

Pray, Think, Do

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[0 : 00] Okay, now I'm going to do the benediction and we're going to go home. Because he just preached, we just sang my sermon, basically. All right, you got my slides up there?

I'm not really sure of the order, ha ha, I'm not really sure of the order of these slides. I put them together and I said, I think this is the way I want them, but it may not work. We're going to be talking about Philippians 4, and I'm supposed to do verses 7 and 8, but I'm going to do 6 through 9.

All right? So I can skip 9. Huh? So I can skip 9. No, you don't need to pick it up, just like I have to go back and pick up. We're going to be talking about monkeys.

And in order to do that, I need to pick up a couple verses from before. So we're going to start in 6 and then we'll go down through 9. So let's read that. If you open up your Bible to Philippians 4, verse 6.

By the way, you know that we're almost through Philippians. And in the last time, I'm going to ask Matt to talk to us about what's going to happen next, because it's going to be something to refocus our church a little bit on some things that are important in seeking God's will.

[1 : 10] All right, let's read this. Starting in verse 6. Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in everything, through prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, tell your request to God.

And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or praiseworthy, think about these things.

And what you have learned and received and heard and saw in me, do these things. And the God of peace will be with you. So I went back to verse 6 because the flow of the idea that I got out of this starts back there and it goes all the way through verse 9.

So if you want to get the whole picture of what Paul is saying here, you need to... You know, Paul is great. I love him. Boy, I love him. But, as Peter says, sometimes he writes things that are difficult.

And the problem with Paul is he uses these huge, flowery sentences that are easy to read and hard to grasp the meaning of. And I was, I'll just confess, all week after I talked to Mark and we switched because I was supposed to preach next week.

[2 : 30] So I'm doing it this week. I go, Lord, I don't know what to do with these verses. These are great words, but I don't know what to do. And then Thursday morning I went walking, as much as I have it on Thursday, really early in the morning.

And I said, Lord, I don't know what to do with it. And it just sort of popped in my head. I go, ah, I got it. Thank you. I don't know what to do with it, but I got it. And went back Friday morning and wrote this. So here we are. And we're going to deal with some of the things that are in this thing.

And hopefully you'll get a picture of what I think is the core of what he's saying in this for us. He starts by addressing the Philippians and our biggest problem, generally.

You know what our biggest issue is as Christians? Anxiety. Anxiety. And you can call it what you want. It could be fretting. It could be unease.

It could be worry. It could be anxiety. It could be just life. It all falls under this admonition.

[3 : 35] And the admonition is this. Do not be anxious about anything. Do not be anxious about anything. Now, I got a lot of things here this last week I'm going, I'm anxious about.

Right? I mean, we're anxious about these things. And some of us are facing some really big issues. And it causes some anxiousness. Because anxiousness comes out of what?

Unknowing. Not knowing what's going to happen. What's going on. What to do. Unknowing. You know, you got a problem?

Who doesn't? Got to worry. Got a situation you're concerned with. Don't get anxious about it. Don't worry about it. Don't fret about it. And then the question, you go, well, why? Well, not because Paul said not to.

But because, first of all, it won't help. It won't help. It just makes you miserable. In fact, it will probably make things worse. Why? Because when you're anxious or fretting or worried, you usually make poor decisions or ill-informed decisions.

[4 : 39] And you make the situation worse. Now you've got a bigger worry. And Paul tells us here, I think in this passage that we just read, three things that we need to be concerned about.

And three things to do instead. And they're laid out in these verses pretty clearly, I think. The first one, next slide. We're going to be talking about the care and feeding of monkeys. You don't know it, but you have monkeys in your life.

And you spend most of your time taking care of them. I'm not sure what the next slide is, but show me the next slide. All right, here we go. This is the first thing he says, and it's in the second half of verse six.

He says, in every situation, every situation. Now think about that. That means the ones you're anxious about as well. In every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your request to God.

So what did he tell you to do? Pray. He says, pray about it. Now, what is prayer? We often think about prayer as this highfalutin, oh, Gordon.

[5 : 52] Prayer is conversation. You want to have a good conversation with God? Get up at five o'clock and go walk in the dark. Nothing to distract you, except maybe some wild animals in the woods, depending where you live.

Nah, just say, look, it's time to go, it's time to go. You know, you just talk to him about it. If you're going to fret, fret to God.

Tell him. Or I'm really concerned about that. I don't know what to do. He loves to have you hear that. Go talk to the one who can do something about it. Don't talk to your spouse.

Well, you need to tell your spouse what you're worried about. But don't expect them to come with an answer, because they don't know what to do anymore than you do. Talk to someone who knows what to do about it. Paul says, prayer, petition, and supplication with thanksgiving.

That should be the first place we turn. We should have an honest and open conversation with God. I find myself talking about it. Lord, let's talk about this.

[6 : 58] And I'm talking about it. And then I have this little voice in the back of my head saying, well, you need to tell him the real reason. You've told him all the outward reasons. Now tell him the real reason. I go, why would I want to tell him? Because he already knows it.

