Right Thinking Produces Godly Living, part 2

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us.!

Just a couple of notes, though, as we begin this Christmas season. At our bookstore, first of all, right here in the hallway, we've got a number of brand new books that have just come in that we ordered.
We got probably 100 books or so new this week. And so that's just something that we offer to you. We don't make a dollar out there.
Whatever we buy it for, we can get a little bit cheaper usually. Whatever we buy it for is the exact price we sell it for. And so there's a number of trusted resources out there in all different kind of subjects and categories.
I encourage you to go out there and look through there. We've got a lot of new titles. We also have a book just especially for Christmas. If you're looking for some reading for you or for your family just to help you as we begin this Christmas season, we've got some really good Christmas resources out there as well.
[1:24] I encourage you to take advantage of that today. Tonight in our evening service at 5, we're going to have a really special time as we kind of blend Thanksgiving weekend, looking into the Christmas season, and considering also even the resurrection of Christ, kind of taking all of those huge components of our life and join them together tonight.

Our youth choir is going to lead us. That's always a great treat when they're in here with us. And then we'll be preaching and then taking the Lord's Supper together. And we want to think about how thankful we are for the birth of Christ and the sacrifice of Christ and the promise of His coming.
So tonight will be a really special time at 5 o'clock. Hope you will join with us for our evening service. We've been studying the Gospel of Mark, and for the next several weeks, we're going to take a brief pause from that.
As we look at a couple of different texts around this Thanksgiving and Christmas season, a couple of weeks ago I had been asked to preach the annual sermon for our state convention.
And there is a theme for the state convention, and so I preached on that theme. But as I was working in that and preparing for that message, as would often be the case, you learn far more in your own heart as the teacher benefits far more from anything you're able to teach or to give away.
[2:59] And in working through that and preparing for that, there were just so many things that really captured my heart and my mind. And what I wanted to do, the pastors of the convention got kind of the short version.

I want to take, Lord willing, this week and next week and give you really the more full treatment of what I have learned and studied and put together that I hope will be a great encouragement to you as a church.
We're going to be in Philippians 4, looking specifically at verses 8 and 9 the next couple of Sundays. But we'll look at all of the first part of chapter 4 here in just a moment.
There is a little bit of background to it that I want you to understand. Paul is writing from jail when he writes Philippians. He's under house arrest, which really is quite remarkable.
Just that one part of information to then just read this short letter we know as Philippians and to see the joy that comes over and over again from his pen.
[4:08] It really is amazing to think about that he could be facing circumstances like that, and yet the theme of this letter is to rejoice. And he'll say to have joy, and again I say rejoice.

When you read Philippians, we find Paul who has lost his freedom but has not lost his joy. Now I think that's helpful for all of us to remember that whatever our circumstances may be, it may cost us

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our money.
Circumstances may cost us our health. It may cost us our freedom. It may cost us our job. But the circumstance of life need never cost us our joy.
Not for those who are truly in Christ. And the reason why it's possible for Paul to retain his joy even in his circumstances is because his mind is focused on the right things.
Chapter 4, verse 1. Let's just get a little running start here on a runway before we get to verse 8. He says, Therefore, my brothers whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved.
[5:28] So as we start this part of chapter 4, what Paul is saying is that we are to stand firm. Now, just turn back to the left one page to chapter 1, verse 27.

Now I just want to show you, this is just the bookends of the book. It's of his letter. Verse 27 says, Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.
This is how the body of Christ is to be. We're to stand firm. And we stand firm as we live and minister in one spirit, one mind, side by side for the gospel.
Now this is incredibly important because in every church, there are always temptations, both inside and outside the church, pulling at you.
And temptations that would try to distract or divide the body of Christ. Then every local church must see to it that they work hard to keep the bonds of peace.
[6:55] It's imperative that we would work together with one heart and one mind. I think the question I'm probably asked more than any other from new members to our church is how does this church enjoy such unity?

I get some form of that question probably more than any other question. And the ultimate answer is it's the gift of the spirit. The Lord has been gracious to us and we have enjoyed just tremendous years of unity.
It doesn't mean that we agree on everything, nor do we have to. It doesn't mean we have the same opinion on everything, nor do we need to. But it does mean, as Philippians 1.27 says, that we strive together in one spirit with one mind.
And the answer to that is God has been gracious to us. Human-wise, as far as the way it works out in the local body, is it just takes all of our congregation refusing to be distracted by lesser things. That's what the local church must do, is refuse to be distracted by lesser things. And remind ourselves of what we uniquely have to do as the body of Christ.
[8:21] So we are to stand firm. So back to chapter four. When he says stand firm, this is something he's already mentioned in chapter one. So if you were just reading this letter in one setting, the way it would have been done in first century time, you would come to that and realize that this is something that he's really wanting to emphasize.

