



A Thanksgiving List
Preparing Our Attitude for the Holidays
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, it's hard to believe that this Thursday is Thanksgiving, which I hope is not news to you. This weekend is the weekend before Thanksgiving and then you're going to try to clean up from all that, you're going to blink your eyes and it will be Christmas. It's hard to believe that it's already that time of year again and while it's a time of the year where, I'm sure all of us, have some good memories of, I trust most of you are realistic enough to know that it is a challenging time of year. It's one that comes with a unique set of stresses and pressures. There's always family issues and politics at the office and issues with money and just there's expectations and cultural things and even down to feeling bad about your decorations because your neighbors go crazy. Whatever.

There are lots of things that stress us out and can be problematic. And so my job, I think this weekend before Thanksgiving, because we're between these two series in Luke, we had this weekend for me to stand back and say, well, what might be good for us as Christians. So let me, as your pastor, say, let's work on our attitude this December. Let's try and make sure we get into Thanksgiving and Christmas with the right kind of attitude. Because it's easy for us, I've heard some very mature, Godly Christians just throw up their hands, just recently to me, and say, I'm just tired of this whole thing. Right? I mean they were really a bah humbug, you know, attitude. I felt bad for them but I thought, you know what, that's something I've felt before too.

I'm just tired of the commercialization, I'm tired of all the stuff and just can't wait to get to January and get it over with. Well, I don't think that's the right perspective. I think we can have the kind of perspective that really reflects a little bit of the genuineness of what God had in mind with all of what people print on their Christmas cards. We'd like to have some joy, we'd like to have peace, then we would like to really celebrate, starting with Thanksgiving, the good things that God has done and then ultimately culminating in this celebration of the incarnation. It would be good for us to go through that with those two things, I mean, peace and joy, that would be awesome.

So as I prayed for you and prayed about this weekend, I thought let's go to a passage that teaches us on that and, of course, I looked at several, but I got to a passage of Scripture that I hope is familiar to most of you, as God's people, in Philippians Chapter 4. And I thought, OK, here's a passage about joy and here's a passage about peace. And I thought, as I look through what I've done in the past with you as my beloved church, I thought, well, I've preached on this several times and I've kind of walked through some of these issues and I usually focus on the command there in this passage, in Philippians 4, to rejoice. And he says it again, I rejoice always, and I'll say it again, rejoice. I've also dealt with a lot of that as it relates to the prayer that's commanded, to replace your anxiety with prayer.

But I thought, you know, we don't often enough work on verse 8 in Philippians 4. It's all a package deal, I understand that, and we got to see the context of this, but if I could help you this Thanksgiving, Christmas season, the New Years, all that goes on, get you ready and really try to calibrate and adjust your attitude and say I've got a guarantee for you. If you would put into practice what's in this passage you could have a, as it's put in the passage, "a peace that surpasses all understanding." And you'd be able to have this God of peace draw near to you and you could have this joy that the Apostle Paul had as he wrote this letter from prison of all places, a very joyful book, sometimes even people write commentaries about Philippians and they call it this book of joy. Well it's coming from prison, it's called a Pauline prison epistle. It's amazing that we have so



much good instruction and help in our Christian life as it relates to joy and peace from a guy that's incarcerated unjustly in a Roman prison.

So, I thought let's focus on that eighth verse. If you put these into practice, I think you can come out of this with a kind of sustained joy and peace, the kind that God would be proud to have you representing in your little corner of the world and your extended family and your office parties and your shopping, whatever you do this holiday season, and to have this kind of be the rock that stabilizes your attitude all the way through this season and beyond.

So let's look at this passage. I'll familiarize you again, as I know you're familiar, but I'll get you, again, re-oriented to the text in Philippians Chapter 4. And then let's focus and spend the majority of our time building what I called "A Thanksgiving List" which is a bit of a one-sided description of what I hope to accomplish this morning. But let's take this seriously because I find a lot of Christians, they may put into practice the first part of this passage but they've neglected a lot of what goes on here in verse 8.

So follow along with me, let's start in verse 4, which is a frustrating, really, command for a lot of Christians because it seems to be a command where I'm told to direct my emotions and I have a hard time doing that, I don't know about you. People say, you know, feel this way, it's hard for me just to feel a certain way. Feelings are a reaction. Right? Feelings, they come out of circumstances or things that are happening in my own life or heart. But this passage just gets right to where he is headed in the text and that is, I want you to rejoice in the Lord always, even if you're in prison, even if you have the worst December ever, even it's the first time you're going through this holiday season with the loss of a loved one, or your financial situation and you're without a job, and even if your family is one you'd love to trade in for another one, you need to "Rejoice in the Lord always; again he says, I will say rejoice."

Then he speaks to something in the internality of your heart, the character, the thing that makes it clear that you're the kind of solid, stable rock, you know, solid personality, that character that it has this reasonableness, even if everything else is going crazy. Let it be known to everyone, let you be that kind of light and salt in your context where you have that attitude that everyone says, "Man, that's solid, that's stable, that's peaceful," as we'll see here in a minute.

"The Lord is at hand." He's a God who's near. He's a God who is ready to get involved. Well, you've got some things that certainly are not reasonable, not solid, not this sterling, rock solid character.

You've got a lot of anxiety perhaps and rightly so because there's a lot of things in December or this time of year or any time of year that produce this kind of anxiety. But it says, don't let that reign. And just like a lot of things in the Bible, it doesn't just tell you what not to do, it's going to tell you what to replace it with. In this passage, we're told to do what you've heard many sermons on and that is you need to replace that anxiety with prayer, "in everything by prayer and supplication," real heartfelt requests, it says, "with thanksgiving." Now, put that in brackets because we're about to see what that's all about. He's kind of throws it in in this sentence. "Let your requests be made known to God." So real heartfelt beseeching of God, that supplication, I want to give my request to God. It needs to be flavored with, and seasoned with this thing called thanksgiving, which is appropriate for this week. And, if you do that, look at this, "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, it'll guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." That sounds good, but there's one more thing and he adds it with this transitional word, "finally," there's one more thing you got to do. Finally, you've got to have this, this goes together. "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's the one imperative in this text, "think about these things."

Now you watch this in my life, he says in verse 9, "What you've learned and received and heard and seen in me," I'm doing all that, you "practice these things." And here it is again, "the God of peace will be with you." The Lord is near and that God of peace is going to step up and he's going to grant you that, like Jesus said, he says, "I'm going to give you peace but not as the world gives, I'm going to leave my peace with you." And in a world and in a time and in a generation where there are a lot of things to knock us off center and to get us to be that kind of frantic, frenetic, anxious person, certainly at times of stress and frustration, the Bible says, no, you have God right there, the God of peace.

That is our challenge. Of course prayer could certainly necessitate a series of sermons and instructions on how to go about that. But, at least today, I can say, I think you know enough about what it means to give yourself to prayer. But this often neglected list in verse 8 is where we can start today, focus on today, leave today with, what I hope, is a Thanksgiving list for you, that's more than thanksgiving, but, really, preceding that thanksgiving is a kind of a thinking list, because that's what this is all about.

