

## Christ-Exalting Mind

Pastor David Corrente, January 12, 2020

Well, thank you, Quinten, that is quiet the introduction. And just grateful to be here among family. Every time we are with the Grace Fellowship Church, we come and family scenario with all of the joys of privileges of ministry that we've been able to share already. And I would like to extend our grace and peace to you from all of the saints at Grace Church on 99.

Yes, you heard me right. As of a couple of months ago, we have officially changed our name to Grace Church on 99. So as a part of the Grace Advance family, as a part of the Grace Community Church family, Grace Immanuel Bible Church family - and simply because the grace of God is sufficient for every single one of our needs, we decided to change our name as well to Grace Church on 99.

Many of you know that we have been going through many changes at the Church, structurally with a bridge going right south of our property. Which by the grace of God, allowed us to pay down a debt that we could never have with the amount of people who show up on a Sunday morning, and allowed us to stay on the highway. So we wanted to give God the glory, and so all that pass now in the coming future will know the grace of God over our Church.

And so we are very thankful for that. And we are just looking forward - we have a wonderful year planned with all of you as Quentin has said, and we are looking forward to it all, and very, very grateful for it. I actually, interacted with Quentin while I was in seminary, so I have known him for well over five years now. So we go back a ways and are very grateful for their love for our family; he and Tanya and for Grace Fellowship Chilliwack.

We are just incredibly thankful and grateful. Jeremy has been a wonderful friend. And Jeremy and Katie have just been dear comrades in ministry to us and our family. So we are very thankful for all of you.

Well, turn in your bibles to Philippians chapter 4. Philippians chapter 4 this morning. Maybe you have heard this line before - it came out of the 1970's from the United Negro College Fund that, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." That a mind is a terrible thing to waste. A mind in healthy, functioning order is capable of all sorts of good things for God's glory.

Think of all what God has designed in the mind of someone who is made in His image and all that they are capable of. Whether it is constructing a rocket to get to the moon, whether it is to paint something in glory, or maybe, the innocence of a child's mind to think in all of the wondrous capacities that the Lord gives them.

But I would like you to think also about a regenerated humble spirit-filled mind. Something that God has done in regeneration, and has given you a new capacity and a new way of thinking. Because our mind is not an organ like your heart or lungs are, your mind is a part of your inner man, your inner life that is connected to all of your life. It's connected to everything that you are. You are not going one moment even now as I speak without some sort of thought process, and filtering through some sort of world view.

Your mind responds to stimuli, it makes decisions every moment of the day. God ultimately gave you a mind as a part of your inner man to ultimately relate to Him. He gave you logic, He gave you your thought life, He gave you the capacity to think in a particular way so that ultimately, you would relate to Him in the way that He's designed you to relate to Him. And

to use your mind claiming reason and logic, devoid or separated from how God wants you to think, or in parallel with how He wants you to think is called “pride.”

Your mind is at its highest functioning capacity when it is aligned with how God wants you to think in a particular situation. God's thoughts, God's reasoning, and God's logic will allow your mind to function the way that God desires it to function.

Christianity is a thinking man's religion. Maybe you have heard it before that Christianity is anti-intellectual. It's a crutch. You guys just believe in a blind faith without any kind of evidence whatsoever. It makes you soft, it makes you weak. And again, in Romans 1, that talks about the suppression of truth in unrighteousness. We know that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, He's the treasure house, the store house of all wisdom, James says. And He thinks as the highest authority; God Himself.

Jesus said (coming out of Deuteronomy 6), "You must love your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your might and with all of your mind, with all of your understanding, with all of your intellect." We must be aware of those who come around and say that worship is a matter simply of emotion and of feelings, and just of your heart and there is not a particular capacity that you think about worship. You think about the way that your Christian life impacts your soul.

And please, at the start of it, understand that this is not negation of faith. This is not saying that your faith is not a part of this (of course). That what you think and what you believe is a matter of your faith. Faith comes by hearing, you understand what you hear. And I would like us to understand that worship takes place in your mind. What you think about, how you think about is a matter of your worship to God. He is concerned about your thoughts. You must think critically about your worship.