You just want to admit it. It's for your benefit as much as his. He already knows. Tell him what's really on your heart. Even if it sounds really ungodly, unholy, selfish.

Just tell him. He knows anyway. He's going to deal with it. You just want to admit it out front. And get it out there. Lay out your fear, your worry, your anxiety before him.

Pray. Pray. Talk with him. Petition. Ask him to do something about it. Supplication. Beg him if you need to. If that helps to get your need across, do it.

Do it. He doesn't need these. But we do. And then be thankful. I think that's the part we see. We get so focused on the negative, the bad thing that we're worried about.

[8 : 02] Then we forget. That's like one tenth of one percent, you know, of our life is right there. Oh, I'm so worried it's going to come. When we forget the 99 point whatever percent that it is.

God has blessed us and given us these wonderful gifts. If we just open our eyes and look and see. That's probably like about five o'clock in the morning. Guess what's out if it's not cloudy?

The stars. Have you ever pondered the stars? Amazing. Amazing. We can only see a part of them. We had the big full moon.

How many of you saw the full moon this week? Amazing. Amazing. Take your grandson for a walk. And he's digging around in the sea and looking for things.

And you find out that there are different kind of ants. Some ants are good and some are bad. You find deer prints in the soil.

[8 : 57] And you say, which way are they going, Wyatt? He says, they're going that way. How many? Oh, it looks like only one. The amazement, the wonder of the world we live in.

The things that he's put in our world. We should be thankful for. We should stand in awe. We're saying that. Stand in awe of him. For the wondrous things he's done. Far beyond all that little worry and fret we're doing.

And having our lives. Now, here's the secret. When we go to him and we lay out all the issues that we have, we have to leave him there before him.

We cannot go back later and say, well, Lord, I really want to chew on this one for a while. I want it to chew on me for a while. I don't have anything else to do.

If you want peace, and that's God's peace, the peace that only God can give, then you've got to let it go and leave it there with him.

[10:03] Turn the slide. Yeah. You see, it's a deal with monkeys.

If you try to keep an anxiety or a worry or something like that, you're now responsible for its care and upkeep. It's on you.

I don't know if any of you have ever had a monkey, but they are not pleasant creatures to keep. Just like a monkey, that worry, that thing that you're worried about will hang on you and demand your attention and demand your care and feeding.

Now, I had a boss when I was in the Army, and he taught me about the care and feeding of monkeys. And see, he was in the business of delegating. He would go to his boss, and the boss would say, here are the monkeys.

Take them. I don't want monkeys. So he would come back to the office, and that's what he would do with them. He'd give them to us. These are your monkeys. Take care of them. If you were smart and could do it, you had somebody that worked for you, and you'd go to them and say, this monkey, I need you to take care of it for me.

[11:16] And when you get it cared for, let me know what happens so I can go back and tell the boss what's going on. The problem is, somebody has to take care of that monkey. Now, if we give God the monkeys, they're his responsibility, not ours.

They're his job to take care of and feed, not ours. We're set free in a sense. You become free from the monkey business. You can walk away and say, whew, it feels so good to get that monkey off my back.

But you have to trust God in doing that. Because what are you doing? You're saying, I can't do anything about it, so I'm going to give it to you. You can.

But what our human nature is to go and say, what? I'm not really sure. I need to go check on that monkey. And that's the worst thing you can do.

You need to say, God, you got it. You got it. And then you need to pay attention to what God says about this monkey. I think what you're going to find is most of the time, these monkeys just simply go away when you do that.

[12:30] They were, nothing's going to happen. It just was a worry. And nothing is going to come of it. If it is something that comes of it, you trust God to do what?

Make things all work together for your what? Good. Trust Him. Lord, I don't know what's going to happen. This monkey could really be bad.

But I'm trusting You. And then pay attention to what happens next. Pay attention to what happens next. Pay attention to what's going on around you because maybe God is actually working that out so that your monkey is cared for.

Alright, next slide. He says, second thing Paul says, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or praiseworthy, think on these things.

Now the word think there means more than just put it in your head and go, oh, yep, yep, yep, yep, yep. And it means to ponder, to consider, maybe even to meditate on. Now there's a couple reasons he tells you to do that.

[13:49] If you go back to Psalms and you read them, a lot of them are rehearsals of God's great works. Have you ever noticed that? And sometimes they're rehearsals of what has happened in David's life, how God has worked in his life.

Why does David do that? Usually he starts out with a problem. Oh, woe is me. In other words, he's got a monkey. And he goes, I don't know what to do, Lord. There's the prayer and the, you know, that supplication.

And then he says, but I remember you did this, and then you did this, and then you did this, and then you did this, and then you did this, and then you did this. What happens about 10 verses later, he bursts into praise.

And thanksgiving. Why? Because he sees God is bigger than his monkey. He sees God has done more in his life than just allowed this one monkey to live in his life.

He knows then he can trust God to do even what's necessary with this one. Fill your mind with things that are positive and that are beneficial and that are beautiful and that are commendable in all these things.