Matter of fact, look at verse 8 again, even as it's printed on your worksheet, I tried to pile those phrases one on top of the other. If you look through this, and you can't see this as clearly in English as you see it in the original language of the New Testament, Koine Greek, but what you'll find here are six adjectives, six things that describe things. And then you have two nouns, which I think are helpful for us. We'll understand that in a minute, and then one verb, one imperative verb, one directive verb, a command.

So you got six adjectives describing things and then you've got these two nouns in the Greek language, one is the category of excellence, if you want to talk about what it is that we're to be thinking about, it's excellence, and then the other thing here in Greek, it's a noun, it's things that are worthy of praise. Something that should be the fuel for that thanksgiving talked about in verse 6. If I'm praying instead of being anxious, I'm going to ask God for things that I'm frustrated and angry and worried and anxious about, but the Bible says, you ought to flavor that with thanksgiving. Well, he's giving us a list of six descriptives that should certainly be worthy of praise. Praise is thanksgiving. Right? We praise God by giving him direct thanks for the things that he's done. So, with that in view, I got six adjectives, two nouns. If I'm going to simplify this verse I'd say, "Hey, excellent things, things that cause you to give thanks to God and worship God, think on those things," then the one imperative verb, think on those things.

Now, the thinking is the command. Growing out of that, in particular because this is Thanksgiving week, it ought to be the fuel for our thanksgiving. So you could leave here today, not only with the exhortation to think very carefully about certain things, but it can be the fuel for your thanksgiving in every week of your year. And you need to understand, those things can be categorized as excellent things, but instead of just giving you one word, he gives us kind of these categories, these six descriptives.

So I want to work through those. But before we work through those in the second half of your outline here, I want to start with how important it is for us to give some thought to our thinking. OK? So, if this is a command to think, that's not really our culture's strong suit, have you notice that? And it's not that we're stupid, it's just that we don't give much thought to our thoughts, directing our thoughts. This really is a command to say, "Here are the things you ought to be



thinking about. Think about these things." These are things obviously that fuel your thanksgiving, they're worthy of praise. There are things you could categorize with one word, they're excellent things, but these things, think about them. I love even the Greek word, "logizomai." We get the word "logic" from that. This is not just kind of letting them pass in and out of your mind, wafting in, wafting out, it's thinking on. Matter of fact, sometimes that Greek word logizomai starts with a Greek preposition which gives it the sense of "down upon" to think down on it, to think intensely, to give your mind to these things, to set your mind on. Some translations even add that preposition in Greek "to think on them." Think on those things. Logizomai.

We are called to be, to summarize, point number one, if you're taking notes and I wish that you would, jot this down. We need to be, here is what God would expect, "Be A Discriminating Thinker." The whole context is thinking about these kinds of things.

So, "thinking" I want to just talk about for a second in a generation where we don't give much thought to our thinking. Matter of fact, we are reactionary thinkers, not purposeful thinkers, primarily. I'm not saying you don't think purposely when you go about your job at work, you do that, I understand. But when you're free to think about whatever you want to think about, generally in our generation we're just reactive thinkers. Whatever's in front of us, we respond, we think. But what we think in terms of whatever our circumstances are or whatever the screen is saying in front of us, whatever the show is that we're watching, whatever the radio program is we're listening to, we just react in our thinking. This passage is a command, a command to think about certain things.

Let me illustrate it this way with an illustration that may seem a little too militaristic for you. But if I'm going to describe what's going on in this passage, is here's the Apostle Paul, directed by and speaking for, the Holy Spirit in your life, saying, "Here's a target. Acquire the target." Ok? We need to know what we're supposed to think about. Think on these things. What? These things that are excellent, the descriptives, these six adjectives. There's the target, paint the target, understand the target, acquire the target and then the word, "logizomai," get your logic, get your mind and point the barrel of your thoughts at that target. OK? Now I'm going to really getting on Orange County with you, and then pull the trigger, and keep pulling the trigger, pull it, pull it, pull it, pull it, pull it. Keep pulling the trigger. Now, if this was out in Kentucky or Georgia you'd love that illustration, but...

I know it seems kind of harsh and militarized. "I don't want to think about thinking that way." You ought to think of you're thinking that way, because I've just described a word, that we're commanded to do throughout the Scripture and all the Godly people did and it's a word you are going to have a hard time reconciling with the illustration I just painted but it is exactly what this means. Ready? Here's the word. I've just described for you, painting the target, aiming the barrel of your thoughts, pulling the trigger repeatedly, I just described to you, ready for the word? Meditation. Meditation. You're welcome. I mean you don't need to applaud or anything but I've just given you a great illustration of meditation.

Now I know what you think meditation is. Hummmmm... You think it's, like emptying your mind, because you let the eastern religions rip off this very important Biblical discipline and you don't think that meditation is what I've just told you meditation is. Meditation in the Bible is us acquiring a picture, and the Bible is always trying to define what that picture is, as to what you ought to think about. Purposefully not responding to your circumstances, putting your mind on that, aiming the barrel of your thoughts at that target and then just continually pulling the trigger and making my thoughts think on those things over and over and over.

And you know what that's called? A battle, it's a struggle. That's why I think a militaristic



illustration, which the Bible is full of them, athletic and militaristic, it's a struggle for me to keep thinking on those things. There's a battle for your thoughts, you know that right? A big battle for your thoughts.

Constantly, there is a battle for your thoughts and Satan works not only in the interior of your mind in the battle for your thoughts but he's also working in the environment in which we live, to try and keep our minds occupied with whatever it is going on in our circumstances and surroundings. And particularly when we get into situations that are different than are every workaday world schedule, in times like Thanksgiving and Christmas and travel and shopping and all the things that we do in dealing with extended families, you need to recognize that there are a lot of pains that are going to be given to me saying, "I've got to keep thinking about this. I got to keep my mind on this. I keep focusing my mind on this. I've got to keep pulling the trigger."

Meditation is a Hebrew word in the Old Testament, it comes from a, it's an illustrative word, that comes from the animals that made noise, and they called it like muttering, or lowing, but really it was the picture of the animal that, as we learn in sixth grade or whenever we studied the farm, not because we didn't grow up on one, is how those farm animals, some of them, they chew the cud. Right? Even Bible students learn that phrase from the Old Testament.

They chew the cud. They chew the cud, which they got all these compartments in their stomachs and all these different stomachs and they regurgitate, this is fun, I know, before lunch, regurgitate the food and they keep chomping on the food. It's like, "I thought you ate that two hours ago?" "Nope, still going. Chew, chew, chew, chew." Right? That embodies the word, it's an illustrative word, meditation, which is an exact picture of what we're talking about, because meditation doesn't give us the target. The Bible's context has to give you the target.

For instance in Psalm 1, it talks about the righteous person who isn't just listening to the sinner and the scoffer and all the rest of that but, no, his mind is really fixated, he meditates on the Law of the Lord, his delight is the Law of the Lord, and on his Law he meditates day and night, he keeps firing away at those things. He paints the target, he gets it, he acquires the target, he takes the barrel of his thoughts, he aims it at it, and he keeps on going. I going to think about that, I'm going to think about that, I'm going to think about that, I'm going to think about that some more.