We even sang today, "Lord, test our thoughts and our attitudes" and vice versa. Worship will ultimately help you understand how to think.

We read this morning in Ephesians chapter 4 - as the Gentiles were walking, as unbelievers walk, as you used to walk in your unbelieving state, in the futility of your mind, the callousness of your heart. There is a way of understanding as an unbeliever that only filters through self. But now as a believer, you now filter everything through Christ. Because Second Corinthians 5 says, "You are now a new creation." That is your inner man, your inner life has now been regenerated and changed including your thought life.

Ephesians chapter 2 says that, when you were an unbeliever, you indulged in the desires of your flesh and your mind. But now, in Christ, Hebrews 4:12 says that the Word of God gets down, this two-edged sword gets down to the joints and the marrow, and is able to judge the thoughts and the intentions of your heart. It gets down to the inner recesses of who you are in our life, including your thoughts, able to judge your thoughts. Which means God wants to judge your thoughts and He wants to bring them in line with how your everyday life is. Every moment of life is a matter of worship. You are thinking every moment of your life. And Paul is warning us here in Philippians 4 to think about this way, and how we bring our thought life under Christ.

Beloved, don't be deceived because when you think of the garden, when you think about how sin entered into this world - what was the scheme of Satan? "Are you really sure God told you that? Are you really sure that you are going to die if you disobey?" He got into the thought life of Adam and Eve to start being skeptical about God. And it was just a matter of

the thoughts changing about God's character and then believing those thoughts, believing those lies - that sin entered into this world. And it's a similar way that he schemes today. To challenge your thinking, to get your mind off of Christ, off of His Word, off of God Himself.

And so as we think of this New Year, as we even come to the Lord's Table today, let us not waste this God given grace of a regenerated renewed mind to think and believe and worship in a way that God desires, in a way that even Christ prayed for in John 17 - that brings unity and growth into your life and into this church. As we come to Philippians, we're jumping right into the end of it, almost into the conclusion.

And so just for context sake, this is a prison epistle where Paul is stuck in Rome and he is given a gift by the Philippian church. Epaphroditus from Philippi goes, even almost at the sake of his life, gives a gift to Paul. And what happens is Epaphroditus says that there is a little bit of conflict in the life of the church, and so Paul in effort, wants to encourage them to bring spiritual unity to the life of this church.

And he wants them to think in a particular way because Philippi is a Roman colony in Macedonia; they are not even close to Rome. And what this means is because Philippi was not a part of Rome (even though they were a Roman colony), you had all the privileges. That would be like you and I going to a Canadian embassy on a foreign soil. We would have all the privileges of our Canadian citizenship given to us as rights at that embassy, and we would freely enjoy them.

So this Roman colony, even though they are not in Rome so to speak, it is a Roman governed land at the time. It's modern day Greece, modern day Europe. They thought highly of themselves – “We're in a Roman colony, we're privileged to have Roman citizenship. And therefore, we get to engage in all the benefits.”

That is the way Paul wanted them to think, except spiritually. He wanted them to think as citizens of heaven. He wanted them to walk in a particular way that would elevate or honour, dignify the Lord as a citizen of heaven. Worship in a particular way that is a citizen of heaven. And so, in Philippians chapter 1, he recognizes that he's in prison and he tells the church there that because he's in prison, some of them have kind of gone off, and some are preaching with selfish ambition.

And he says, “Look, the Gospel is going out. Don't judge them, the gospel is going forth. I am in Rome, I'm in prison, and I'm getting the Gospel to people who have never even heard the Gospel before. My circumstances are working a particular way where the Gospel is getting out. Even if there's people that are preaching with selfish desires and selfish ambition, the Gospel is getting out.” Here's how to think about the Gospel getting out in Philippi.

In Philippians chapter 2 – Remember, he says, that if there is any encouragement in Christ, any fellowship of the spirit - he's encouraging them again for spiritual unity. And then in verse 3 – “Do nothing from selfishness or empty deceit.” Verse 4: “Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also the interests of others. Have this attitude in your mind which was also in Christ Jesus” He's wanting them to think about each other now. When you think about your circumstance, when you think about the context that you're in, you think the way that Jesus thinks.

