

Finally...

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9

In the final analysis, much of life resides beyond our control—little can we change even in the best of circumstances. Even so, no matter what situation we may face, we can control our thinking more specifically what we choose to center our lives upon. Look at Paul's plight; he pens these words in prison as some preach the gospel to spite him (Philippians 1:7. 17). Yet, he chooses to do is to focus his energy on goodness and righteousness instead of their cruelty and malice. As he puts it elsewhere, "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Romans 12:21). More than anything else, our choices define the kind of person we are. Our choices reveal what we really believe in and what or whom we really love. Exchanging spiteful words or deeds puts us on the same footing as those seeking to destroy us. When we become as they are, they have won—we have lost control of what really matters, purity of spirit, mind and heart.

The world plays a constant game of one-upmanship in an effort to better one's position others often become pawns in battle to top one's competition. It becomes a confrontation of personalities whereby one must dominate the other—beating them into submissive roles. Christ did not come to exchange blows or wrestle any into submission. Rather he calls us to bind up the broken hearted, heal the hurting and comfort the tearful. How can we do this if we are in a scuffle over possessions, status or glory? Christ calls us not to dominate or be honored but be ever seeking of true, honorable and pure excellence. We eschew personal praise or attempts to prove our own worthiness—completely acknowledging that he alone is worthy and he alone ought to be praised. We seek to practice his goodness in our lives because he deserves our heartfelt gratitude rendered in our devotion while all the while it does our souls good.

The world has enough spiritual contamination without our adding yet more by turning our thoughts to them. Jesus put it this way, "*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness*" (Matthew 6:22-23)! Whatever we have our on is what we value for we attend to it and aspire to have it. Letting the hurt and spite welling up around us to turn our heads and focus upon it, brings the darkness from without to within. Ponder on this line from Martin Luther's immortal hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, "And tho' this world, with evil filled, Should threaten to undo us; We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us." While we cannot hope to prevail against the evil Satan fills so completely in this world, one little word from Christ shall fell Satan and all his minions. Seek not justice in this world, but seek the One who is just and merciful to all.

Let us not dwell about how the battle fares—in our lives, there will be many tragedies and triumphs, and not all will go well—but let us look for truth, honor, excellence and purity to secure safe harbor in our hearts and minds. Let us learn of God rather than the world. Let us practice all the goodness we see in Jesus and others who have committed themselves fully to God. Let the God of peace fill our hearts and minds rather than the clatter and clang of the worldly passion. Let peace of Christ fill our hearts and minds (Colossians 3:16-17).

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