If you don't give attention to your thoughts, if you don't exert effort in your thoughts, you'll be just like everyone else in the world. And the Bible says, don't be like that. Don't be like that. "Don't be conformed to the world," this sounds familiar now, Romans 12:2, "but be transformed by the renewal of your..." blog description? No. You know, channels, change the channel... No. "Renewal of your mind." Get your mind directed and focused and make volitional decisions about what you think about. In the Old Testament, as I've taught you, the Hebrew idiom for the center and seat of our intellect and our thinking was the heart. Today it's the seat of our emotions, I understand. You don't have the same connection. I've taught you this before but the "splanchnon" in Greek, the bowels in the Old Testament, were the center of your emotions, but it didn't look good on Valentine cards so we moved it to the heart. "I love you with all my bowels." That doesn't sound good.

So, "I love you with all my heart" became the thing of "I have these affectionate feelings for you, I feel the green fuzzies," so the center of our emotions in western thinking has become our heart, but in the Bible, the center of our thinking is the seat of our thinking, the cockpit of our thoughts, is our heart. "Leb" in Hebrew. Our heart, "kardia" in the New Testament.

New Testament starts to show us the transition, even doing a Hellenistic Roman type of Western



thought, at least the seeds of it, to be more specific. Even like the renewal of your mind, Paul talked to the Romans out West on that. The renewal of your mind. You could have said that in the Hebrew idiom, the renewal of your heart. That's why in the Old Testament when you see heart, be careful that you don't think emotions, which Westerners have a problem doing. They read the Old Testament through a Western lens and they don't recognize we're talking about the center and the seat and the operational headquarters of your thoughts. So when you read a verse like Proverbs Chapter 4 verse 23 that says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance," you could read that this way, keep your mind, protect your mind with all due vigilance. You should always be on the alert about what's going on in the theater of your mind and then it gives the reason, "For from it flow the springs of life."

That's a poetic way to put it in a poetic book in the Bible but it says everything, really, is going to flow from that. Everything comes from that. As Jesus said in the New Testament, "It's not the things that go in your mouth that defile you, it's the things that come out of your heart," using that Hebrew idiom as he spoke to the crowds, this Jewish crowd. It's the center of your thinking, it's your thoughts, and he says, just like murder and hatred and lust and adultery, they all come from the thoughts of a person. And so you better guard your thoughts.

Now this is not a message about garbage in, garbage out. Right? I mean, it's not junior high and not that that's a bad principle, it's a good one, but you need to understand that I understand there are lots of environmental things that have allowed you to have a lot of choices to choose from when it comes to your thoughts. But you need to choose what you're going to think about, when you're free to think about whatever you can think about, you're not working on a spreadsheet for your office, your thinking between your directed thoughts for your paycheck, and you're now engaging in whatever it is you're doing and you need to say, "I need to be very specific about directing my thoughts."

You need to be a discriminating thinker, a discerning thinker, because everything hangs on that. And the Bible is always trying to tell us that, even in the Old Testament we have that picture of "God will keep him in perfect peace," the prophet Isaiah directed, "whose mind is stayed on him." You have to keep your mind focused, and in this passage about the promise of peace and joy, really comes down to how you're doing in your thought life. Because you could have the worst December ever, as Lamentations Chapter 3 reminds us, it can be bad, like Jeremiah writing the lament, a dirge over the destruction of Jerusalem with Nebuchadnezzar, the bad guy winning, and the good guys seem to be losing. And after all of that, when he says, "The affliction of my soul," I'm just reading from Lamentations 3, "it's like wormwood, it's like gall, it's so bitter, my soul continually remembers and is bowed down within me. BUT this I will call to mind," I'm going to direct my thoughts. And he says, "Therefore I'm going to have hope." He's going to have some peace, he's going to have some joy. And he starts stating the things he's going to choose to think about. In this case, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning." If I really think about it, if I put my mind to work on this task, "they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' my soul will say it, 'therefore I hope in him.'"

Here's a guy in the worst circumstances and he has a peace that surpasses all understanding and the pivotal line in that poem there is, "But this I will call to mind." Work on your thoughts this holiday season, work on your thoughts all throughout the year.

Decide on what the target should be based on scriptural guidance as we'll get here today, right now. Aim your thoughts and keep pulling the trigger on that, like a cow that chews its food for hours and



hours and you will have the idea of what God wants you to do in terms of being a discriminating thinker.

Let's build the list. Number two. If you look at his passage and we work our way up, as we work our way up, we see excellence is the category, that's a good way to describe it. But the adjectives, the six adjectives, build a list for me. Now I called this message "A Thanksgiving List" because if you take these six adjectives, I guess you could go on a lot of different directions, because they seem pretty broad. They're all one word. But I'm going to give you A Thanksgiving List based on this list of adjectives and therefore I'm not saying this is the only list you could come up with out of this, but I'm going to try to give you some specificity, trying to narrow it down here a little bit, so each one will give you something to say, "There is a target that I can specifically think of." It's almost like the painted ring is here in the word, we've got six words, and Mike is going to help me get down to a little bit closer ring and paint more of a bull's eye for you. Not to mention that there can be other things that fall under these six categories.

But let's start and let's label this whole section here, number two on your outline, we need to think about, and of course because it's all worthy of praise, certainly this week, let's make sure that we always, not just this week, but always thank God for it. So "Think About And Thank God For...", six things, six categories, six bull's eyes. Acquire the target, identify it, we'll aim our minds at this.

We won't know how you do with this sermon until you have a chance to start filling in the details of those six targets and directing your thoughts and, hopefully, by the end of the week, you can say, "Man, I spent a lot of time and effort putting my thoughts on these kinds of things," and see if that doesn't change your attitude.

Number one, what's the first thing, Letter A. "Whatever is true." Whatever is true. You know, the Bible constantly speaks of truth. Truth and, unfortunately we're not real good at seeing, a truth that if we want the truth, the true truth, as Francis Schaffer said, a kind of truth that's not based on your opinion or my opinion, we've got to go to God's definition of reality and we've got to look at what he has to say. It's hard for me to look at the word truth and not have my mind rush to all of those passages where the Bible keeps telling me, "You want truth? Go here, here's the truth." When Jesus prayed that his people would be set apart in truth, Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in truth," and then he makes it very clear for all the generations that would read that prayer, "your word" as he speaks to the Father, "is truth" your Bible is truth. So let's jot this down to paint our first picture, Letter A. You want to think about true things, let's get specific, the heart of truth revealed to us and available to us is "God's Word." So jot that down, Letter A. I mean the word is truth. Now, let's think about that. You want your mind on truth, it's still a pretty big target here, our minds need to focus on God's Word. Think about this. When Satan came in Matthew 4 to Jesus and tried to get the barrel of his intentional thoughts directed toward things that were wrong, called the temptation in the wilderness, every time there was a direction here that Satan wanted Jesus to think about this or think that way, every time that happened Jesus snapped the direction of his thoughts back to where it needed to be by aiming at the truth and that truth was always defined for him but with what? Scripture. Every time. Right? He'd say, "It is written..." So you're asking me to think this, do this, pursue this, entertain this thought, I'm telling you, here's what the truth says. And he uses Scripture. This was the pattern of Christ, it was the teaching of Christ, and it is what the Bible continually reminds us is the truth. Now, if you define truth... Right? What is the truth? Not your opinion, not my opinion. If you got opinions about who my wife is, I hope, I, knowing her best and being closest to her, I would be able to say, "Here's what Carlynn is all about, my wife is all about. You can have an opinion about her but the one who knows her best should be able to have the most accurate opinion of her."