Now verse two, we're reminded that life in the local church is not always simple. Verse two, he says, I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.
These are two ladies in the church. And this is all we know about them. And just as he has said, stand firm.
He says, entreat, implore. These two ladies to agree to have the same mind. These aren't ladies who were false teachers in the church.
These are true believers. These are ladies, according to verse three, whose name's in the book of life. These are ladies who are involved in ministry. But just because this is a real life and a real world, sometimes even people who love Jesus and believe the gospel have a hard time getting along.
[9:41] It happens. And while it does happen, it is a serious enough issue that Paul feels the need, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to deal with it.

He says, I entreat these ladies to agree in the Lord. What do you think he has in mind here? Go back to chapter two. We're talking about having the same mind to agree, to have the same mind in the Lord.
Chapter two, verse one, says, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind.

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And so when you come to chapter four, the words he's using are very purposeful. They're repetitive. Chapter four doesn't exist in a vacuum. It's the conclusion of the full letter. And his encouragement to the church is to live in joy and live in unity by having the same mind.
[11:02] When he says in verse two, for these two ladies to agree in the Lord, it's more than just saying they've got some interpersonal conflict they need to get along.

It's saying they need to remember to be of the same mind. To remember that our purpose is that with our mind, we have the same goal and the same focus.
And then he goes on to say in verse three, yes, I ask you, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.
Just one side comment here. Don't be surprised or overly discouraged when you find yourself having some friction with another believer in the church.
I'm not saying that it's not important. I'm just saying don't let that have too much ability to shake you. It happens.
[12:16] It happens in every church. It happened in this church. It happened here to Euodian Syntyche. And when that happens, we do need to deal with it and we don't want to let things like that fester.

But too many times, people come to a church and it's like they're just shocked that people aren't perfect. Nobody is. No ministry is perfect.
No person is perfect. No congregation is perfect. And so if you find yourself truly trying to do ministry work and there's just some interpersonal stuff that makes it difficult or there's just certain people that it's harder for you to walk together with, don't blow that off.
But certainly don't let that drive you away. Just understand that we've got to work together. Then we work together by being of the same mind.
We work together by having a certain focus in our heart and our mind that unites us together no matter what. Verse 4, he says, rejoice in the Lord always.
[13:30] And again, I will say rejoice. Now just, I just want you to notice that verse 4, which is a verse that most of you have memorized, even if you don't know where it's found, most of you, if I say rejoice in the Lord, you could follow that up with, and again I say rejoice.

Just notice that that verse on rejoicing, and again rejoicing, comes right after he's mentioned the reality that sometimes there's trouble among the body of Christ.
These two ladies who are doing ministry work, who are having a hard time agreeing, the very next verse, Paul says rejoice, and again I say rejoice.
Don't let the presence of imperfections in the church drive you away. Now again, let's be clear. Where there is sin, we've got to confront it. Where there are people who would be disobedient to the Word, you have to respond in the biblical way.
[14:40] Not for a second should we take lightly our sin. Not for a second should we lower the expectations of righteousness. I'm not saying in any way that we would do that.

What I am saying is that just because there's imperfections in the body does not mean that we should lose our joy. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say rejoice.
Verse 5, let your reasonableness be known to everyone. That word reasonableness means to rise above offenses, to be merciful.
I urge you Odie and Syntyche to agree in the Lord to have the same mind, have the same purpose, have the same spirit, and let's keep rejoicing in the Lord's church, he says, and let your reasonableness be made known.
Let your ability to be able to forgive offenses be known. Let your ability to be merciful even when you don't get your way be known. And what you begin to understand is the context behind what Paul is saying and why he can have joy no matter his circumstances because he's building his life and he's helping this church build their foundation upon a certain way you think.
[15:57] and the way you think begins to drive what you do. He goes on to say, the Lord is at hand.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
I'll just say this, prayer is a great outlet for your anxiety. If you find your heart anxious, prayer is a great outlet for that.

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Before you read a book on anxiety, before you talk to a person about anxiety, prayer is your first and greatest outlet.
Verse 7, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
[17:05] The word guard here is used in a military sense often times to talk about taking someone into custody. The peace of God will take custody and guard your heart and guard your mind in Christ Jesus.

Which tells us that if you remember the context, Paul writes this while under house arrest. But ultimately, it's not a military guard that is guarding him.
It's the peace of God that is guarding him. It's not his chains that are holding him because the peace of God has set him free.
And when you begin to think biblically and to know the truth of who God is and who you are in Christ, it will radically change your life.
So back to chapter 4 here when he says in verse 7, the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds.
[18:22] The question is, how do we think? What kind of way should the believer be thinking for this to be true? Here's the point.

God's peace in verse 7 produces something. And it's found in verse 8 where he says, 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, here it is, think about these things.
God's peace produces active minds. God's peace produces active minds.
Now just notice the flow of his argument here. The peace of God is connected to what we think. God's peace produces a way of thinking.
That's verse 7. And a certain way of thinking, verse 8, brings peace with God. That's verse 9. So when you talk about unity in the church, when you talk about being able to stay focused on what matters the most, here's where it starts.
[19:55] Number one, think a certain way. We have to think a certain way. We're going to look at just verse 8 today.

Verse 9, we'll look at next week where we learn to put into practice the things that we think. But first, he says, you've got to think this way.
The battle for our unity, the battle for our purity as a body is waged in the mind. Now, we've got to understand a little bit of why this is needed.
Because in Paul's day and in our day, there's going to be this subtle shift to try to get people to not engage their mind.
In our world today, even among many churches today, it's a focus on the emotions to the neglect of the mind. And this is a very subtle shift that is incredibly dangerous.
[21:15] There are places where they will still use biblical language, but the goal is to bypass your mind and just get to your emotions.

That's a problem. It's a problem because biblically, godly living produces active minds and active minds produce godly living.
When you have experienced the transforming grace of Jesus Christ, one of the byproducts that comes from that is a mind that is engaged a certain way, disciplined, and ordered a certain way.
And we see this all throughout Scripture. In fact, John mentioned a moment ago during the music, Isaiah 1.18, come, let us reason together.
To reason means to think together. That's one of the things we do when we gather as God's people is we come to this place to think, to remember, to set our minds on certain truths.
[22:23] 1 Peter 3.15 says, always set apart Christ as holy in your heart and always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is within you.

What's the reason why you trust in God? What's the purpose? What's the thought? Our salvation is based on facts.
It's based on knowledge. It's based on truth. It's not just based on how you feel. Assurance of salvation is not how you feel.
Because some of you in this room today feel secure. But if you don't really know Christ, no matter how you feel, you're not secure. If you do not have peace with God through the blood of the Son,

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Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter how good you feel about your religion, you're not His.
salvation is not based on feelings. Now, the other side is true also. Sometimes, for any number of reasons, you may feel less than secure.
[23:38] But if you are in Christ, you are held by Him. He won't let go of you. All the Father have given to me, not one shall I lose, Jesus said.

My security of salvation isn't how I feel today. It's in Christ's inability to lose me. You need to know the truth.
Matthew 22, 37 says, You shall love the God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your mind. Our minds must be engaged.
Romans 12, 2. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.
Colossians 3, 2.
Set your minds on things above. So, all throughout the New Testament, over and over and over again, is this call to have your mind engaged.
[24:38] To think a certain way. To know and believe certain truths. But in too many circles today, the emphasis is all on emotion.

Now, let me be very clear about something. As believers, we should feel deep emotions. We should feel love and feel joy and feel victory.
You should feel love for other brothers and sisters in this church. If you're married, you should feel deep affection and emotion for your spouse.
If you have children, you should feel deeply a sense of love and devotion to your children. Of course, we should feel certain things.
But biblically speaking, those emotions follow after a mind that has been biblically ordered and disciplined to think a certain way.
[25:49] Which means if you take thinking and believing and truth out of the equation, all you're giving people are emotions and feelings based on something less than truth.

And this is where you get people who are passionate about a God they do not really know. And that's a dangerous place to be. Now, somebody may be tempted to say, Michael, this is just semantics.
But it's not just semantics. It's the difference between training people to live by feelings or to live by right thinking.
And that's not semantics. It's the difference between a youth ministry that's built on lights and games and flash versus teaching the Bible, preaching the gospel, and making disciples.
And that's not semantics. It's the difference between the focus of a home teaching their children what is true and always true versus teaching them to make decisions on how they feel that day.
[27:10] If you let your children make decisions based on how they feel, most of your children will never go to school, will never do homework, and will never have anything other than cake for breakfast.

