of the tree of life, not be hurt of the second death, eat of the hidden manna, receive a white stone with a new name, have power over the nations, receive the morning star, be clothed in white, have our name in the book of life, have our name confessed by Christ before the father and the angels, be a pillar in the house of God, and sit with Christ in His throne. (**Revelation 2 & 3**)
- In order to press on, and run this race acceptably before God, there is “one thing” that we must do: diligently, habitually, stubbornly forget those things which are behind. The word “forget” means to “give over to oblivion”. What are those things that we are to forget? All things that pertain to the law, which can only condemn us:
 - Forget the good things that we have done. Taking count of, and resting upon those things is prideful, self-righteous, and nullifies the work of Christ. Dwelling on our past labor causes us to rest upon our lees. It causes us to think ourselves something, when we are nothing. It causes us to believe that we have added something to our own salvation. It causes us to look down upon our brothers and sisters in Christ. “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” (**Luke 17:10**) Yesterday

is gone; we have the breath of life today; let us serve Christ acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

- *Forget our past sins.* We certainly must stop every sin that we see - lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets us (**Hebrews 12:1**). But we cannot dwell on the sins of our past. It leads us to despair, and even greater sins of doubt, and counting the blood of Christ as insufficient to save us. Our merciful God has set our sins as far as the East is from the West (**Psalm 103:12**), He has cast them into the depths of the sea (**Micah 7:19**), He has turned their scarlet stains white as wool (**Isaiah 1:18**). We count Him untrue and unfaithful to say that our sins are too great. Forget what is behind, and press on toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling.
- *Forget the offenses of others against us.* Everything in the previous paragraph - I should be applying to others, as much as to myself. We have received mercy from Christ; where we could not possibly earn relief, we have been freely forgiven a debt that can only be paid by the eternal fire of Hell. Christ took our awful sin upon Himself, laying down His own life, so that we may live. We cannot possibly turn and demand payment of our petty complaints toward one another without incurring the wrath of God upon us. If we desire mercy, we must be merciful. (**Matthew 5:7**) If we hold grudges, and shape our Christian relationships around our petty offenses, then we have rested upon the law, and we will certainly be judged by it.
- Reach forth to those things which are before - focusing our days on learning better what our Lord requires of us, and doing it with our whole heart and capability. Minister to the body of Christ - walk honestly in hope, serve diligently with joy; preach boldly in love.
 - **1Corinthians 16:13-16** *"13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 14 Let all your things be done with charity. 15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) 16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth."*
 - We should look at those that have set up their lives to minister to the body, and preach the gospel, and submit to their example. Hear their instruction - do as they do! It should feel painful and unnatural to do otherwise. Runners live like runners; they train like runners; they eat like runners; they have the accoutrements of runners. Runners run. Likewise, servants of God must serve; we must learn to serve; we must set up the very fabric of our lives to serve, in real, practical ways. Anything short of that is to deceive ourselves, and conform to the world. Look past yourself - Find the work; do the work; rejoice to have the privilege in Christ!

- **Isaiah 6:5-8** *“5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”*

Be of the same mind (ch. 3 vv. 15-21)

- **Philippians 3: 15,16** *“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”*
- Once our faith has been exercised – often painfully – we are brought to “perfection”, which just means maturity, or full age. Our head knowledge becomes visceral, heart knowledge. Therein we know all that we just discussed: Our own works can merit us nothing, and cannot be relied upon; We have Christ, and he is to be pursued with all of our might. We reckon all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and are willing to suffer the loss of all things to gain Him; we desire to be found in Him, and in his righteousness, and to know more of Him. Therefore we forget what is behind, and press forward in His service. Work faithfully, diligently, while it is yet day time; run hard, while the race is still afoot. THIS is our rule, and we cannot waiver from it. We cannot turn back and dabble with the law. If we think to justify ourselves by the law, God will bring us to understand clearly that we have nothing to boast of in ourselves. If we think that we can rest on our goodness, He’s going to demonstrate to us that it is dung. If we think that we can avoid the difficulty of the race ... if we think that we can stand on our own and despise the body ... if we think that we can chart our own path, regardless of the instruction of the scriptures ... dung, dung, dung. Follow the example of those that have come to a more mature understanding of these matters, and demonstrate it with their daily walk; those whose consistent behavior is heavenly focused.
 - **Matthew Henry:** *“The enemies of the cross of Christ attend to nothing except their sensual appetites. Sin is the sinner’s shame, especially when gloried in. The way of those who attend to earthly things, may seem pleasant, but death and hell are at its end. If we choose their way, we shall share their end. — The life of a Christian is in heaven, where his Head and his home are, and where he hopes to be shortly; he sets his affections on things above; and where his heart is, his citizenship will be there. May we be always prepared for the coming of*