Well, God has sent his self-revelation, and so, Carlynn comes up and says, "No, here's what I'm all about." That declaration should silence everyone else's opinion. It needs to be reconciled and conformed to and in alliance with what is true, what is the reality. What does God think? What does God want? What does God think of you? What does God allow for you? What does God rejoice in for you? What does he hate about what you're doing? All of those things, those can't be defined by your gut visceral reactions. They have to be defined by God. Truth is whatever is in correspondence with reality. Truth is whatever is in correspondence with reality. Right? That's truth. And you say, "Well, I'm not sure that helps me a lot because I'm looking at situations in my life and they are anxiety producing circumstances."

For instance, here they were on the Sea of Galilee. There was a huge storm. The disciples are freaking out but there's one person in the boat who has a peace that surpasses all understanding. It's the kind of peace that's so peaceful that he can rest peacefully on a cushion asleep in the hull of the boat. And his name is Jesus and there he is, he's chilled out and relaxing. Everyone else is freaking out. And if I said to myself, as an onlooker, "What is the truth about this situation?" I think the disciples would have a case, would they not, "Here's the truth. We're in the middle of a bad storm. Here's the truth. I've seen storms like this wipe out boats, break them into pieces and I've learned of people drowning in storms like this. Here's the truth." Ok? Now is that true? It's true. All of those things are true and you can look at the truth of your circumstances, but here's the reality that Jesus had, he had the truth of the big picture. He had the truth of the whole picture. God, of course he is God in the flesh, had declared in the Word what his son, the Messiah, God incarnate, would do and accomplish and be. He knew, and Jesus, because he knew the truth and he was God, knew that this thing did not end, call the Incarnation, the first coming of Christ, with a drowning on the Sea of Galilee. He knew this was just a temporary inconvenience. This is not a problem. We're not going to die this way. God's got a plan for us and the plan for us isn't going to end here.

He knew that and, you know what, the disciples grew up reading those scrolls, they'd been to the synagogue, they should know the same. They should not be afraid for their lives. Well, they ought to be concerned about the boat, they should put their hand to the task, but they shouldn't be freaked out as Peter speaks up and says, "We're going to die out here." And that was not the truth. And they should have known that was not the truth. And yet they didn't affirm that truth because, like a lot of us, we can look at the tree trunk that's right in front of us and that's all we see, and you can say, "Mike, this is the truth. I have cancer. This is the truth. I lost my job. This is the truth. My wife left me," whatever that thing is and we can focus on that and that would be a true statement, those are true and it is anxiety producing and it's problematic and it causes stress and then add the holidays, yeah, that's a lot to worry about and be anxious about. But the real truth that should be the fuel for our praise and thanksgiving is the whole picture and Jesus had the truth about the whole picture and that whole picture was derived from God's Word. And the same goes for you.

Yeah I understand, when you look at your circumstances they may be anxiety producing circumstances, but the truth of God's Word is going to help get everything in perspective. And that's why the Word of God needs to be a part of every day of your life. That's why you cannot go through a season of your year, certainly not in a time like this when stressors are up, financial, and our time, and all the expectations and family politics. I cannot have the stressors of my life exclude my time in God's Word, because once the Word of God is squeezed out of my schedule, my mind has a lot less to work on when it comes to God's truth and I become a lot like the world, reacting to circumstances or, worse yet, chasing some kind of experience in my Norman Rockwell dream or whatever I might have and thinking that all my well-being, all my peace, all my joy, relies on the circumstances as to whether or not we have a placid lake today or whether there are waves. That's



not the way to think. You want peace and joy that transcends circumstances and all understanding, well then you're going to have to get the truth of God's Word in your mind. If your Bible's getting dusty between Sundays then we've got a real problem in terms of you having any hope to have peace and joy because those things are derivatives of you having your mind set on truth. You need the truth.

And by the way, since this is a list, not only about thinking, although that's the primary focus and foundation of everything, it's also a list for us to give praise to God, these are praiseworthy things, the truth that God has given us. And specifically, the inner circle of that, the inner ring, is the truth of God's Word, you need to know that you ought to be thanking God for this. And this is a good passage for you to jot down just by way of personal challenge. How about this? Psalm 119 verse 164 and the challenge isn't to write it down, although that's a long reference. Psalm 119 verse 164, the longest chapter in all the Bible. David, I believe, is the author of this. It's not explicitly stated, but in my study, that's my conclusion and David was called a man after God's own heart. Here's what a man after God's own heart thinks about the Bible. Now there are a million different synonyms for the Bible in this particular chapter, it's the longest chapter in the Bible and it's all about the Bible.

And in this passage, here's what he says, David, I believe, a man after God's own heart, if not, it's a psalmist inspired by God to give us something about a Godly priority and he says this in Psalm 119 verse 164, he says this, "Seven times a day I praise you, for your righteous rules." There is a synonym for the Word of God, the righteous rules of God. God has given his directives, he's given his rules, he's given his priorities and here he says, "Seven times a day, I thank you for this."

Now I just want to get in your mind and think about it. I'd also like you to leave thanking God for it. It would be a good thing for you to have at the top of your list, instead of saying what everyone else says, "I'm just thankful for good health and my house and my family" is what everyone else says, start with this: "I'm thankful that God has disclosed his truth to mankind and I have a copy of it in my own language and I got to read it this morning before I came to lunch." That would be a great thing for us to start with. And, you know what, if you did it once that would be great. You want to see how a man after God's own heart? He's doing it seven times. What does that look like?

If I'm going to do it seven times a day and spaced it out, I get to do it when I wake up in the morning, when I have breakfast, when I have lunch, when I have my snack in my afternoon, when I have dinner, when I have my snack at night, before I go to bed.

Think about a person who sits down and prays with you. Let's just say your husband or your wife. And when you wake up you pray together and she's praying for, "Thank you so much for your Word. I just want to praise you for your Word, for your righteous rules." And then at breakfast, same prayer. Then at lunch, same prayer. Then at 3:00 in the afternoon, same prayer. Then at 6:00, same prayer. Then at 8:30, same prayer. Then at night time before you go to sleep, same prayer.

If I had to put up on the screen, when was the last seven times, if I were to make an aggregate of how many times you said thanks to God for his Word, how long would I have to go back in history to add up seven times that you praised him for his truth?