In Philippians chapter 3, he says, “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision.” There were those coming into the church that were encouraging

them. You needed to add works to your salvation. And Paul says, “Look, if there is anybody who could add works to their salvation, it would be me. And here's my pedigree: Circumcised the eighth day, nation of Israel, tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews, persecutor of the church; as to righteousness in the Law, found blameless.”

If anyone could earn their salvation, Paul says, “It was me. But I count all of that as a loss that I may know Him in the power of His resurrection.” So he knew exactly how to encourage them against these false teachers. And then in chapter 4, he gets to the conflict. There's this conflict with Euodia and Syntyche, and he's encouraging them how to think through bringing spiritual unity between these two ladies.

And I know much is made of Philippians in the sense of joy. Because 16 times through the book of Philippians, the word “joy” or “rejoice” happens.

And so essentially, what we do is we say this must be a book about joy. And yes, it is a major theme in the book of Philippians. But I would argue that the theme that is running ultimately through Philippians is spiritual unity in the Gospel. And the reason why I say that is because 10 times in this small little book, there's one word - think the same way, be in harmony with, have the same attitude. It's the same word, but translated in your English a couple of different ways.

He wants to bring spiritual unity through the Gospel. And as you could imagine, what is the recourse? What is the conclusion? Joy. When you have spiritual unity in the Gospel with other brothers and sisters in Christ, there is this joy that is only of a divine source. When I come here with you and minister with you, that is where my joy comes from. Because I think about a church striving in the Gospel, striving to make Disciples of Christ. And because of that unity and the great commission, there is this magnitude of joy that we have together as churches, that stems from the Spirit of God, Himself. So Paul wants them to think in a very particular way.

And so when we come to this text, Philippians 4:8 and 9, it has all of this context behind it. And I'd like to actually start reading from Philippians 4:1. So we get the entire context of what's going on within this particular conflict with Euodia and Syntyche.

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. 3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 The things you

have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

And so if I could give you an outline very quickly, that in these two passages here, Paul's given us two critical thought processes for growth and unity. Two critical thought processes for growth and unity. All of that is desirable within your life personally and all of that's desirable within the life of the church; whether it's growing spiritually and whether it's growing in a unified way.

In verse 8, he wants us to have intentional renewing. Critical thought process for growth and unity is intentionally renewing your mind.

And then in verse 9, it will be intentional action. What do you do with these thoughts that you have now when they're Christ exalting thoughts?

And as you can tell in the context here, what is going to rob you of a Christ-exalting mind? What is it going to take away from that? Well, verse 6 says that you're going to be anxious. Verse 6 also says that you're not going to go to God and depend on Him in prayer. That you will try to guard your heart, you will try to guard your mind apart from Christ Jesus.

So in this entire context of conflict with Euodia and Syntyche, he says, "These women have shared in my struggle for the Gospel. Here's ways that you can help them. Here's ways that you can help the church. But if you are anxious, if you are independent from me, if you are striving in your own strength - you are going to be on your own. But if you are trusting the Lord, if you're praying and dependent upon Him, God's peace that surpasses all human comprehension will guard you. And then, here's how you transform your mind, renew your mind, transform your thinking."

And the main thrust of this command is actually at the end of verse 8. Look down at the text, where Paul writes, "Dwell on these things." Or maybe your text says, "Think upon these things." That's the main verb in this verse. So everything that happens before, Paul wants you to do something. This is the action word of the verse – "Dwell on this, think about this, meditate on this."

There's an aspect that Paul is wanting you to take a step back and think critically. To take in the situation and meditate or dwell on all of the whatevers, all of the ifs, so that your mind can exalt Christ. And the word Paul uses is interesting. There's a range of meaning here. It's to calculate, to determine a process or to ponder upon a process to come to a conclusion. He also uses this word in Romans 4 - accredited to righteousness, accredited as righteousness to Abraham.