our Judge; looking to have our vile bodies changed by his Almighty power, and applying to him daily to renew our souls to holiness; to deliver us from our enemies, and to employ our bodies and souls as instruments of righteousness in his service."

- We are often brought to focus on these eternal matters, by means of affliction. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." (**Psalm 119:71**) When we are loaded with affliction, grief, sorrow, etc., we are brought to seriously consider our ways. When we are looking death in the eye, by the providential working of God, we are caused to consider eternity in a more visceral way, and we are comforted by the promises of our faithful God. The whole body is exercised – where one is grieved, we are all grieved. We are urgently reminded that we must be considering our end every day; our daily thoughts and behaviors should be guided by the hope of our heavenly destination. Our home is there. Our treasure is there. Our citizenship is there. Our Bride Groom is there. The means of our daily lives should be toward heavenly ends. How we think, how we make decisions, should all bow to the heavenly destination, to the commitment that we have each made to follow after Christ. When we decide how to spend our days, we should not ask "can I?" - the question is "should I?". Does it edify? Does it serve the body of Christ? Does it prepare me, my house, my loved ones, for the Kingdom of Christ? All things must bow to Christ. Here are a few thoughts from Richard Baxter on this topic:
 - *"Well done, good and faithful servant," must go before "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course," goeth before "the crown of righteousness which God, the righteous Judge, will give." All that ever must be done for salvation by us, must here be done."*
 - *"So that if we will make sure of heaven, it must be by giving all diligence to make firm our title, our calling, and our election, here on earth. If we fear hell, we must fear being prepared for it."*
 - *"If they mind not, believingly, the end, they will never be faithful in the use of means. If they mind not, and use not diligently, the means, they will never obtain the end. None can use earth well that prefer not heaven, and none come to heaven, at age, that are not prepared by well using earth. Heaven must have the deepest esteem, and habituated love, and desire, and joy; but earth must have more of our daily thoughts for present practice. A man that travelleth to the most desirable home, hath a habit of desire to it all the way, but his present business is his travel; and horse, and company, and inns, and ways, and weariness, &c., may take up more of his sensible thoughts, and of his talk, and action, than his home."*

Avoid tripping hazards! (ch. 4 vv. 1-4)

- The benefits of the body of Christ to our souls are endless, here are just a few examples of the joy and health that flows through the flock of God.
 - **Psalm 133** *“1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; 3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”* **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** *“9 Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. 10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? 12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”*
 - **Proverbs 17:17** *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”*
 - **Proverbs 27:17** *“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”*
- How quickly this all falls to ruin when we look backwards; when we dwell in conflict; when we meditate on our fleshly causes; when we ferment anger; when we justify ourselves in lightly esteeming some part of the body, thereby dividing the body, and setting it at naught! Beloved friends, it is ONLY by pride that contention comes. (**Proverbs 13:10**) Satan has a hay day when we won’t mortify our flesh; when we won’t value the body of Christ for what it is; when we won’t submit ourselves to one another in love; when we won’t dwell in meekness and humility, and utilize scriptural remedies to overcome our hateful, malicious flesh; when we take our toys and go home – every man to his tent – dwelling in his own desires, and his own haughty judgment. This is the way of the world.
- On the contrary, the Church of Christ, by His workmanship, and command, “looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners” (**Song of Solomon 6:10**). The world knows us as His, because of our love for one another. (**John 13:35**) These aren’t things to say – they are things to be, by the grace of God.
- These 2 women – faithful servants of Christ in their own right – couldn’t get past their anger toward each other. You can write the script. Lots of accusation; lots of justification. Lots of “what-about-ism”. A never ending see-saw of who is at fault. When matters get knotted up in the flesh, there is only one solution: cut through it with the sword of the Spirit! Forget what is behind – it is dung and death! Press on, holding fast to Christ, and helping each other forward! If we desire mercy, then we better be merciful! All else is the law ... and the condemnation of the law.