I mean, for some of us, I don't know if we even had seven times we thanked God for his Word. But to say, "Oh, David could say, 'I guess 24 hours ago,'" seven times a day. It would be good for us to start. Man, I'm just... How about twice a day? Let's just start with that. Let's just start saying, "I'm going to thank God every day, let's say morning and evening, I'm going to thank God for his



righteous rules that God has given us the truth." In a world that's absolutely lost on a sea of opinion and conjecture, it's called relativism, they have no idea what the truth is. You got a copy of that truth on your phone, you've got a copy of that truth on your shelf, we got the Word of God. Think about it and thank God for it.

Number two, Letter B. "Whatever is honorable." Whatever is honorable. Now it says "whatever" because that's the syntax of this passage, that's the break down, the way it's organized. "Whatever..., Whatever..., Whatever..., Whatever..., Whatever... But you can put next to this, if you really want to study this word from a Biblical perspective, this word is never used of a whatever or a thing, it's always used of a person.

So as a matter of fact, you could make it broader than that but at least the Biblical usage, let's paint the bull's eye, for this week at least, let us paint the bull's eye, if I want to think about something, let's call it this, "Honorable People" because that's how it used in the Bible. Letter B. You need to think about, yes think about, and thank God for, yeah, I know you probably would have done that anyway, honorable people. Honorable people.

The Bible says there are people who are worthy of your esteem. There are people who are to be highly respected. There are people who you should love and admire and those are the people you ought to, believe it or not, you ought to think about them, because this word is only used in the New Testament for people, honorable people, dignified people. The Bible says that a person should not be leading in a church unless this word is a characteristic of him or her. Those leaders should be honorable people. And I'm saying, even if you didn't know where to start with this, I mean you could go, I hope, to your church leaders and say, "I've got a few people here I have been thinking about. They ought to be... My mind ought to be coming back to them. And I have to be thinking about them." And Paul says this all the time. As a matter of fact, let's work back through Philippians real quick. You've got the passage open? Let's go back to Chapter 3. Philippians 3, look at verse 17, Philippians 3:17. "Brothers, join in imitating me." Oh, he's so arrogant. No, Paul's a humble guy. He just knows this: what we all need is good role models. What we all need are people that you should look up to as dignified, noble, respectful, deserving esteem kind of people, who are a couple of laps ahead of us in the Christian life, people who we can look up to. And he says, you know what, "Keep your eyes on them.

This is not a call for you to become a stalker. Right? "Well, I'll be driving by Pastor PJ's house at night." No, I don't want you to be a stalker. OK? We want you to keep your eyes on them just like this next word is an analogy, "Who walk according to the example you have in us." This is not about their gait, this is not about left foot, right foot. This is about they're living a particular lifestyle and, as it says in Hebrews 13 that we read in our Daily Bible Reading yesterday, you ought to remember your leaders who spoke the Word of God to you. Imitate their faith, look at the outcome of their faith, think about them, think about them, think about them.

Now, could that be abused? Sure it could. You become some, you know, groupie of some spiritual leader or whatever. It doesn't have to be your spiritual leader, could be your parent, could be a Sunday school teacher, could be a counselor or could be your discipler. Nevertheless, I hope you've learned the healthy proper mindset of saying, "Yeah, I need to keep you in mind. When I live my life, when I think about my life, I need to keep you in view." Do you think Paul spent much time thinking about people even though it may have seemed, at least in the org chart, that they were beneath him and the org chart? He admired people and thought of them often. Let me give you an example. Keep moving back in the book, Philippians Chapter 2 verse 25. Philippians 2:25. He's sending an emissary, a messenger, his name was Epaphroditus. He was apparently from Philippi



and he's sending him back. Now Paul's under house arrest in Rome. He's sending him back and he says this, "I thought it necessary to send you Epaphroditus, my brother, my fellow worker, my fellow soldier, your messenger and minister to my needs." Now, that's quite a resume. I mean he's just trying to write this letter, I'm sure you're concerned about an economy of words, and he's spilling out all these words as to how he views his friend Epaphroditus. "He's a brother in Christ, he's a fellow worker, he's a soldier, he's a hard worker, he's a messenger, a minister. He's been longing for you all and he's been distressed because you heard that he was ill." I'm usually thinking, I want you to know I'm ill so you can care about me and pray for me. He's concerned. Why? Because he was ill, sick. You might be distressed and he was concerned about that. This is a guy Paul goes, "Man, that's an amazing character. He's longing for you all, he wants you to be calmed, he knows you got "stressed out because you heard that he was ill" and indeed Paul says, "Listen let me talk about his illness. He was ill, he was near death," but God had mercy on him. He's still alive, he's recovered. "Not only on him but on me also lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

I don't know if you look at these leaders in the Bible as rocks, they don't need anybody, they're independent, they're mavericks. It's not the case. Paul's here confessing with his transparent letter that, "You know what, I would have been just crying my eyes out had God taken this guy away from me." He admired him, he thought of him. Thought him enough to give him all kinds of labels in verse number 25.

Now he says, "I'm all the more eager to send him to you, therefore, that you may..." Here's the thing, if you think about leaders that are exemplary, you think about spiritual people who are ahead of you in the Christian life, you think about role models, dignified, highly esteemed people then, you know what, you'll rejoice when you spend time with them. Even sometimes when you call them to mind it will bring a smile to your face. The Bible says, "Rejoice at seeing him, and that I may be less anxious." I want you to be less distressed because he was ill and I was anxious that you were distressed, it's like, man, can you just spend some time with him? Give Epaphroditus a big hug. "So, receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men."

Who do you honor? In your mind, you need to call those people to mind. There are lots of scoundrels, crooks, reprobates, thieves, cheats, swindlers in the world, I understand that. And you can spend all your mental capacity and energy working on your thoughts and seething about all the bad people in the world. Or you can do what the Bible says, fix your thoughts on people who you should and rightly admire. Words that surround this in the Bible, Titus Chapter 2 verse 2. People who have this word that's translated here, honorable, there are also sober minded, they're self-controlled, they're sound in their faith, they're people who love, they're sound in love, they're steadfast, they're enduring, they are persevering. Those are the people you ought to be thinking about.

And if you still are so prideful you can't find someone who is alive and lives within 100 miles of where you're at, that you could think that way about, well then fine, go to your book list and read about great Christian biographies and at least learn to admire some people who you think about often and thank God for. I hope you've got people like that in your life.

Speaking of thanking God, even the Philippians, go back to Chapter 1 verse 3, Paul was thanking God for all the time. I hope this wasn't a hard stretch for you, it wasn't revelatory to say, you got to thank God for the people you admire, that you esteem this week on Thanksgiving week but, I hope you do it like the Apostle Paul, more than on a holiday week. Philippians 1:3, "I thank my God in all remembrance of you." Every time I think of you and I'm thinking of you often, I thank God "always in every prayer of mine for you making all my prayers with," what's the word, "joy."



And all you do is bring your request before God, all my problems, this, that. No wonder there's a negativity. You want the negativity to be replaced with joy and peace? God says get some of these people in your mind, in your heart and joyfully give God thanks for those people. Remember them. Think of them. Fix your mind on them. Fix your eyes of your mind on these people.

"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is... just." Here's the third thing, Letter C. Let's write it down this way though. Just before you write this down let me give you how this is translated. This is the most common word on the list. There are six adjectives. This is the one that's 79 times used in the New Testament. So there are 78 other references to this word. It's often used in the Bible because the Bible talks a lot about justice. It talks about the just thing being done. It's sometimes translated the "right thing" when the right thing is done. And when the right thing is done in a world that's filled with wrong things, that's the just thing that should happen. Does that make sense? Sometimes translated "right" or "righteous" sometimes translated "just." When the just thing or the right thing happens in a world full of wrong things, that's a just thing, that's the justice of God. When something that is inequitable, unjust, becomes just and equitable and right and fair, that's the good thing.

Let me call it this. Letter C. You need to think about and thank God for "When Right Wins" when right wins. When the right thing wins out, when something that should have or could have gone another way that would have been unjust, it would have been inequitable, it would have been unfair, it would have been wrong, it would have been terrible, and now it's been it's been righted. Praise God for that. And not only praise God for that, don't just download it from your mind, think about that, that's a victory. In Psalm 103, this great psalm of prayer, all of a sudden now we're talking about justice that was done by God all the way back to Moses. Think about that. Psalm 103, you've got this period of time, 600 years before this song was written, you've got him saying, "And look at the justice worked here. Look at what God did here that was just. Look, the good guys won here. Look, the bad guys got punished there." The just judgments of God. I hope you can see when you see the right winning out that in a world that's given over to the enemy, the god of this world is Satan the Bible says, and when good happens, it's God's hand of intervention.

Let me give you this verse which is helpful, Proverbs Chapter 15 verse 25. "The Lord tears down the house of the proud." Now a lot of times there are a lot of proud people with their house still standing, but when a house goes down on a proud person, we're sitting back going that's an evil person, an anti-God person, a person who hates what's right, they pervert the justice of other people and their house falls down. Well, God's executed some justice there. Here's the flipside, "But he maintains the widow's boundaries."

Now, a lot of times widows are taken advantage of, a lot of times the weak person, though he's good and innocent, he loses and he gets scammed in some way. But when the widow's boundaries are maintained, it's the Lord who does that. And all I'm saying is, if you look at a situation and say, "Yeah, right won out there. Matter of fact, I was thinking this could go the other way, I could be wrongly accused. This could go the other way, I might have lost that account for something I didn't do wrong. You know, this could have gone the other way, they could have thought poorly of me, but I did the right thing with the right motive." Whatever it is, when right wins out you should take note of it, you should remember it, just like the Bible says, maybe you ought to memorialize it, they use to stack up rocks when stuff like that would happen. And every time they pass by, they'd go, "remember that victory?" There was one in the Old Testament "Sela Hammahlekoth" God did the right thing right here, that was the Hebrew phrase for it and some of the translations still transliterate it that way. Look at what God did in providing justice when it looked like our back was



against the wall.

Have you had any victories like that lately? When something you thought could have gone the other way, went the right way. Think about that and thank God for it, obviously. One of the primary fuels for Old Testament thanksgiving and praise is God's deliverance, when the good guys win and the bad guys lose. You say, "My life is full of the bad guys winning and the good guys losing." Well, let me give you this first then, Isaiah 61:8.

When I look at this list, I tried to keep as many of these as possible right here and now, but I couldn't help but think, you know what, the ultimate thing my mind constantly gets back to when I think about God's justice winning out, I'm always thinking in the future. Isaiah 61:8. "For I the Lord," autobiographically, here's God now, "I love justice." I love justice. I love it when the bad guy gets his due and the good guy wins. I love that. He goes on to say, "I hate robbery and wrong," don't you? Do you hate robbery and wrong? Someone ripped you off, had your house broken into, been held up, had someone steal out of your car? I mean, I hope that makes you mad. We had someone rip us off last week here at the church. Breaking in the middle of night and we hate that. You know, we see it, we see it on video, it's unjust, want to catch that guy. Well, God loves justice, he hates robbery, he hates wrong. And then here's his promise, "I will faithfully give them their recompense." The problem is, right now, he's given a lot of room for repentance. Right now, justice is not here. Right now, there's a lot of crooked paths and messed up rough places, but he says one day I will make a crooked path straight and the rough places smooth and plain. It's coming.

So I know this: that everything that I may say, "Well, it's hard for me to rejoice in the right thing because that list is really short and a lot of wrong things are taking place in my life and a lot of injustice and inequity is taking place." Well, just hold on. "Thank God in advance." Isn't that a good phrase? Love the way praying as a family or my dad praying that, for great faith. "We thank you in advance for what you're going to do." That's a good way for you to start praising God, certainly when it comes to his justice. You got to thank God, think about, keep your mind focused on when right wins out.

Letter D, pure. "Whatever is pure, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever's pure. Your mind needs to be on things that are pure. What are we talking about? It's not a chemistry term, this is a term for someone's life. Matter of fact, this may help you, I don't know if you know these words, we talk about them sometimes, the Greek word for holiness, "hagios" holiness. That word holy, as a cognate, a first cousin word and that's the word here, "hagnos." Hagios, hagnos. These words overlap in their meaning. The core concept is "set apart in a moral or ethical sense." In this passage we are talking, not just about holy people, but the holiness or the purity that comes out of their life.

Matter of fact, there's a lot of discussion in the Scripture, not just about a perfect, holy standard that only Christ can meet, but the perfecting of the saints, the holiness of the saints, the purity of the saints. Lot of discussion about that. And you and I, as God's people, his saints, we need to say, "You know what, that's something to thank God for." I put it this way, just a flip the word to its core root meaning, let's put it down this way, Letter D, one word, we need to think about and thank God for "Holiness." And what I mean by that is the holiness in your life and the holiness in your Christian friend's life, the family member. If you're seeing what we generally call around here sanctification, which, by the way, is the Latin word, that's the root of it, "sanctus" for the word holy. Hagnos or hagios. Sanctification means I'm increasingly seeing my life becoming holy. You ought to thank God for that holiness, whether you see it in your friend, Epaphroditus, whether you see it in your spouse, whether you see it in your kids, whether you see it in your life, you ought to think



about that holiness, you ought to cherish that holiness and you ought to put your mind continually going at that and thanking God, it ought to be worthy of praise, those recollections of God's holiness. "No one's holy but God," I understand that. We're not talking in the absolute sense, we're talking in a relative sense in our sanctification. I can prove that to you by just quoting sometimes when this word is used in the New Testament.

It says that we can have wisdom, James 3 verse 17, that is pure, same word, hagnos. We can say things in a situation. You can give wisdom that is pure, you can receive wisdom that is pure, and when you do, man, think about that and thank God for it. It says you can have conduct, even in a hard situation, speaking to wives who have unreasonable husbands, First Peter Chapter 3 verse 3 says, those women can choose to have "pure conduct." And in that pure conduct, we can say, "Look at that. Think about that. Praise God for that. Set your mind on pure actions like that." Matter of fact, you can be so characterized by those pure activities that you can be called pure. There are three instances: Titus 2:5, Second Corinthians 11:2, First John 3:3. All of these describe the reality of us having a character that is pure. Absolute perfection? I'm not talking about that. Don't misunderstand that. Titus 2:5, Second Corinthians 11:2, First John 3:3. Same word in all those contexts.