He uses it in Philippians chapter 3: "Regard myself of laying hold of." - Why is this important? It's almost like transactional language. When you think about righteousness, you think about the transaction of salvation, right? Credited righteousness to your account and Christ took your unrighteousness. Why is this important?

It's because a transaction has to take place in your mind – "I was thinking this way in this circumstance, and now I'm thinking this way because Christ calls me to think this way. This is worship of Christ and this is not." That in your mind, you are formulating your thoughts in such a way that are guarded because they're the way that God desires you to think.

So in this context, you may be wondering, why does Paul go here? Well, think about conflict. I know you probably don't have any conflict, personal conflict or anything like that, but just think about any kind of conflict that could happen. Where does your mind go? How quickly do you come to conclusions? How quickly do you assume things? How many times do you wish you could grab those words that are midair before they hit the ears of the other person?

All of that happens in your thought process first. All of that happens in your mind. All of that happens in your inner life well before the external manifestation of that. The transaction in your mind has to take place. And what Paul does not want these Philippians believers to do is to have lazy minds. Christianity is not lazy thinking.

It's a very specific word that Paul uses, and he gets into these words of how they are to think. And if you notice, look down in your text again, he says this: "Whatever is true" or you could also translate that as "many things are." As many things about the situation, as many opportunities as you have, you dwell on these things. Calculate the circumstance, ponder as much as you can about these things. And this is what's going to guard you, this is what's going to help you. This is what will lead (in verse 9) to active obedience, Christ-exalting mind.

So this is the intentional renewing. This is the first critical thought process that Paul desires for growth in unity, and it is intentional renewing. Here's this first word that he has for us. Well, actually go back into, "Finally, brethren." I think it's important to tackle. I just kind of missed this in my notes, so forgive me for that.

"Finally brethren" - why does he say, "Finally brethren?" *Finally brethren* gives you that sense of family, right? It happens numerous times in this letter. So what do you think about when you hear the word "brother in Christ, sister in Christ, the family of God?" To know that your fellow believers are actually fellow heirs of Christ? That you are going to be in heaven sharing the same inheritance with the believers in this room as Christ has purchased? You've been adopted into the same family, you're the same sinner that needs grace, you're the same son that can cry out "Abba Father?" That should generate some thought processes in our mind when you look at your fellow believers.

And so he says, "Here's how you should think, here's the intentional renewing in your minds." First word; whatever is true. And truth could be described as this - reality from God's perspective, God's revealed reality. And that comes from God's character and it comes from His nature. It's who He is. Paul is setting the tone here for all of these words.

Whatever circumstance you're in, we first must dwell, think, ponder, calculate what is true - and it's reasonable, understandable. That's the basis of our faith, right? We serve and we believe the one true and living God. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Jesus sent down the spirit of truth. We have the word of truth, and there's one true Gospel, and this church is the support and pillar of the truth.

Your growth and your strength in your Christian life will ultimately depend on how you take truth and apply it into a circumstance. That's what wisdom is. Wisdom is applied truth. Taking what God says, God's perspective about a situation, and then putting that into that specific situation or context that you're in. That's what happened when you were saved. Romans 1, Paul says that a non-unbeliever exchanges the truth of God for a lie. So now,

you've exchanged those lies for truth. That's how you live. Truth is now preeminent in your life.

So, first, you need to think about what is true from God's Word. What is true from God's Word about this circumstance or situation? We want you to have a biblical worldview. We want you to think theologically. I know that word can scare you sometimes, but all it's saying is what you believe from God's Word and you think about it rightly, and then you put it into practice. When you think biblically, when you think theologically, all you're saying is that you want to know what God says specifically about a situation, and then you apply it. You train yourself to discern how to take God's Word and then use it in that particular situation.

And we want you to train yourself to take particular texts of Scripture. Not just maybe general thoughts, but when you're interacting with somebody, when you're at work, when you're with your spouse, when you're with your kids, when you're with your neighbours, when you're with other believers in Christ - that you're thinking in such a way that texts of Scripture are coming to mind. And you ask yourself, "What does God say about this? What does God have to say about this?" And you're filtering through kind of the Rolodex of Scripture in your mind. That you have either memorized or have brought up to encourage other people.

