

MAKING THE BEST OF A BAD SITUATION

Philippians 4:6-9

INTRO: Turn your Bibles or turn them on to Philippians chapter 4. Today I want us to read verses 6-9. My title for the sermon this morning is, "Making The Best Of A Bad Situation".

Paul is the human author of the book of Philippians. If you are familiar with the book, you will remember that Paul is writing from a prison cell. You would expect that there would be tones of sadness or even anger. But, on the contrary, this little letter is upbeat and full of REJOICING.

One of the biggest issues that people face in this time that we live in, is the inability to get their minds off their circumstances and FOCUS on Godly things. It's a real problem. Today, I want to see what the Word of God has to say about that.

READ vv 6-9 *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think on these things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."*

Notice...

I) THE ENCOURAGEMENT: v 8 *"Finally, brothers..."* (You know what it means when a preacher says finally? Absolutely nothing.) Now notice what Paul does. He just starts listing things, *"whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right..."* He's just listing stuff, almost in a sonnet. It's very poetic. Paul, in a rhetorical flourish, which he is so capable of, with his brilliant mind, sounds like one of their stoic philosophers. He's using all of these virtues, that is associated with and related to God and God's Word. And he says, *"think on these things"*. The phrase that he uses, which is translated into English as "think on" is a phrase that actually means, "make it your habit of thought".

This passage reads like a catalogue of all the good things of God. (You'd have to be over a certain age to even know what a catalogue is...made with paper from trees :))

Paul is saying here, there are some things you need to be consumed with. In v 6 Paul said, "Be anxious for NOTHING", now just two verses later he is saying, but there are things you should be aware of and obsessed with.

MY SERMON TODAY IS REALLY ABOUT FOCUS. The Word of God, here, is talking about a right focus. An unfocused mind is easy prey for that which desires to steal your peace. And when your peace is taken from you, it takes with it, your joy and happiness.

Let's look at fear and faith for a moment. FEAR, FAITH, fear OR faith. FEAR and FAITH actually have more in common than what you may think. But the number 1 thing they have in common is, they're both powered by FOCUS. Fear is a result of focusing on the wrong things, while faith is a result of focusing on Godly things. And Paul says, "whatever THINGS are good and Godly, FOCUS ON THOSE THINGS". Then he just goes through a list. And he's not even specific. He says, WHATEVER is good, WHATEVER is true, WHATEVER is honorable, WHATEVER, WHATEVER, WHATEVER, WHATEVER, as long as it's godly and good...think about it! MAKE IT YOUR HABIT OF THOUGHT!

I) THE ENCOURAGEMENT: v8 CONTINUED FAITH IS THE BY-PRODUCT OF CORRECT FOCUS! The Bible teaches that faith is a gift from God, and it's admirable to ask God to increase your faith. But I have found in my own life that God doesn't increase my faith until I improve my focus. IN OTHER WORDS, God doesn't always just give you something because you have a momentary need and ask for it. Most of the time he waits and gives you what you need when you've been focusing on your relationship with Him.

ILLUS: My whole life growing up I played baseball. I remember the first instruction I ever received from a coach. WATCH THE BALL! As I got older, I realized there was much more to the game than that, but nothing was more important. I remember my High School coach, Coach Dickerson screaming at us WATCH THE BALL! WATCH THE BALL! The same thing I learned in little league, he's still screaming at me.

Paul is talking to a Philippian church that is under persecution. They have a lot of philosophical questions. They have a lot of personal issues. They have a lot of political pressures. And Paul is saying don't make this more complicated than it needs to be, just watch the ball. Or, if we can spiritualize it... KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS! Eyes on Jesus!

It's amazing how simple it really is when we look at the things that make us afraid and anxious, the things that brings us down, and defeats us. It's amazing how simple the solution is. I don't mean to talk to you like you're 7 and in little league, but EYES ON JESUS!

If Peter were here today he would tell you of a time he took his eyes off Jesus and he began to sink. IT'S REALLY SIMPLE PAUL SAYS. It's not that complicated! Just keep your eyes on Jesus. Whatever, whatever, whatever is godly and good think about it...make it a habit to think on those things.

APPLICATION: What is holding you back from being what God wants you to be? From accomplishing the dreams he's given you? From changing the parts about you that you don't like and He doesn't either? WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?

If I gave you time to talk, (and I'm not going to) and you shared with me what is holding you back, I guarantee you would give me a list of things; people, tragedies, financial situations, health issues, THINGS. But here's what I've learned, it's really not things that hold us back. I know that because someone who's come before you has already dealt with what you're dealing with, and they did it with courage, with faith, with victory. And they did it as overcomers. But you're doing it with fear, you're doing it in weakness, so it's not the thing that's holding you back, it's not the THING, it's how you THINK ABOUT THE THING, that holds you back.

Paul is saying, if you think about the right things, you can go through some hard stuff. BUT here's the problem, most of us never stop to think about, what we're thinking about! WE NEVER STOP TO THINK ABOUT, THE THINGS WE'RE THINKING ABOUT! And Paul says if you want to live a life that is characterized by faith, and courage, and steadfastness, and if you want your children to see in you something that makes them want to love God, and if you want to make some kind of difference in the world, if you want to stand firm, you've got to think about such things! WHAT THINGS? Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever turns your eyes toward Jesus! THINK ON THOSE THINGS! You have to think on good and godly things, then you have to HOLD THAT THOUGHT!

Paul is saying, there are all kinds of things to thank God for. There are all kinds of reasons to rejoice, all kinds of things to shout about, all kind of things to turn that frown upside down, but you have to think about what you're thinking about!

I) THE ENCOURAGEMENT: v 8 CONTINUED Paul said, I'm in prison, but I'm not hopeless, because I know how to MAKE THE BEST OF A BAD SITUATION! I'm thinking about Godly things! How about you?

II) THE EXAMPLE: v 9 “Whatever you have learned...” Refers to those things mentioned in v 8. “Learned” (Gr. Manthano / Man-than-o) refers to teaching, learning, instructing, and discipling. Paul is speaking here to his personal instruction and discipling of the Philippians. Paul knew, the Philippians knew, what to do, because he had shown them.

“Do” (Gr. Prasso) refers to repetition or continuous action. Practice as a habit.

Paul uses the *present imperative*, commanding believers to continually practice these things as their normal way of life.

Dwight Pentecost - “truth is communicated to a person through the channel of his mind, and truth is grasped by the mind. But unless that which is received by the mind is loved with the heart and translated into action by the will, the truth has not done its proper work. Truth is designed to possess the total person. Truth is not designed simply to teach the mind; truth is communicated so the heart might respond in love for the truth and the will might respond in obedience to the truth... Blessing does not come on the believer by saturating his mind with the truth; blessing comes on the believer as he translates into action the truth that his mind has received... maturity in the Christian life is not measured by what a man knows but by what he does. Let that be indelibly impressed upon your mind.”

“...and the God of peace will be with you.” In v 7 Paul said, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Now in v 9 we see an inversion of that, “...and the God of peace...” WOW, I'm glad he did that. It gives us insight. If you're a Christian, you don't just have the peace, that God gives, within you, you have the God that gives peace inside you, dwelling in you! Not just His resources, but the revelation of His very presence. I like that!

Paul knew this truth even from a prison cell!

CONCLUSION: Do you have the peace of God in your life? Do you have the God of peace living inside you? You can't have the peace of God without the God of peace.

READ vv 6-9 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think on these things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”