And yet, when it comes to the most important things of life, we just let our children act on their feelings. semantics. This is not semantics.
This is the difference in raising up people and raising up a congregation and raising up children that understand things that are true, and because they are true, everything about our life is ordered by that versus saying, this is how I feel today, so the truth changes today, and tomorrow when I feel differently, the truth may change tomorrow, and now you're a wave of the sea blown and tossed back and forth by the wind.
Feelings aren't wrong. Emotions not bad. Emotions just make bad leaders for life.
We live by that which is true. Always true. Not based on our feelings.
[28:49] When you get married, I hope you feel that deeply. And I hope that there's all kinds of emotion the day you get married.

It would be a sad thing to get married and say, how excited are you? And you go, eh, it's alright. That's not good.
You should feel deeply. But your commitment to that spouse is based on something that is true. Namely, that what God has joined together let no man separate.
That you have given your word before God to be faithful till death parts you. And you do not want to live your marriage based on feelings.

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Who feels like taking the trash out? Who feels like paying the bills? Who feels like sacrificing when you don't want that's not the way you have a good marriage.
[29:52] You don't do it based on feeling. You do it based on the fact that God has brought us together and the way I treat my wife speaks of the gospel.

The way my wife responds to me speaks of the gospel. And what people are supposed to see in our marriage according to Ephesians 5 is a picture of the gospel. I know that. I believe that.
I'm convinced of that. And I want to be a faithful husband not based on how I feel that moment but based on what I know to be true. Now in no way is the New Testament arguing in no way for passionless emotionless scholars who feel nothing.
Not at all. We should feel deeply. But our commitment comes based on what we know and how our mind thinks.
I'm not worried at all about what my wife is going to do one day if she wakes up and just doesn't feel like being my wife because I trust in what she knows and is committed to and believes.
[31:13] The most important thing about you is what you know about God. emotions are important. They're just not the way that you make decisions.

Feelings matter. It's just not what your faith is built upon. We are to have active minds that think a certain way.
So in verse 8 he's going to walk through certain ways that we are to think.
Finally my brothers whatever is here's the first one whatever is true. Now at the end of verse 8 he says think about these things.
He's going to give us a list of things and then say to think on them. Logizami is the word in Greek. You can hear a little bit of our English word logic logizami.
[32:15] We get our word for logic. We get our word for logarithm. It's about making a careful determination. Whatever things are true so we think on these things.

Things that are true. It means things that are reliable. Things that are faithful. John 17 17 your word is truth. truth. The first thing we must think about are those things that are true and what is true in an ultimate sense God's word.
Second whatever is honorable. It refers to things that are respected. Things that are lofty.
Things that are dignified. Things that are noble. In fact this same description is used in Timothy and Titus to describe the character of elders and deacons in the church.
They are to be honorable. In other words we are to distance our minds from things that are not honorable.
[33:26] So it's not going to work very well if you go to a church that tries to tell you here's all the movies you can watch and here's the movies you can't watch.

Here's the music you can listen to and here's the music you can't listen to. That doesn't work. It doesn't work either when your kids are teenagers and you've got to give them a list of here's every show you can watch and here's every station you can listen to.
You can't do that because there's always new shows and new movies and new websites. So instead what you have to do is train your people your children to think a certain way.
and you train them to think about things that are true and honorable. So they just ask themselves is what I'm watching honorable?
If what I'm watching is dishonorable I distance myself from it. It's not legalism to say I want to think a certain way but here's the issue when people live their life based on feelings rather than biblical thinking they will always accuse those who live differently as being legalistic.
[34:37] Don't fall for that. Legalism is saying if I follow certain rules I can be pleasing to God. That's wrong. Righteous godly living absolutely says I want to think about life the way God's word instructs me to think about life.

That's not legalism that's called discipleship. And train your children and as a church let's train our minds to think on things that are true and honorable.
Then he says third whatever is just these are things that are righteous these are things that are in line with God's standard.
We think on those things. Fourth whatever is pure this refers to things that are holy and wholesome morally clean unblemished unmixed.
Let me just give an example of why we need to have all these categories of how we think. Alright? So far he has said things that are true honorable just and pure.

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[35:59] If you have someone who has a sense of justice but not purity so they value justice but they don't think in terms of purity then in the realm of sexual morality what they will do is say as long as what I'm doing isn't hurting anybody else then it can't be wrong.