Because if we're not doing this, then we start to get independent from God. We'll start to get anxious. We will start to not depend on Him in prayer. This is what's going to ultimately produce anxiety in one's life - because you're trusting yourself.

But not only do you want to think about God's Word and what God has to say, but secondly, you want to think about what is true in the situation; what actually happened? What is reality? Are you one to tilt information or manipulate information in your favour? Are you a trustworthy source full of integrity? What actually happened, what was actually said? And we need to humble ourselves in those moments. Are you acting or working off of false information? How many conflicts could be solved or not even start if we just got accurate information before we responded?

Worshipers in spirit and in truth reject falsehood. Remember, that's why we read Ephesians chapter 4 - you do not learn Christ in this way. Don't get back to the thinking as you were as a non-believer. I understand that we have remnants of the old flesh, remnants of the old man. We're still battling some sins that were even there before we came to Christ. We all understand that. But because you're a new creation in Christ, you have a new way of thinking even about those sins, about these contexts. Intentionally renew your mind with the truth.

Secondly, he says, Paul, "Whatever is honourable." This is dignified thinking. And not dignified in the sticking up of your nose and puffing up your chest kind of dignify, we're talking about dignity and worthy of respect in a way that's above reproach. It's above societal norms, it's above the normal way of thinking. It's a serious or weightiness of thought. It's used in Titus 2, especially with the older men. It's used and First Timothy about deacons. You have a particular way of thinking.

Maybe you can use the illustration of a soldier that just comes in and they are just decorated. You act in a particular manner before them. If you come into a mess hall and you have a group of privates, and then a general walks in, there's probably a hush in the room. The

normal banter that goes across the dining room table probably ceases in a particular way. And whenever that man speaks, everyone's ears.

It's a dignified way of thinking and living that brings you above the regular standard, and you're not willing to lower that standard. And you realize that there is a standard, particularly of truth. That you don't just relegate your thoughts below what's needed, but you elevate your thinking to what is honourable. And the opposite of this would be shameful or degrading. We teach our children this all the time. There's a particular way to act at another person's house. There's a particular way to speak at the dining room table. That's honourable, that's dignified.

Again, different cultures have different ways of thinking and acting. And one of the reasons why I wanted to come to Canada specifically, is because of the multiple culturalism. You just step into a church like yourself or like Grace Church on 99 and there's five or six languages within a hundred people. And all of you come from different backgrounds. All of you have cultural norms that you bring into the life of the church. What might be a cultural norm in one way might be shameful in another.

How do you think? What comes to your mind when you think about what that person just did or said, even though it's a cultural norm for them? Dignified, honourable. You're discerning a seriousness of your thought, a critical thinking of what is weighty and what is serious. And you do that in your conversations all of the time. You know the context for that. And Paul says, "Intentionally renew your mind in what is honourable and dignified."

Third word; whatever's right. And there's two ways to understand this word - the quality of something and equity. The quality is like a characteristic. The righteousness or a righteous man. Jesus is called the "righteous one." The law is called "righteous and good." It's what describes something, the quality of something. Contrasted with maybe, wicked or deceitful. The quality of your thoughts, the intrinsic quality of how you think about something.

And the second way of thinking through this, is the equity or fairness or justice. How you deal with somebody or in a situation. Do you deal fairly, equitable with them? Do you deal with them in a right way that is just? Are you someone that tips the scales in your favour? You always want the biggest piece of the pie.

Psalm 145:17 says that, "The Lord is righteous or just in all of his ways." There's not one thing that the Lord does that is not right, that is not just, that is not equitable.

Zechariah 7:9 says, "Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother."

And again, you can see how important this is in conflict, in your growth as a Christian, in the unity of the Gospel. If you're analyzing, thinking critically, dwelling, renewing your mind about what is right - what does God say is right, what is equitable? And the quality of rightness within the situation. And do you have the convictions to stand on what is right? It is not enough beloved just to know what is right if you're not willing to have the courage and conviction to stand on what is right and stand on God's side, and act according to what is right. Not just assuming motives, not just judging motives, but you're doing what is right.