"Well, no one's pure but God. I'm just going to hold to that." Listen, the passage in the Sermon on the Mount, do you remember when Jesus said we ought to be like our heavenly Father, who is good to those who wrong us and our enemies. That's the passage about loving our enemies. When I choose to be kind to someone who is my enemy, when I choose not to retaliate, not to return curse for curse, I'm now like God because the picture there is "God causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, he causes his rain to come on the crops of the evil and the good, the just in the unjust." And if you would be kind to your enemies, you would be doing God stuff, that's a God activity. You'll be just like your Father in heaven.

He ends that discussion with this phrase: "Therefore, be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Now some people say, "Well, I just think that's a theological bar, it's so high, none of us can reach it, we should just look at that and go, 'We just need Christ righteousness.'" That's NOT what the passage is about. The word "teleos" and I often tell you that word teleos, it's the word for "just right." It's the just right, pure activities, the pure response, it's the God response to the situation. And when you see that in your life or someone else's life, when they do the right thing, when they do the pure and holy thing, when they do the God-type thing, when they do the Godly thing, take note of that. Think about it. Let your mind chew on that, cogitate on that and thank God for that.

I can tell you some pure times you've had. How about this: when you've been hit with temptation, I know you know this verse, First Corinthians 10:13. "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man." Right? "God is faithful and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you're able, but with the temptation he's going to give you," do you know the verse, "a way of escape that you'll be able to endure it." Now, a lot of us grieve, and rightly so, how many temptations we've encountered and we have not taken the way of escape. Right? Frown at me if you've been that person. Of course, we all have. But, I bet you can smile because I bet there's a few times you've been in that temptation, even this week, and you were hit with that temptation, whether the flesh, the world, the devil, you've been tempted to do something wrong and instead you saw the way of escape and you took it and you came out of that situation and you didn't fall with that temptation. There's a teleos moment, there's a holy moment, there's a pure moment. When you see those in your life or someone else's life, praise God for that. Are you seeing sanctification progress in a family member, people around you, in your own life? In the last 12 months, how's your sanctification been? Think about those things. Those are victories. They're worth thinking about and thanking God for.



Letter E. Here's a weird word on the list. "Lovely." Oh man, we've gone soft here now. What is that about? Lovely. Well, I don't know, that's a hard one because this is the only time this word is used in the New Testament. It's what we call a "hapax legomenon." It's the only time we see this word in the New Testament. You have to look outside of the New Testament to find it, and you'll find it in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, predating Christ. Alexander the Great wanted to create this great Greek library, he takes the most important book in the world, the Bible, and he has that translated by 70 scholars, he puts it in the library of Alexandria and it has become a very important early representation of the Bible. It's in the wrong language because it wasn't written in Hebrew, like the Bible was, it's written in Greek, but in the Greek translation in the Old Testament we find this word and where we find it is an interesting place. Probably why everyone translates it lovely. It was when King Ahasuerus, the Persian king, kicks his wife, the queen, out of the palace and then he says, "I need a new queen." Now, he's a jerk, right, because he's getting drunk, it was a bad story, but there's a heroine, there's a hero in the story and she's going to save the Jews and her name is Esther. And you remember how Esther became the queen? Not in a very virtuous way. It wasn't like they had interviews, it was at a beauty contest and she got all made up and fixed up and dressed up and they brought her in and all these women were parading before the king, and the Bible says, when King Ahasuerus, aka Xerxes, King Xerxes, the Persian king, saw her, here's the description, "She was lovely."

What? So, Godly people are supposed to think about lovely things? Well, it can't just be, I mean, it can't be that! I mean, let's at least put this into the kind of Godly sphere of "lovely doctrines" or lovely..., you know. You know what, the Bible uses this concept about things that I think we can say are, I put it this way, beautiful realities.

Letter E. "Beautiful Realities." Beautiful realities are worth us thinking about, in the pure sense, beautiful realities are worth us cogitating on, beautiful realities are worth us thanking God for, even down to... Let's look at it. I mean, obviously, this king, picking his wife, certainly used of Solomon and his bride in the Song of Solomon. He sees her and calls her beautiful or lovely in the passage. And here's a man rightly enamored with the beauty of his wife. Nothing wrong with that. That's Godly. It's a Godly thing. Even a mom, when Moses' mother looked at Moses, it says he was a beautiful child, a lovely child. I mean that's worth admiring. That's worth thinking about. That's worth thanking God for. That's got to be more than skin deep, well it is.

One of the Greek terms that we find in the apocrypha, in the Greek version of the apocrypha, in Sirach, which is a proverbial book, is that people with their words, the wise with their words, make themselves to people attractive. We're not talking about skin deep beauty. But when someone does a beautiful thing, says a beautiful thing, it's a beautiful reality, just the right words, as it says in the proverbs, these well-spoken, apt spoken words are like apples of gold and settings of silver. It's beautiful. Nature. Creation.

The Bible says it in Psalm 19, that "The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies they pour forth this speech that puts on display," here how we translated it, "his handiwork." I don't know if you used that word this week, handiwork, you probably haven't. You know what that is? You want to translate that more modern? It's art. Look at his art. Art is put up on a wall because it is beautiful, it's lovely. To walk the beach, to enjoy a sunset, to look in the eyes of your baby, for a husband to admire the beauty of his wife. Even for them in the Old Testament, it spoke of them admiring the loveliness of the columns on the temple when they would go to worship. Of course it would represent the majesty of God, but the psalmist would speak of the loveliness or the beauty of the temple columns. Or even the people who thought about the city of God, Zion. They personified and



perfected in their minds the city of Jerusalem. They would walk through Jerusalem and they would say, "How beautiful, how lovely is the elevation of Jerusalem, the city of our great king." Even someone looking at a city, with them hauling trash down the streets and people building stuff with the chisels and the stone masonry going on, even in that, beauty, standing back and saying, "God's at work here in this." I think it's good for us to think of beautiful realities.

Psalms 94:19 says, "When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul." The consolations of God often are the beautiful realities in this world because the Bible says, that even in a fallen world, there are pictures of the beauty and glory of God. "The whole earth," Isaiah 6, "is full of his glory!" Now not every last thing, obviously, there are a lot of disgusting, vulgar, ugly things in this world but his beauty is reflected here and it's not bad for you to keep your mind on those things and to thank God for them in the purest, obviously, the purest sense of that fixation.

