

Think about these things  
Philippians 4:4-13  
October 11, 2020

How many of you have ever engaged your mouths before you turned your brain on? When this example is used, does the person who has spoken speak reasonably most times? There is another expression, speaking out of your head. Stuff is coming out that hasn't been thought through and if it was, many different words would be coming out of that same mouth.

Paul is speaking to a people who wanted to tell of their faith. Yet, they like we sometimes are a little anxious about witnessing. Our own sinful nature, the world, and the devil are all there though, trying to create doubt and anxiousness in us. Paul, the guy who was so focused understood how so many things would seek to get a person off track, to shut them down.

Where did Paul say to go, what was a person to do? He says: "Let your requests be known to God." You mean I should be requesting of God as those anxious feelings overtake me? In the midst of this anxiousness, how reasonable does it feel to not be anxious, to be at peace? No, it is more like a single focus and not on anything good for you or the supposed things that our minds THINK are going to happen or not happen. This focus seems to take over and on our own, it is like there is a blockage to anything that would trump the anxious thought.

Paul is telling the Philippians they have some ammunition in their arsenal that has nothing to do with a big bang. They have a Lord who is right there, the counselor is in them and as they pray to God, the Holy Spirit is there to communicate to the Lord EXACTLY what is going on with them and with the situation they find themselves in. We are no different.

Paul says that the requests should be made known to God in prayer. Pray, talk to God as you would a friend, a friend who went to the cross to pay for your sins, a friend who knows you better than a brother, He is a friend that wants the best for you and for the one you want to witness to.

How many times though, do our thoughts focus on the negative? We like peace but does the focus on the negative ever give us peace? No, it just keeps us stirred up. Paul knew we all need to get in a different state of mind. He, by telling them to change their focus, not on what they perceive is likely or not likely to happen but on the positive foci of truth, honorableness, justice, purity, loveliness, on things that are commendable,

excellent and if there is anything in the exchange you may have with the exchange that is worthy of praise. He encourages them to think on these things, really looking to what is good going on here.

Paul says to practice these things. Practice, what do you mean practice? We get so used to **reacting**, that practicing is so far out of the norm, we may be out of the practice of practicing.

I don't know how to play the piano or any musical instrument besides a radio. I can turn a knob or flip a switch but to get a coherent sound out of some hammers pounding on some stretched tight wires, totally foreign, like a foreign language. Are these things of Paul foreign too? Can we think on these things with practice though, so that it will come be our practice?

The thing of it is if we were to engage our brains first, then there is the opportunity to not so much react to what is being said but to the person behind the statement or feeling. That person is valued by God, just as much as you and I are. When Jesus went to the cross to die, He went willingly for enemies, even those who drove those spikes through His hands and feet.

Jesus looked, not to those feelings, those thoughts or to the anger but to the person behind all that. He didn't die for a thought, an angered expression but for the person behind it all. When many tout as the favorite verse of the Bible, John 3:16, what does it mean that God so loved the "world"? Does it mean that God so loved a round ball in space? I don't know anyone who thinks that way. No, He so loved each and every person who has ever lived on that ball, that He saw worth in sending His Son.

You may have heard the thought that if you were the only person on earth, Jesus would have died for even if it was just you. You and Jesus alone. You needed saving, He would have gone to the cross because He knew you, created in the image of God, were worth it.

When a person isn't thinking about these things, how many times are we thinking about the welfare of others? We aren't. We, like the devil seems to always do, focus on ourselves, our welfare, our so called good. "Good for food, your surely are not going to die, you will be raised to the glory of God, this food is a delight to the eyes and will be a useful to make a person wise. How many of these items point to the focus on anyone but ourselves? How many relationships have been destroyed by thinking of the other person first and foremost?

Think about these things. Jesus thought about “these” things in coming to this earth. In truth, Jesus came to earth knowing that truly the only way to save us was for Him to do what He did. Like a man courting a woman, he should do it in a way that honors that relationship, Jesus showed that kind of honor in coming to be the bridegroom to the church. Jesus came with justice, paying the price that was required for sin, by taking on the sins of the world, just as was required of the breaking of the first law, where God warned that death would be required if it was broken.

Jesus was pure, the only one to be completely pure of anyone that has ever lived. That purity should show forth in our actions as well. Jesus saw how lovely people were to Him. Think of how He thought of the down trodden, the lepers, the soiled women, the little children. He despite those around Him who wanted Him to ignore these down trodden of the world, took time out of His day to focus on them as if they were the only people needing His time.

Jesus did so many commendable things. Even unbelievers tell of the commendable things Jesus did. Commendable actions by believers many times are the very things that get unbelievers to wonder if what you are bringing is worth looking into, to take a second look at. I have pointed to the adage before, people don’t really care how much you know until the know how much you care.

Speaking of excellence and worthiness of praise, Jesus was seen as a leader who showed excellence in dealing with people. His actions brought about praise from many. People saw and heard how He reacted and spoke and had to wonder how God could have given something like this to men, yet here was a man, Jesus, flesh and blood, showing wisdom in His questions, even to religious leaders when He was just a youth, maybe 13 years old.

Paul had displayed these things he was talking about. He had live out His life like this, practicing these things. He was saying that the Philippians should practice these things too, as they had seen him do.

Paul then rejoices in this as it seems to him that they are listening, are practicing somewhat as they are not so focused on themselves that they have taken time to concern themselves, not on themselves but on Paul’s plight. He is thankful for their concern even though he says he can get by with what he has, even though prison is a little restricting.

Paul had every right, we might think, to be negative, to be downhearted and yet how uplifting was this letter to the Philippians. You and I know that when we see

someone who has it worse than we do who can still smile, be happy, shine the light of Christ, that the dark cloud we are walking around in can be set aside, whisked away by the refreshing breeze of the Good News we have been given to give out to others.

Paul encourages the Philippians to think about the things he listed in his letter to them. Take the focus off those things that would keep their communications from having the desired effect of a positive witness, to the pointing to the one who fulfilled all those items that would bring peace.

The disciples were all down that night in the upper room, the night after the empty tomb. They didn't even have a body anymore. Sure, Jesus was killed. Yes, He was taken to the tomb supposedly to lay there forever and yet now they had nothing. When Jesus passed bodily through the walls of that room and came into their presence with His body, yes scarred but very much alive, what did He say? "Peace be with you".

Why peace? They were going through nothing peaceful. Jesus killed, no body, others were probably encouraged to find **them** and kill **them** too. They had the leader, lets clean things up by going after his followers.

In spite of what would follow in the time to come, there were many fleeing Jerusalem from those who wanted to take their lives, two had peace because Jesus brought peace to His followers through the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that lives in each of you. In that peace, they spread the word of Jesus, the Savior to many.

Each of you has the Holy Spirit but each of you has that other spirit, your spirit that too many times wants to react in a negative and weak way, thinking you are your own and you can handle it without bothering God. We all know how well that ends up many times. Wait until you're stuck before you go to get rescued by God. Why not practice the things Paul talks about that keeps you from getting stuck in the first place.

Paul points to making our desires, our requests known to God. He knows already but by our going to the Lord in prayer, our focus is where it should be, not on ourselves but on how God is asked to work, His work in us to create that peace which passes all our understanding.

Think about these things. Why not? We can think about all sorts of things but these things help us to get the focus off ourselves to those the Lord brings into our lives. It is going to take some practice on our parts. We can get rusty, use it or lose it is what is said, so we need to engage our memory, our God given minds to think before we act or speak. Practice these things and as Paul says: the God of peace will be with you.