Fourthly; whatever's pure. Whatever is pure, whatever is innocent. This word is also translated in your Bible sometimes as "chaste." It's talking about moral purity, the moral

quality of your thought life when you think about a particular thing, situation. Paul uses it in Philippians chapter 1, with “pure motives.” That your thinking is not diluted, it's not tainted, it's not twisted, or maybe you could say in the opposite, it's not immoral. That you are not filling your mind with immoral thoughts.

Remember, Jesus in Matthew chapter 5, says that you are still liable of murder before the court if you hate your brother. That's internal, that's thought life. Or that you have already committed adultery in your heart if you lust after someone who is not your wife. That's in your life, that's in your mind. As well before any action takes place - and this is where God wants to see your worship purify. As you think about things, there is a moral purity about it. There is a chasteness about it.

Remember Psalm 11:7: “The words of the Lord are pure words.” It comes from a pure source. The way that you think and the way that you speak and the way that you act, are going to come out of the moral purity of your heart as you grow in Christ.

Remember, even First John chapter 3; as you're thinking about Christ returning to be pure as He is pure. That you're not drinking down the corruption of the world, that you're not tainting your mindset and being blinded and making shipwreck of your faith because of the way that you think, even though outside, you want to put on this moral facade, but inwardly, it is full of immorality and twistedness.

That's called hypocrisy. That was the judgment upon the Pharisees from Jesus. You're like whitewashed tombs. The outside; clean, it looks nice, but on the inside is a dead man's bones, full of impurity. Paul says, “Purify your thoughts, cleanse them, that they're chaste. Dwell on these things.” You can see how Paul is moving through this - whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is right and whatever is pure. This is just moving in a particular direction here.

Fifthly; lovely, whatever is lovely. And this word could also be translated “whatever is pleasing” or “whatever is delightful,” “whatever is admirable,” causing delight in your mind or looked upon as admirable. Thinking truthfully, rightfully and purely, is going to bring a particular loveliness, right? A pleasantness. When your home is working in a particular way, where truth is saturating the context and the conversations, and you're interacting in a way that is truthful, honourable, right, pure - isn't there a loveliness about that? Don't you admire couples in relationships that there's a loveliness because you see how the Lord is working in their life? It almost brings an attractiveness. It draws people to you.

So when your coworkers think about Christianity, to some degree, is there a draw for them because of the way that you respond to situations, circumstances? Is there a loveliness about it? Admirability about it? Not just because they may reject it in their pride, but do you ever get the questions, “Why do you respond the way that you do? Why did you forgive our boss after what they just did to you? Why did you do those things?” There's an attractiveness, there's a loveliness about it. It's hard in a conflict to particularly renew your minds about lovely or delightful things when it's hard.

Sixthly, good repute; commendable – whatever is commendable. And this word has a more specific nuance about the words that you speak. Using words with cautious reserve. It brings a reputation or brings a commonality to you, a commendableness about you. Many proverbs

speak about this - the reservation of the tongue or reservation or restraint of your tongue. Think of Proverbs 18:21: "Life and death are in the power of the tongue."

Chapter 13:3: "One who guards his mouth protects his life."

Chapter 21:23: "He regards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from distress."

In this particular context of conflict, Paul says, and Paul writes here in the Proverbs 18:19: "An offended brother is harder to win than a fortified city." You may take years building up a relationship, and then with one conversation and one word, it's going to be harder to win them back than a walled city. He's talking about the quality of the words that you speak, that come from the mind and how you think.

Again, Jesus in Matthew chapter 12 says that all of your words will be judged. Every single word that you speak, every conversation that you have is on record books in heaven. It's all written down, you can't change it, you can't wet it out, you can't backspace it. You can't put it through the shredder. And Jesus at the end of that says, this actually shows the kind of fruit that you're bearing in your life. Because a good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. This is about your words that you speak.

Paul's very particular here; whatever's true, whatever's honourable, whatever's right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute - you dwell on those things. You try to find in the situation all of these ways to renew your mind, to think in the way that Christ would desire you to think.

And then lastly, these two words here; whatever's excellent, whatever's worthy of praise - or if anything is excellent or if anything is worthy of praise. These are kind of summary words. Peter uses this word "excellent" - "And supply moral excellence" in Second Peter chapter 1.

Whatever allows a virtuous way of living, and whatever is worthy of praise, whatever is excellent, whatever is worthy of praise. Again, you can see within the context why this is difficult. I would challenge you, beloved, that if you are in some kind of conflict to sit down and think about ways that you can praise that other person. Any ways that you can elevate your mind in a dignified way to think about what is true and right and honourable and pure and lovely, and whatever is worthy of praise and excellence about that person - to have a Christ-exalted mind.

And why would I say that? Well, think about Romans chapter 5 - what was your state when Christ came down to save you? Was there anything truthful, honourable, right, pure, lovely, or of good repute in your own mind and heart that is worthy of Christ coming down, leaving the throne room, to become a babe in a manger, to walk the road of Gethsemane Calvary, across to the tomb for us? No.

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. While we were still helpless, while we were still in our sins, while we were still dead in our trespasses and sins, Christ made us alive and gave us what is true and what is honourable and right and pure and lovely and of good repute. He is excellent, He is worthy of praise.

If you want to grow spiritually, beloved, intentionally renewing your minds to think in a way that Christ even saw you. So when you take the cup and you take the bread today, in what ways do you need to intentionally renew your mind? Is it a particular person? Is it a particular context or circumstance at work? Is the relationship even with your spouse or children or your family?

This is what we need to dwell on. We need to expose errant or false thinking, and make that transaction in our minds of how it would honour Christ. Christ embodies all of this and we must follow Him in that. That's our first critical thought.

The second is going to go much quicker. First critical thought is intentional renewing. Second is intentional action. Second critical thought process for growth and unity, is intentional action. Look at verse 9: "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the peace of God will be with you."

Again, the main verb or the main thrust of this verse here is the practice. Take these things and Paul says, "You have an example in me." Practice them. Take what you have learned - and as my dear friend has said, I am a coach in baseball and we encourage you what? Practice like you play. You take what you have in practice and you put it on the field or you're not going to get any better. You take the words of Scripture, you humble yourself by the power of the Holy Spirit. You intentionally renew your mind with the truths of God's Word, and then you act upon it. That's how growth happens. There's no real magic formula. It's just taking what God says and doing it, believing it by faith, renewing your mind, practicing it.

What Paul is encouraging all of us in the life of the church is verse 8, is like transformed thoughts; and verse 9, is transformed living. And I would encourage you that anytime you go to your Bible, that's the case. Whether you're just doing your five-minute devotional, whether you're reading a systematic theology, or you're just doing your Bible reading program, whenever you come to God's Word, God is desiring to change your thinking, renew your thoughts in a particular way so that you would believe in a particular way, and then respond and act accordingly, every single time. Not just in a sermon, not just in care groups - every time you open the Scriptures, God is desiring to renew mind so that you would think more like Him and respond to circumstance more like He would respond to it.

So practice these things. You have learned them, you have received them, you have seen them and heard them. The very obvious illustration is parenting – "How many times have I told you this? How many times have we done this? How many times have you gone to church on a Sunday morning? How many times have I told you to put on the same clothes?" Practice these things.

Paul says, "You've actually seen this. You've actually seen this. You have Christ, but you also have Timothy." Timothy helps Philippi for a while, Epaphroditus was sent and Paul himself was there. And in chapter 3, Paul actually says, "Join in my following. Follow after me. You have a group of men here. You have Jeremy and a group of elders, and I see that you're bringing out some deacons and we praise the Lord for that. You have a group of men and elders who are striving to be those very men."

And I am striving to be that very man in a life of Grace Church on 99, that we would present to you this very thing. That we would preach and you would receive and you would hear and you would learn and you would see in our lives. But are you desiring to be that particular

person as well? Are you desiring to be the one that one can look upon and say, “How did you think about the situation? You walked through this, what did God do? How did He change your heart? How did He change your mind?”

