

Philippians 4:2-9

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[0 : 00] Even the person who says, I'm doing nothing tonight. I'm turning my mind off. We're going to only watch a movie.

In truth, gives their mind over to being entertained. Yes, we all give our minds to something. Our text today, 4, 2 to 9, is concerned with what I would call matters of the mind. And for those who would ask the preacher to demonstrate some supporting evidence that this is the case, it perhaps is enough to see that those verses are hemmed in on either side by the same word on the mind or thinking.

You can see it there in 3.19 with minds, that is those whose end is destruction, set on earthly things. And then next week's opening verse, chapter 4, verse 10, this word translated concern twice is literally their thinking.

[1 : 29] I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your mind or your thoughts for me. Indeed, your mind was given to me.

You did think about me, but you didn't at that time have opportunity. Our text is hemmed in by the matters of the mind. And not only the context would give us that as our theme today, but you'll see the content of each particular unit in the text.

Three brief paragraphs. Find this same word or concept in play. So what are the pursuits of the Christian community when it comes to the Christian mind?

First, there's an appeal to be of an agreeable mind. Verse 2, I entreat Iodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord.

That which is translated to agree is literally, wouldn'tly, be of the same mind. An agreeable mind is what the Christian community ought to give itself to.

[2 : 56] And notice it's an appeal. I entreat Iodia. And then the same word again. I entreat Syntyche. They both get equal play here.

I am urging you individually and both of you to be of like mind. This is Paul's great concern. We are to give ourselves to a relational union that is commensurate with being united to Christ.

This goes all the way back to chapter 2 and verse 2 where he's saying, if there is any fellowship in the Spirit, be of the same mind and almost the same construction.

In chapter 2 and verse 5, you're to have the mind of Christ. The Christian community is to be united in mindset.

In one sense, you might really say that the book of Philippians, since chapter 2 verse 5, is doing nothing other than unfolding the practical implications of being wedded to Christ.

[4 : 05] Christ ought to be united. And I say it's relational because the issue in the Philippian church, in the context of our verse, is a falling out between two women in the congregation.

I entreat Iodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. That's the uniqueness then of Christian teaching when you're to give yourself to a life of the mind that isn't something you do on your own. Christianity by nature becomes social, relational. It's done in relationship because we have been united to Christ through faith.

Now we're not told the exact nature of the dispute between these two women. It's left unsaid, presumably because they all knew what had happened.

But we do know the heart issues that are underneath all relational conflicts in life.

[5 : 21] Do you remember back in chapter 2 verse 2 where it talked about a desire to be of full accord and of the same mind? It put forward the heart issues there that undermine union here.

Verse 3, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. So I don't need to know what the issue was for Iodia and Syntyche.

I am aware that the internal nature of their heart is no different than the nature of our own heart. And our own heart will find one of these two devious heads rising from the waters in our mind. Selfish ambition or conceit. It's selfish ambition that he referred to in chapter 114 that others thought that while Paul's in prison I'm going to get the best of him.

In other words, selfish ambition takes opportunistic movement when another is down.

[6 : 30] What Ray Kroc said, the founder of McDonald's, is that when you have your competition drowning, what do you do?

He said you shove a hose in their mouth. I mean, you do it all the quicker. That's selfish ambition. When somebody is down, you advance yourself.

Now, that's a cause for disunity in the body. Or conceit, literally just self-glorifying. So whether it was self-promotion or self-glorifying, I think when we talk to these two dear sisters, they'll be able to say, yes, the root was there.

You never needed to know what the actual thing was. They had gotten into a spat of sorts where one was trying to get the better of the other and neither wanted to give in and one was trying to rise above the other and neither would suppress that ambition.

Now, how does this happen? All you got to do is get up, right? Roll out of bed. That's how this happens. Let me put it this way.

[7 : 50] There's an intensity to life in relationship that brings this about and it's not unique to the Christian community but when you think of it in regard to church life, there's an intensity, a relational intensity to gospel partnership together that automatically by nature we are vulnerable to conflict in relationship.

We are vulnerable to the heart issues that want to see ourselves advance. We're vulnerable to wanting to get the credit for what happens. This is not unique.

In other words, there's a nearness to local congregational church life that makes us susceptible to a clash that would actually pull lives apart.

And notice then that this disagreement, what Paul's concern is, isn't that it has erupted to a point where it destroyed the church. His concern is that the disagreement, which they can't quite get settled, can lead to a distance and the distance can lead to a disdain and the disdain for one another begins to fracture the movement of the gospel.

That's what happens. It happens all over the world. And notice it can happen to even the best of us. I think Yodia and Syntyche, while they were called out here, well, it remains to be seen.

[9 : 21] We'll have to ask them what they thought when this letter was read aloud in the congregation. But my children would tell me, even on a soccer field, Dad, you don't call out anyone by name.

If you want to correct an individual on the field, you need to correct us all somehow. We'll understand who you're really getting at. But Paul is more direct.

He's old school. He's a yellow legal pad kind of guy. He's a clipboard carrying coach. And he just says, Yodia and Syntyche, you need to agree in the Lord. Don't worry, I'm not doing that here today.

My point is that these are the best of women. And Paul wants to make sure that you get that point with the three phrases he uses to describe them.

Notice, he says, they have labored side by side with me in the gospel. That word laboring is the word we get for athlete. They have been on...

[10 : 25] They are teammates for the gospel. I have history with these women. We have won games together. We have fought battles together. These are wonderful women who have labored, striving side by side with Paul for the gospel.

In other words, they've competed together with me on behalf of the gospel. Not only that, they were companions in the work of the gospel with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers.

We've already seen in this little letter how this idea of God is at work in you. I believe God has done... He's begun a work in you and He's going to complete it in you. And that God continues to work in you.

And what he's saying is that they are striving... They have been striving with me. They have been working with others. And then he goes on to that last thing just to leave no doubt in regard to their standing that not only competitors for Christ, companions with Paul in work, he is confident of their condition before God.

Their names, he says, are written in the book of life. So these are not divisive women. These are not members that are constantly kicking at the goats.

[11:37] They are not known as being contentious. They are not slanderous. They are not immoral. They are not those who challenge Paul's leadership. These are two committed, contagious Christian women, the best.

And that's my point. It can happen to the best among us. And if those issues are left unchecked, it would be cause for division.

So before Paul closes up what it means to have the mind of Christ, he makes personal application in regard to this relational unity. And notice, even at times, if it might take another to help, he says in verse 3, yes, I ask you also, true comrade, help these women.

There might be times in the church where even though you're trying to get it right with one another, you need, you just need another mind, another lover of Christ to come alongside and say, let me help sort this out.

So, what about us? Are we giving our minds over to an agreeable spirit with one another?

[13:02] Relational union is befitting of all those who have been united together in Christ. Therefore, keep short accounts. Make peace.

Let me put it another way. control your own spirit. I used to tell my kids sometime when it came to self-control, they were all little at the time and it didn't happen very often, but I would say something to them at age 3 or 4 even when, you know, you're in a grocery store aisle or something.

And I would look at them and say, if you can't control yourself, who will? And they would look blankly at me as if, what are you talking about? But it's true.

Get control of yourself. That's what Paul wants. And as we control our lips, as we control our mental habits, as we control our understanding that we are united to Christ, we can find ways to take the oxygen out of that which would flame up into disagreements and distance and disdain.

This is the rightful, a rightful pursuit of the Christian mind. The second paragraph though. Help for the anxious mind.

[14:30] Our union with Christ gives help for the anxious mind. This goal of the second paragraph is seen most clearly in verse 7 where our word, mind, or thinking actually emerges again just as it was there in verse 2 and earlier in 3.19 and following in 4.10.

And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. That's the goal. The goal is a mind that's guarded.

And the goal that would disrupt your peace of mind is what? Not relational discord, internal anxiety. That's what it says there in verse 6.

Do not be anxious about anything. That's the goal. Anxiety in life leads to a restlessness of spirit and a lack of peace.

I mean, wow, if you don't know this then you have the life. What was it?

[15:50] You're not going to know this one. Well, some of you might. Pastor Jay might. Loggins in Messina. Give me some peace. Peace. Peace of mind.

Oh! Okay, so, that's what we want. Peace of mind. And what steals it is anxiety of soul.

Yeah, they didn't know Loggins in Messina. Well, you do know this. you do know what it's like to get something going in your mind that you can't shut off.

It's like a bad spigot on a house that just keeps coming. It just floods and you can't, you want to get rid of it. It might be something related to work.

It might be something related to your profession. It might be something related to your family. It might be something related to your health. it might be something related to your children.

[17:02] And all of a sudden your mind gets going and there's no shut off. And this is why all of a sudden it's 2.30 in the morning. You're laying awake. There's no rest.

Why? Because some things are out of your control. What's out of your control? Evidently, your heart at times can be out of your control and your mind can be out of your control because his goal is actually that God would find a way to guard this because you can't guard it.

You don't, you don't ever get on top of this. But do you know what to do with your anxiety? See, see, Paul actually says that the Christian mind, the mind of Christ, actually gives very practical instruction for those of us who are living burdened, anxious lives.

lives. And that would be all of us, I assume, over some matters. So I love his practicality here. There are three prescriptions put forward by Paul for the anxious mind.

First, verse 4, rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. this is a prescription for anxiety. [18:25] Corporate worship and private praise. To take your mind and begin to glory in the elevated truths of the gospel.

I mean, so let me put it this way. you come to Christ through faith in the gospel and it's the gospel itself and a reflection on it and a meditating on it that actually enables you to keep going. This happens in Paul's epistle to the second one to Timothy where he tells him all these difficult things he's got to do in life and then he says to him, remember the Lord Jesus Christ risen from the dead.

In other words, a mental reflection on the victory of Christ who reigns is actually the antidote that enables him to continue in difficulty. He fixes his mind in the Lord and he begins to rejoice and so even at that point in Paul's letter to Timothy it's the one point where he actually throws forward a quote from a hymn.

Why? Because music is the language of the soul and music finds its way in and enables you to rejoice in ways that strictly your mental apprehension doesn't always do.

[19:47] So at 2.30 in the morning when you do not sleep, I ask you what's on your playlist? When you can't shut down your mind, fill it with praise and rejoicing.

If you're going to be awake then be in his presence. Not circularly moving through the course of events that you cannot control.

rejoice in the Lord the prescription for the anxious mind. The second one lets your reasonableness verse 5 be known to everyone for the Lord is at hand.

In other words when you're anxious then at least practically when you're dealing with other people in which your anxiety can surface stay level headed.

Because when you're not level headed when you're out of your mind too much emotion gets involved. I mean it's a wonderful thing. We need one another on this don't we?

[20:54] You know you're getting ready to send an email and then you're thinking I'm just so anxious about all this. Well then you have someone that knows you really well read it before you send it.

And they look at you and say hey you've got to find a way to get the emotion out of this. This is not going to go down well. Your anxiety is actually going to stir this thing up. So he's saying be reasonable.

Let your reasonableness be known. So with all your anxiety control the way in which you are walking with others in it.

Now it doesn't mean that you just kind of put a lid on it and repress it because repression is actually going to be worse than the anxiety itself. But I think what he's saying is deal well with it.

And remember the Lord is near. And I don't necessarily think he means here the Lord is near in judgment. I think he means the Lord is near. He's a present help in a day of trouble.

[21:55] He's that close to you. He can walk with you. Call upon him. Lord, oh Lord, I'm anxious of soul.

And you need to be near because if you're not near who knows where I'll be heading on this one. Indeed, that's perhaps why it moves to the third thing. A rejoicing as a prescription for anxiety.

A reasonableness with others. The first of course then is inward rejoicing. The second is outward reasonableness.

And the last one, make your request known to God upward. These are the three ways in which you deal with anxiety. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests, there's our R, nice R, rejoicing, reasonableness and requests, make them known to God.

Pray about it. And pray about it with thanksgiving. And when these things become, when we actually give our, when we discipline our mind to respond to our anxiety with these threefold hangers in a sense, it does say then that the God of peace will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[23:19] Jesus. How practical the Christian faith. third, not only an agreeable mind, help for an anxious mind, but here in verse eight and nine, which are one sentence by the way, a call for an active mind.

This is so important for the Christian faith today. Far too many of us are allowing ourselves the notion that our mind can be passive.

That's not the Christian faith. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there's any excellence, if there's anything worthy of praise, here it is, there's our word again, think about these things. But this is the word think on steroids. This takes us from phreneo to logizomai where you can hear logic. This is a word that says you got to be calculatingly, actively, rigorously, at work on these virtues.

The Christian community has to have an active mind. There ought to be a rigorous working of mind. [24 : 47] It doesn't just say, well, think about this. I'll think about that. Have you ever thought about it? No, no, this is get after it. Start calculating your way through this thing.

This is a present imperative. This is bring the force of logic to bear on these things. In other words, the Christian community ought to be known for a rigorous mental reflection with calculated thought on all things praiseworthy and difficult and that need to be worked out.

you know, I thought about wearing a bow tie today because, well, because we were talking about the mind, the Christian mind, and I thought, I'm not wearing a bow tie today.

Because if I wear a bow tie, you're just going to think, that's just a weird church, man. You go there and it's all about the mind. So I don't have a bow tie on today. just to let you know that an average guy from 1010 Howard Street with a 1.9 GPA is still standing here saying, the Christian community must give itself to the development of our mind.

I don't care where you are, Christianity is by itself an education. A poor tinker, John Bunyan, writes one of the most important books ever in the English language, Pilgrim's Progress.

[26 : 21] He didn't have anything more in the second grade education and spent 12 years in jail making shoelaces. But why was he able to be so richly endowed as to serve centuries of Christians in their faith?

Because he gave himself to a rigorous, thoughtful apprehension of all things good. No more laziness within the church.

No more mindless worship. Now there needs to be expressive worship. this is almost the closest thing in the scriptures, I think, to a list of virtues, this think about these things.

Notice it actually is a list because it keeps repeating this word whatever. I mean, this is not like 1 or 2 Peter 1 where the list is connected, you know, where knowledge leads to this and this, where there's a connection.

No, these are isolated six ideas that stand completely on their own and he wants you to think of it that way as a list. Christ. I mean, you go all the way back to somebody like Aristotle who began to talk about virtue and his virtue and vices and the idea that things that are praiseworthy ought to capture our mind.

[27 : 54] And he writes, fine things are the objects of praise, base things of blame, and at the head of the fine stand the virtues, at the head of the base the vices.

Consequently, the virtues are objects of praise and also the causes of the virtue are objects of praise and the things that accompany the virtues and that result from them and their works while the opposite are the objects of blame.

So this is all the way back into the Greek world. There's a consideration of the virtues. They actually outlined four of them and then by the time Paul came along with 1 Corinthians 13 and wrote about faith, hope, and love, they were appended to the four so that there were in a sense now seven cardinal virtues and they were in contrast to the seven deadly sins and the vices, one of which I believe is sloth, which also can be applied to the mind.

And Paul is saying that you ought to give yourself, to an active mind. The Christian community is to be known, known for this, deep reflection on things that are honorable, just, just, pure, lovely.

That's for the aesthetic among us even. Commendable. This is what we ought to do when we're by ourselves at night with nothing to do.

[29 : 40] What are you doing this evening? I'm going to sit quietly. I'm going to reflect on the word just. I'm going to consider if I can define for myself what is justice.

I'm going to think this through. This is the life of the mind, is it not? The life of the mind is to give yourself to the act of contemplation.

And in a Christian context, contemplation that brings you into the presence of God. Now this is something that being in a university context, the university here has something to offer to the church.

Because the university, and this one in particular, has as a hallmark the life of the mind. There are people here who can actually help you, Christian or not, learn how to cultivate thoughtful reflection on praiseworthy things.

Well, this is the mind of Christ. It makes me think that he himself must have reflected on these things. Made it his ambition to live a quiet life in which he could contemplate these things.

[31 : 04] Are you giving yourselves to the mind of Christ in this way? Is there a concentrated mental acumen at work within you?

Benjamin Franklin, you know, he wasn't a Christian to my knowledge. He had 13 virtues and he actually, I guess, put them in a book and walked around with them so he could be contemplating all the time.

The t-shirt at the University of Chicago campus, my favorite one, my favorite t-shirt, something to the effect of, that's great in practice, but how does it work in theory?

I love that t-shirt. It's humorous, but it gets at something. I'm tired of Christian faith that considers itself unworthy of thoughtful, meditative thought on great things.

So there's an immense overlap here between what Paul is putting forward and what we have seen in a classical sense or even in a contemporary sense. Now let me say something.

[32 : 27] While the university here has something to offer all of us, the Christian faith has something to offer those in the university. Notice how that ends. You practice these things so the God of peace will be with you.

This is the unique feature of the Christian faith. Active mental apprehension of worthy things leads you not only to contemplation, and to a life lived well, but lead you to a God of peace.

Now in a university context, because we want to have our mind free from all encumbrances, normally it leads to religious skepticism or at least agnosticism because you feel like you can't give your mind to anything that might constrain your freedom in any way.

And so you begin to think I'll dabble with Christianity and think about Christianity, but I'll never give myself to God lest I no longer become a scholar. Well, Paul was smarter than any of you anyway, and he saw no dilemma in giving himself to Christ and the mind of Christ, which actually holds all of the universe together by the word of his power, and being able to cultivate a religious faith in Christ and to have the God of peace with you as the ultimate end.

Now the church then has something to offer. It's a fallacy anyway to think that your meditation on virtues should be keeping you agnostic on all things religious.

[34 : 14] Because at the end of the day, you do advocate beliefs. We all do. And your belief that you can't have God, well, that's just your take it by faith.

No, there's a fallacy to think that you can do all these things and stay away from the Christian faith and therefore be safe. No, you're going to end up with your own set of beliefs that somehow govern your own life anyway.

So I'm simply telling you, allow room if you're here and not a Christian today, allow room for actually thinking that an active mind can lead to contemplation which leads you to a God of peace.

Well, now comes Christmas. Peace on earth with whom God is well pleased. Now comes the table where we can meditate and reflect and taste the justice and praiseworthiness and lovely things of God.

Feast your soul on these things. Well, I've got to stop. The Christian community, these are matters of the mind.

[35 : 39] What do you do? What do you give yourself to? Relational union horizontally. Restful communion vertically.

Rigorous contemplation internally. Nothing less from the mind of Paul.

our heavenly father. Father, we now turn our attention. We turn our mind to the table in which we see and hold and taste that which is most pure, most lovely, most honorable, most just, most merciful, most satisfying in all the world.

Not a proposition, oh God, but a person. The Lord Jesus Christ, who while we were yet sinners, came and laid down his life for us.

For he had a mind that would go to the bottom that we might rise to be with you.

[37 : 10] Strengthen us then in his name. Amen. Ź Ź Thank you.