"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely," one more. Letter F. Keep your mind on this, let's paint the target here, "whatever is commendable." Another word you might not use every day, commendable. Another word that's unique and you got to do a lot of word study on this to get down to the component parts of it. I guess it's not that hard, but it's not used elsewhere in the New Testament so you can't find contextual definitions of this word, but it's a two-part word and the first part, familiar to us, the word "eu" which is "good" and the second part of it is like "report" like a favorable report is the way a lot of linguists finally get down to it. When you get a favorable report, that's worth us thinking about, cogitating on, putting that in our sights, celebrating that, re-celebrating it and saying, thanks to God for the good report. You may have had some health scare and you go into the doctor, you take all your tests, he gives you a clean bill of health, a good diagnosis, sends you out with a great prognosis, that's a good report, a favorable report. Your kid may come home with a report card. If it's good, it's a favorable report. You may go to your tax accountant there and, it doesn't happen very often, but maybe he'll give you a good report one year and that would be something to rejoice in, occasionally I've had that. A good report. Maybe your boss gives you some review. Good report.

Now those are all worth celebrating. But if I'm going to think about the best report of all, the favorable report, there is a favorable report on your life, if you're a Christian. Matter of fact, we just turned the words from "favorable" to "good" and we take the word "report" into "news" the Bible says, there is "good news" for you, the best news of all is that you and I, though we deserve bad health, though we deserve bad grades, though we deserve to be bankrupt, I mean, spiritually and morally we deserve the worst.

The good news is God takes all of that, pins it to his own son, satisfies his justice, takes all of his righteous merit, attributes that to you, and he says, here's the good news: "though you're sinners, I'll treat you as righteous, though you deserve hell, I'm going to give you heaven, though you deserve to be excluded as an alien and as a hostile person against my kingdom, I'm going to make you a friend to the kingdom, a citizen, a child of the king." That's the good, good news. Now I know there's a lot of good news you could set your mind on and be thankful for, but Letter F, you need to celebrate the "Good News." The good news, ultimately this week, I'd like you to focus on, is the fact that if everything else in your life has gone wrong, you can sit here today with your trust in Christ. You've got the good news of the Gospel.

Because the Bible said there is an act of focusing our memory on something, thinking and training the barrel of our thoughts and firing at a target that he wants the church of Christ corporately to do over and over and over again until we see him again, I want to close with that. He said, "Do this in remembrance of me." The payment for our sin on a cross.



I'm going to ask the ushers to come down, we're going to pass out the elements of communion. If you've never taken this with us, this is only for Christians. If you know you have a real relationship with God, you take these elements, you hang onto those, spend some time privately talking to God, and I want you to focus on the good news of the Gospel and say, "This is what I'm most thankful for, the good news." Think about that and thank God for it privately as you speak to God and if there are any sins standing between you and God, this would be a good time for us to confess our sins. To say to God privately, just silently between you and God, God I admit this is a problem and I'm here today to claim the good news of the Gospel, I'm going to repent of these sins, put my trust in you, I'm going to move forward. So these elements are going to pass as I'm speaking and grab those, I'm going to give you some time to silently deal with God and talk with God and, in about three or four minutes, I'm going to step back up and we'll take these at the same time together as we connect, I hope, our hearts with the most important things our hearts and minds ought to be set on and I know it will change our attitude. I hope it changes your attitude, not just for the moment, the sacred moment of worshipping during the Lord's Supper, but I hope it changes your attitude for weeks and months to come. You talk to God. I'll be back up, we'll take these in a moment.

For the outsider the ordinances of Christ may seem odd. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They're simple, they're ancient. But they're not to be understood as mystical. And unfortunately a lot of times people will take the two things that Christ told us to repeat as behavioral or practiced events, ordinance, something he's ordained for us to continue to do like the Lord's Supper and, unfortunately, build up an unbiblical definition of it all. So, I think it behooves me as a teacher of the Bible to be clear with you that what's happening here is an act of remembering, with a tactile assistant, drinking and eating these elements that represents, they don't turn into, there's no magic trick that happens here, it's us drinking and eating these elements, just like they would eat the lamb that they roasted after putting the blood on the doorposts during the Passover. It was this sense of identification with the victim that paid the penalty so that they could be free from the penalty they deserved. And so we ingest these things not as magical food, they don't nourish us spiritually in the sense that there's something happening to these elements or something intrinsic in them, other than the fact that our minds are engaged in the act of worship in remembering Jesus, as he said, "Eat this in remembrance of me, drink this in remembrance of me, take this in remembrance of me." That picture of us focusing our thoughts is what this is all about.

Yes, Jesus did talk about the cup that was the blood of his Covenant. Those were images, just like he said he was the gate or the door, just like he said he was a shepherd. He's not a shepherd and were not sheep. These are analogies. And so it is with these elements.

After saying that, "This is the blood of my covenant," he said, "I won't drink this fruit of the vine again until I drink it with you new in the kingdom." So we know he not saying it magically turns into anything.

With that said, it's not to take away from its importance. The Bible says, that if we eat and drink this without examining ourselves, we'll eat and drink judgment to ourselves. Again, like that fruit of the tree, they reached out and grabbed, there's nothing magical in that fruit, it was the act of not being obedient to God and staying away from that fruit in the garden. And so it is for us, if we don't see this as to what it's supposed to represent, if we don't recognize that we need to be right with God, contrite about our sin and grateful for his payment, then we got a real problem. If we're just going through the motions of communion. The church called this the Eucharisto, the Cup of Thanksgiving. And so it is that I hope on the weekend before Thanksgiving after talking about a list of things that build a thanksgiving list for us, there's nothing better for us to do than to remember



that the cup that represents his death, his blood, as a reminder of how thankful we should be that you and I stand as Christians with no condemnation for us, Romans 8 says, and instead, Romans 5 says, we're going to receive his commendation. We talk about a good report. You talk about good news. People who deserve to be punished will be free and not only free we'll be lavished with God's grace for him to commend us as his children. So if you understand the Gospel and I trust that you do, I'd ask you to eat this bread and drink this cup with great thanksgiving today.

God, we do thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ who came to live among us in a human life that would represent each of us, every temptation, taking every way of escape, every single time, that that righteous act in humanity would be attributed to us, which was only possible and only valuable, immensely the way it was, because he was deity. So we thank you for the second person of the Godhead living among us and sacrificing his life on our behalf, so that we might be counted as righteous, that you might impute to us and attribute to us the righteousness we did not have, so we might be able to say, we are guaranteed an inheritance in the kingdom, that we have your favor and your love set upon us, so undeserving of it but grateful for it. Let that fuel our thanksgiving this week, even though we want to think very carefully about all the other categories, that we recognize how good you are to us and giving us your truth, that you're a God that has given us honorable people to surround us with who we can be grateful for, that we know that you've done and worked justice in our midst and in our past, that you're a great God who gives us holiness and purity and sanctification in our lives, that you move us along and move those around us along and in the path of becoming and conforming to the image of the Christ, we want to think of that and be thankful for it. And the beauty that you surround us with, even though the world is filled with a lot of scarred and marred things, thank you for the beauty that we still get to enjoy in many aspects of our lives. And ultimately God thank you for the good reports that we receive, so many of them so undeserved and this one that we celebrate now, the most undeserved good news of all, that Jesus died for our sins so that we can be right with you. Thank you for that God. I pray that we would have a wonderful Thanksgiving, a genuine and sincere gratitude toward you this week.

In Jesus name, Amen.