They have a sense of justice so they don't want to hurt somebody but as long as they're not hurting somebody it fits their category of justice therefore they can do anything else they want to do think on anything they want to think look at anything they want to look at because no one is being injured that's when you have a sense of justice but no purity and it will lead you astray which is why scripture tells us how to think not how to feel it's not just about how you feel do you feel guilty doing this no I don't feel guilty doing this then it must be right what are you talking about let me just remind you in the Old Testament book of Jonah when Jonah was running from God disobeying God when the people went to find him what was he doing sleeping he felt fine and he was about to have his life overturned if you have a sense of justice but no purity you will do anything you feel okay with and the problem is your feelings are not the standard
God's word is the standard so we've got to train ourselves how to think in all of these categories next whatever is lovely this word is used only here in the New Testament it means things that are beautiful things that are pleasant whatever is commendable it means highly regarded it's things that God would approve of so what are these categories train your mind to set itself think listen to things that are honorable just pure lovely commendable then he gives this summary if there is any excellence if there is anything worthy of praise think about these things this is so practical for us if you're raising teenagers teach them how to think how to think biblically how to understand Philippians 4 verse 8 should I date this person should I watch this movie should I go to this website should I have this conversation should I be involved in this event we just ask him to think biblically is this honorable or dishonorable is this just is this right is this pure is this bringing purity in your life or impurity in your life is it lovely is this something that is admirable is this commendable would God approve of this is it excellent is it worthy of praise help your people your children those you teach those you disciple help them know know how to think and in our day and age where so many places want to talk about experience it's a tragedy because if you're chasing experience rather than pursuing truth you will not arrive at a biblically ordered mind you will arrive at doing what you feel and that's not an argument about semantics it's about theology we have a
God who has made himself known to us and we know him because he revealed himself to us in a book and we read a book and we think about what we've read and we order our life around what is true unity comes from people who think a certain way one faith one mind one purpose does not mean one opinion does not mean one preference does not mean everybody in this room should agree on every single decision that's made not at all does not mean you're being disloyal to have a different opinion not at all but the way that you work together in unity is by reminding yourself that we refuse to be distracted by lesser things because our minds are focused on the greater thing and we want to think on the things that are true and honorable and just and pure and lovely and commendable and excellent and worthy of praise and one last thing if you want to know what your mind is thinking pay attention to what your lips are saying your words are an excellent barometer of what's happening in your mind are your words honorable and just and pure and lovely and commendable what your words speak come from what dwells in your heart and your mind we want to think a certain way because
[43:22] God's peace produces active minds now let me just say one last time we'll close here do not take from this that we are to be emotionless beings not at all you should sing songs about the cross and feel it deep in your heart you should sing songs about heaven and feel that stir your soul love you should think about people who have loved you and served you and prayed for you and taught you and feel deep gratitude for them you should look at your heroes of the faith and men and women in the church who have set godly role models and feel deep admiration for them but all that emotion comes because your mind has been trained and ordered by the scripture to think about things that are lofty and noble and excellent and praiseworthy not think about things that are worldly and impure and shallow the greatest worshippers should be the greatest thinkers and biblically the greatest thinkers should be those who experience the greatest sense of peace because god's peace produces active minds that's how we're to think we'll look next week at the second part of verse nine where he says practice these things how do we take what we think and put it into practice this morning if you don't know christ as your savior the most important thing about you is what you think and what you know here's what the bible tells us we have all sinned and because we

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have all sinned we all have the wrath of god upon us and if we die with god's wrath upon us we face eternal judgment that's what the word teaches here's the good news god the father sent his son jesus christ to live in our place he lived a perfect sinless life he went to a cross to pay for our sins and the wrath of god the father has poured out upon him and those who would believe in the lord jesus christ and trust in him as savior the bible says will be saved that's the truth and what you believe and do with the truth matters for all eternity and if there's never been a time in your life where you have repented of your sin and received the grace that the lord jesus christ offers i would encourage you even this day to call upon the name of the lord to not live your life based on your feelings but on the fact and the truth that jesus lived he died he rose and he's coming again that truth is our greatest hope rest in it this week and let the peace of god guard your heart and your mind in christ jesus lord we thank you today for your word i pray that it's helpful i pray that it's an encouragement and i pray that we would believe and

obey in jesus name amen join us at five o'clock for worship tonight hope to see you then god bless you you're dismissed you

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