And you can articulate those truths because you thought about whatever is true, honourable, right, pure, lovely, good repute, excellent praiseworthy. And you took all those and you meditated on them, you thought about them, and you practiced them. And someone recognizes that and says, “I want to know how you did that.”

The conference that we're going to be sharing together is “Disciples Making Disciples.” That just means the church, that the pastors are not just the ones doing ministry. The church at large is doing ministry, and there's people in the life of the church. There's couples that have gone beyond the years of child rearing, and like Titus 2, the younger women come up and they go to those older women and they say, “How did you do it? How did you love your husband and love your kids? Because there's some days where I just don't.”

And there's younger men and they go to the older men and they say, “Man, there's a dignity about you. There's an admirability about you, there's a sensibility about you. And Titus 2 tells me that I need to be sensible. How did you think about this situation?” Oh, that we'd be a church like that. That we would change like that. That you would learn and receive and hear and you would see in others, and that you would practice. And what does God say? What does Paul say here? “And the God of peace will be with you.”

Is there any more comfort that you can receive in the Scripture than God being with you? In a world that is chaotic, for the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the world to look upon a particular piece about you. Transformed thoughts, transformed living will bring that transforming presence of God in your life. You can read as many books as you want about bringing the presence of God in your life. Philippians 4 tells you how to do it. Philippians 4 is the answer of how to bring the living God present in your life, and His peace resident in your soul.

Starting in verse 6: “Don't be anxious, go to Him in prayer.”

Verse 8: “Change your thought life, renew your minds, put it into practice, be intentional and God will be with you.”

Isn't that the great commission? – “I'll be with you to the end of age.” Christ will be there. Peace is a big motivating factor with Paul. God's presence brings His character. Think of Israel with the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. This is no small issue for Paul and he knows that.

Romans chapter 14: “The kingdom of God is joy and peace.”

Romans chapter 15: “God fills joy and peace.”

Romans chapter 15 again: “The God of peace will be with you.”

Romans chapter 16: “The God of peace will crush Satan.”

First Thessalonians 5: “The God of peace Himself will sanctify you entirely.”

Paul knows that when we are faithful to God, we intentionally renew our minds. We are intentional in the actions that He desires, that there is a peace that God brings, and that peace is Himself. God is with you. He encourages you, He strengthens you. You might be in a trial right now and you're just wondering, "How in the world do I get through this?" You may be thinking, "How in the world do I get out of this?" But God's warning you, how do you think differently through it? How are you striving in the midst of it? You want God's peace through it all? Philippians 4 is your answer.

This is not a subjective, arbitrary experience. We do not get to define for God what peace with Him is like. In the same way, you do not get to describe or define peace with God in your justification, in your salvation. It's the same thing in your sanctification. Peace with God and the God of peace is going to come as a byproduct by you practicing these things. Two critical ways, two critical thought process of growth and unity; intentionally renew your mind and put that renewing into action.

So as you go the Lord's Table today, think about, dwell upon, meditate, ponder upon these things. And I pray at the end of all of that, you will practice, and the God of peace will be with you. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for Your Word which is so clear. It is so helpful for us. So often, we're like sheep that go astray. And when the trials of this life, when conflict happen, we so quickly turn to ourself, we so quickly try to find answers within our own soul, and yet, You are the living God who made us alive in Christ Jesus. You are the one that made us a new creation, You are the one that has revealed Himself, fully and completely to us.

So Father, I pray as we come even now to the Lord's Table, that You would test our thoughts and our attitudes. You would renew our minds, You would help us recalculate the words that we spoke this week, the thoughts that we had this week. And that we would bring them under submission of Your Lordship. That we would deny ourselves, take up our cross, follow after Christ in this particular way. We pray that You would bless Grace Fellowship Chilliwack, Grace Church on 99 as we strive in these things – albeit imperfectly. We're sinners, sin will happen. But I pray, Father, that You would protect our congregations, protect our churches under Philippians 4. That You be with us and provide the peace that You so richly give.

And we ask all of this because of the name above every name, the one who gave us salvation and life in Himself, Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.