**THINK ON THESE THINGS (#3)**

***Things Just & Pure***

Have you ever noticed that God wrote the Bible to cover “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*?” (2 Pet. 1:3). When He said “*all things*” He meant “*all things*.” He could look down the timeline of history and foresee every single thing that was going to happen and give us all the information we would ever need to make godly choices in every circumstance. He did not have to give specific examples about everything in order to guide us toward doing the right thing.

For example, gambling. He didn’t have to specifically explain it is wrong to play roulette or blackjack in a Las Vegas casino for us to know that is a sin. That is why God teaches us by Biblical principles. The 17 “*works of the flesh*” in Galatians 5:19-21 end with “*and such like*.” Anything that is related to these sinful practices “*will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” The greed and covetousness of gambling would surely fall into such a category of “*and such like*.” That should make any God-fearing person pause to ask if what he is about to do is a work of the flesh or a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). A disciple of Christ will always “*abstain from every form of evil*” (I Thess. 5:21-22). That is living by Biblical principles. It is the wise and safe way to live.

**Pray + Ponder + Practice = Peace**

Living by Biblical principles is also found in our current text of Philippians 4:6-9. When feeling anxious, Christians **Pray** (v.6). When we pray then God’s peace guards our hearts and minds in Christ (v.7). But how? Is it some mystical, magical miracle that is given to us that guards our hearts and minds? No. Verse 8 tells us to **Ponder** (think, meditate) on eight “things.” Then verse 9 tells us to **Practice** (“do”) what we have prayed and pondered. The result? **Peace**.

**Whatever.**

*Whatever* is true. *Whatever* is noble. *Whatever* is just. *Whatever* is pure. *Whatever* is lovely. *Whatever* is of good report. *Whatever* is virtuous. *Whatever* is praiseworthy.

Why does Paul say that eight times? Because he is creating guardrails or boundaries for the Christian’s mind. Paul is telling saints we have freedom to think about everything that falls within the boundaries of all that is true, noble, just, pure, etc. That opens up to us a wide range of wonderful things to ponder because the Bible is absolutely full of hundreds of things in each category. For example, can you quickly list just 5 things to “think on” that are true (i.e. truth)? I can list dozens (Matt. 5:3-12; Rom. 12:9-21; Gal. 5:22-23, etc). How about 5 things that are noble (honorable, dignified)? I can, easily (2 Pet. 1:5-7).
Take a sheet of paper and put all eight words at the top and underneath each one write out all the “things” you can meditate on which Jesus would be proud of you for thinking. Combine this exercise with prayer and you have a Biblical recipe for finding God’s joy and peace that will “guard” (think guardrails) your heart and mind.

***Things That Are Just.***

The Greek word for *just* is *DIKAIOS* and as an adjective could be translated “right” or “righteous.” The Greeks used this word to describe a person who lived by a code of ethics and could always be found doing his duty to God, family and country. He lived by the rule of law, seeking to do what was right. Jesus would say this man walked the strait and narrow way. He said of those who live by this code of justice, “*there are few who find it*” (Matt. 7:14). My job is to be one of those “few.” Please join me.

An oft quoted text from Habakkuk 2:4 found in the New Testament is “*The just* (DIKAIOS) *shall live by faith*” (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). Christians, who were once “guilty as sin” have been declared “just” (i.e. righteous, not guilty) by the God of Justice. He rendered justice to us, but only through giving the penalty we deserved to His Son (Rom. 3:23-26). Justice was served, but oh what a price paid! Having freely received this “righteousness” by the death of Christ we now grasp so much better the rule of law and the need for justice. We strongly desire to do what is “right” before God and man. If anybody truly believes in “social justice” it is Christians. I want what is “right” (just) for all men and therefore show no partiality toward anyone. With Amos I cry out, “*Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream*” (Amos 5:24). As a Christian my thoughts must always be, “think, then do, what is right.” It will bring joy.

***Things That Are Pure.***

When you think of “pure” water, what comes to mind? Likely crystal clear and clean liquid you can hold to the light and see through without anything floating in it. My Reverse Omosis water system at home has multiple filters that supposedly eliminate 99.99% of all contaminants (or so they advertise). My mind, filtered by God’s “holy” (pure) Bible, eliminates 100% of the world’s impurities. Psalm 119:9-11 fits here:

*How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.
With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.*

Psalm 12:6 is God’s Reverse Osmosis machine: “*The words of the LORD are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times*.” Think about it, what are the odds of you becoming impure (i.e. sinning) while meditating on God’s pure word? I’d guess just about Zero! Why? “*The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes … The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether*” (Psa. 119:7-14).

Brothers and sisters, I’ll confess to you the greatest struggle in my life is not in my outward actions, but in my inward thoughts. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mk. 14:38). But I’ll let Paul describe my main point: *“For those who live according to the flesh* ***set their minds*** *on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit,* (***set their minds*** on) *the things of the Spirit. For to be* ***carnally minded*** *is death, but to be* ***spiritually minded*** *is life and peace”* (Rom. 8:5-6). Upon what have you set your mind?

Today, think on things just and pure. – Rick