Think on these things (ch. 4 vv. 5-9)

- We are to think on things that are:
 - True (Strongs 227)
 - **Romans 3:4** “God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.”
 - **Colossians 3:9** “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”
 - Honest (Strongs 4586)
 - Strongs: “grave, august, venerable, reverend”. Serious minded; reverence and veneration of God should be on our hearts, and lips, and in our actions.
 - **Titus 2:2** “That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.”
 - Just (Strongs 1342)
 - Strongs: “righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of God; conformed to the will of God”
 - **Luke 2:25** “And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.”
 - **1Peter 3:12** “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”
 - **Colossians 4:1** “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”
 - **Ephesians 6:1** “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”
 - Pure (Strongs 53)
 - Strongs: “Pure, chaste, clear”
 - **2Corinthians 11:2** “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”
 - **1John 3:3** “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”
 - Lovely (Strongs 4375)
 - Strongs: “Acceptable, pleasing”
 - This is a unique Greek word; Compound word: “unto / toward” + “love”
 - **John 16:26** “At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: 27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.”

- **Revelation 3:19** *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”*
 - Of Good Report (Strongs 2163)
 - Unique; compound word: “well + report”
 - **Matthew 25:23** *“His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”*
 - **Ephesians 6:2** *“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”*
 - If there be any virtue (Strongs 703)
 - Strongs: “a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action”
 - Moral courage, especially in the face of adversity; zeal for God.
 - **2Peter 1:3** *“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue”*
 - If there be any praise (Strongs 1868)
 - Strongs: “Approbation, commendation, praise”
 - **Romans 2:29** *“But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”*
 - **1Peter 1:7** *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”*
 - What is true, honest, just, lovely, pure, etc.? - NOT ME! I’ve got nothing in my flesh! So let’s not spend time building ourselves up in our minds; let’s not spend time comparing how we’re better than someone else. Fruitless! Prideful! Malicious! STOP! Danger! What is true, honest, just, lovely, pure, etc.? - CHRIST! Start there. Everything. Always. Christ first. Magnify His glory; prepare for His Kingdom.
- What does it mean to “think on” these things? The Greek word for “think” (Strongs 3049), is elsewhere translated as count, reckon, account, reason, impute, suppose. It means to deliberate, weigh, meditate, judge, purpose, determine. It is not some light, passing thought. Think in terms of rumination.
 - Definition: “to go over in the mind repeatedly and often casually or slowly, to chew repeatedly for an extended period”.
 - This comes from the process of digestion in ruminant animals. Sheep are ruminant animals. They chew and swallow; the food goes into a special “foregut”, where it ferments for a time. They then pull that partially digested

food back up into their mouths, where they chew it again and again, in order to properly digest it.

- **Luke 6:45** *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”*
 - What we think on, meditate on, ruminates on, saturates us; it fills our hearts, and from that abundance, we speak, and we act. For good, and for ill. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks – actions flow.
 - If our hearts are full of grinding pride, lust, and accusations, then our words and actions will bring forth the deeds of the flesh. (**Galatians 5:19-21**) This behavior feeds, encourages, and enlivens the old man of the flesh, grieves the Spirit of God, and gives place to the devil. We must daily “crucif[y] the flesh, with the affections and lusts”. (**Galatians 5:24**)
 - If, on the other hand, our hearts are bursting with virtue and praise, then our words, and our actions will follow; the fruits of the Spirit will spring onto the scene. (**Galatians 5:22,23**) Rejoice together in the salvation of Christ; walk in His ways; consider and provoke one another to love and to good works, putting off the old man and his vile ways; submit to one another; Dwell together in peace and unity, gratefully, compassionately considering the framing of His body – each precious member; pray for one another; confirm our love for one another – greeting one another with a holy kiss. Thrust in with all of your strength. Rejoice where the body rejoices; grieve where the body is grieved; bear one another up; in all things, wait prayerfully, and patiently on Christ.

Philippians 2:1-4 *“1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”*

Philippians 4:20,22 *“Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. ... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”*