[14:56] Psalm 106 is a good example but it says, praise the Lord, give thanks to the Lord for he is good and his loyal love endures forever. You know what loyal love really is?

It's God's faithfulness. And in fact, in the New Testament, I've noticed that sometimes the modern translations are changing things. We usually say, we say something like, faithfulness in Christ, our faith in Christ.

What the Greek really says is Christ's faithfulness toward us. We're never faithful very well but Christ is always faithful.

God is always faithful. Always loyal to us even when we are not. God's faithful love endures forever despite what we do or fail to do.

He's done it all for us. So whatever is worthy of respect or just or pure or commendable, whatever is excellent or praiseworthy, these are the things we are to fill our minds with and our hearts with.

[16:02] These are the traits that are found in the things of God. Jesus is all these things. The good news is all these things. Our hope in Christ is all these things.

God's mighty works are all these things. Go out and consider His creation. Consider His provision for you. If you don't know that God has provided for you, look at your checkbook and then go look at your pantry.

I don't think any of us are starving. He provides for us. Consider His salvation. Consider His love.

And do this and you will have peace because you've encountered God in action. Working to bring all things together for your good. No matter how things turn out tomorrow or the next day or the next day.

Remember Paul said it's to live is Christ. To die is gain. What do you got to lose? If your worst outcome is gaining God's gift of eternal life and eternal peace.

[17:15] What do you have to lose? Well that brings us to the third thing. That's not it. There it is.

Verse 9. And what you have learned and received and heard and saw in me do these things and the God of peace will be with you. And the Greek actually says and the God of this peace will be with you.

Meaning the peace that he talked about that surpasses understanding. Way back in the verses before. And there's two parts there. What you've learned and received and the instruction you got. And then heard and saw. The modeling you saw. That's what you're to do. Take all the stuff you've learned and heard about God and Christ and salvation and all the things you've seen modeled by mature Christians who are walking with Christ and then do them.

Do them. Be obedient. Put one foot in front of the other following Christ over and over and over every day every moment. No matter I walked in the valley and shot out of death.

[18:25] That doesn't make any difference how bad things look. He put one foot in front of the other in faith following Christ saying I don't know where we're going Lord but I know you're going where I need to be. This is where we act on what we've heard and learned from God.

Maybe we got that from scriptures or maybe we got that from some brother who came and counseled us or maybe we got that from a teaching or maybe heaven forbid you got it from a sermon. Use that and respond to that concern that monkey that we left with him earlier.

It may come soon. You may get an answer right away. He may say this is what needs to happen.

You may see events moving you in a certain direction saying this is the way you should go. It might happen today tomorrow the next day or it may not happen for a long time.

but he will provide a way and answer in his time. And the answer you get might be see it was nothing to fret about at all anyway or it might be silence.

But silence it's probably because he's saying there is no answer for this in the way you want it. Just move on. So what does Paul say will be the result of these things?

[19 : 51] He says the God of this peace the peace that passes understanding the peace that is beyond our comprehension will be there to guard our minds and our hearts in Christ Jesus.

Now what does guard our minds and hearts mean? The word guard is a military term. Paul was familiar with that term because guess what? Day and night while he was in that prison we call it prison he was under house arrest he was guarded by somebody.

Someone stood there every day and watched who came in and who went out. Nothing Paul did or received or gave out didn't miss his attention that he knew exactly what was going on.

And Paul says the God will guard your heart the peace of God will guard your heart and your mind. and there's your whole personality and your thoughts and all that your emotions he will guard and he will not miss anything coming into your life your mind or anything going out.

That's the kind of guard we need. My mind wanders. I need it tethered to something. I should be chained to that guard like Paul was chained to his. Peace.

[21 : 10] God's peace. The very peace of God himself. will be there as you seek him in conversation.

So what I want you to do is to consider his mighty works and his love his salvation and his promises and then act on what is put before you following the examples of those who have gone on before you and the examples of those who are mature in Christ.

Now I'm not claiming to be one of those by the way. So what else is there to want? When you present yourself before the throne of God having boldly approached through Christ Jesus like Hebrews says through the veil of his flesh we approach the throne of God boldly and we stand there in the glory and the beauty of his person.

I don't know if I could stand there I think I'd be laying down we sang a song when I see God and I'm there will I sing hallelujah or will I fall on my knees I go no I'd be on my face but standing there in his glory and beauty what else could be of value?

What else could possibly disturb your peace? What opportunities we miss when we try to care for our monkeys instead of letting them go.

[22 : 35] Let's pray. Lord I don't know if I've committed to everything you wanted and said but I just pray that you will work in the hearts and minds of all of us. you will bring your truth to bear and that we will be mindful that you don't want us to hang on to our fears and our worries and our fretting you want us to turn them over to you and trust you and follow you through whatever we have to go to whatever we might have to encounter Lord give us the strength you told Joshua to be strong and courageous help us to be strong and courageous because most of our enemies Lord we know in hindsight we're just shadows help us to trust you to walk with you to stand before you to listen to you to see you to give you praise and thanksgiving and all the things that you've done in our lives we thank you in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen