

Life's a Battle:  
The Battle for our Mind  
Philippians 4:8

Introduction

If you have a Bible, I invite you to turn to Philippians 4. That's where we'll spend most our time this morning. We've been working our way through Philippians 4 and discovering that most of what we chalk up to everyday life stuff is really a spiritual battle for the quality of our life. Jesus spoke of this battle in John 10:10: ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **John 10:10** The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

And we've said, while Satan cannot have your soul, he stills seeks to destroy the quality of life that Jesus has for those who believe in him. So, if you believe in Jesus for eternal life, there is a battle for the quality of your life. And this battle occurs on many fronts. And so far, we have looked at the battle for our relationships and the battle for our heart.

Today we find ourselves at verse 8. Let's read it. ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **Philippians 4:8** And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

Paul tells us to *fix our thoughts* and *think about things*. This command comes from an emphatic Greek word that means to calculate or evaluate. It has the idea of considering or dwelling on something. So Paul is saying something like,

“Calculate and dwell on these things. Consider, evaluate and think about what is true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and admirable.”

And so, we find in this verse a battle for our mind. Generally speaking, if life is a spiritual battle, then our mind is the greatest battlefield. Why? Because of the power of our mind is amazing. How powerful is the mind of an addicted person willing to sacrifice everything they have for a fix? That doesn't make sense to those not addicted. It's the power of our minds. How powerful is the mind of a disciplined soldier or first responder willing to sacrifice their own safety for people they don't know? It is the power of our mind. We can think of lots of areas where the power of our mind is evident. And I think the Bible tells us why our mind is so powerful.

Most of us have heard this verse. It's known as the “Great Commandment.” It's in the OT and the NT. It is the foundation of the Christian faith. ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **Matthew 22:37** Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind."

Why is the mind so powerful? So we can love God in an incredible way. And the same powerful mind that Satan wants to use to destroy us is the same powerful mind God wants us to use to love Him. And that's why the mind is such a significant battleground?

Paul says in another part of the Bible, ►

<sup>NLT</sup> **Romans 12:2** Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

It is our mind that processes information, temptations, emotions, knowledge and actions or behavior. And what our mind determines about these things affects who and how we love and behave and feel. Our mind is the place our faith is developed and nurtured and implemented. And if the enemy can't have our soul, he'll take our mind. Because if he can foul up our thinking, he can foul up our acting. If he can distort our thinking, he can distort our faith. The battle for our mind is a *spiritual* battle.

And this battle is complicated; mostly because we don't completely understand how our minds work. Why do we think the way we do? Why do we act the way we act? Why do we feel the way we feel? What impact does genetics play? Well, this morning, we're going to look at the things Paul says to think about in this battle for our mind. To be sure, this is not an exhaustive study of our mind. This is not a complete strategy. But Paul does point to six virtues, if you will, that he wants us to evaluate and think about. And each of these virtues is designed to thwart an attack on our mind. So, let's take a look at what he says.

1. Think about what is ► true. One of the battles some of us will fight is the battle of lies. Lies about who we are, what God thinks of us, what others think of us. Lies about our sin. And when Satan has the upper hand in this battle, we feel guilty and ashamed. We doubt God's love or protection. We feel distant and alone. We can be unmotivated. It causes us to worry or be depressed.

Casting Crowns is a Christian worship band and they have a song titled, "Voice of Truth." Listen to the lyrics.

Oh, what I would do to have  
the kind of faith it takes  
To climb out of this boat I'm in  
Onto the crashing waves  
To step out of my comfort zone  
Into the realm of the unknown  
Where Jesus is,  
And he's holding out his hand

But the waves are calling out my name  
and they laugh at me  
Reminding me of all the times  
I've tried before and failed  
The waves they keep on telling me  
time and time again

"Boy, you'll never win,  
You you'll never win

But the Voice of truth tells me a different story  
the Voice of truth says "do not be afraid!"  
and the Voice of truth says "this is for My glory"  
Out of all the voices calling out to me  
I will choose to listen and believe the Voice of truth

And that's exactly what Paul is saying here. Listen to the Voice of Truth. Think about the things that are true about you. Things like, I'm forgiven, redeemed, God doesn't love me less; my sin is already paid for; God really is in control; God wins this battle in the end. When you start to think, evaluate- is this true or not- and think about what is true. There is a battle for your mind, and the way to win that battle is to replace those lies with the truth.

I talked last week about how much I worry. Worry and anxiety is a lie. It's a battle for my mind and emotions. The truth is, God can be trusted with what I am worrying about. It isn't that I stop thinking about what worries me. The truth in that situation is that God can be trusted with it. The lies in our head are just a spiritual battle for our mind. Think about what is true.

2. Think about what is ► honorable. Honorable here means high moral character. Paul is saying we should evaluate and think about things that generate high moral character. Another battle we sometimes face is the battle for our integrity. Every day probably, we can be tempted to lie or steal or cheat or deceive or in some way take the low road. That's really a battle for your mind. Because you won't actually do those things until you give yourself permission to do them. That battle for permission takes place in the mind. And Paul says, think about things that are honorable. Think about being honorable. Think about, dwell on, high moral character. Doing the honorable thing in your relationships. Doing the honorable things at work and home or on the ball field or at school. Don't allow yourself to go down the road of dishonesty and dishonor. When your mind starts to go there, recognize it as a spiritual battle for your mind and think about being honorable.
3. Think about what is ► right. This has to do with being just- making sure we are fulfilling our obligations and treating people right. And thinking right about people is also a battleground for your mind. We tell ourselves it doesn't really matter what I think of a person as long as I treat them ok. But that is a lie. It is a lie in the battle for your mind. Paul tells us to think right about people, not just treat them right. And this battle raises its ugly head disguised as lots of things. Selfishness- putting ourself above others; our needs above their needs. Revenge- I will make them pay for what they did. Unforgiveness- they do not deserve it. Prejudice- my kind is better than that kind. Paul's not talking here about how we treat people. He's talking about how we think about people. It's a battle for your mind. And when Satan has you thinking you are somehow better than someone else, he's won that battle for your mind. Think rightly and justly about people.
4. Think about what is ► pure. These things are moral in nature. And most moral sins start in the mind. There is a battle for your mind on a moral front. For guys, our primary moral battle comes from what we see. For women, it comes from what they hear and feel. And through these pathways to our mind, a battle rages for our morality. And here again, this is about what we think about, not what we do. We all

have a line of morality that we know not to cross. But most of the time, that line is drawn on behavior. But long before behavior, we can lose the battle for our mind. Paul says to think about what is pure. We are inundated by our culture with impurity. From TV, magazines, radio, the internet, to the way people dress or flirt. We are bombarded with immoral messages. And the moment we find ourselves dwelling in immorality, we need to remember this is a spiritual battle, not just life. And think about things that are pure.

5. Think about things that are ►lovely; that is amiable or attractive. I think this battle comes in the form of negativity. In every situation or thought, we have the opportunity to see the good or the bad. We can see the positive or the negative. But for some of us, we quickly see the negative. This is a particularly difficult battle for me. I am by nature a pessimist. I know it and freely admit it. But we don't get to ignore these things Paul is taking about because of our personality. It just means the battle is more difficult in certain areas. We can't say, "That's just the way I am." It is a battle for your mind. But Paul says to think about the lovely. I don't really like the word lovely because it sounds so feminine. The idea is to think about things that are pleasing or make you feel good (and fulfill the other things mentioned.) This word doesn't really have anything to do with morality. I think lovely may be different for each of us. The idea is to think about what is pleasing for you instead of negativity, or bitterness or hostility. That's when we lose that particular battle for our mind. When we stop thinking about the pleasing and start focusing on the negative, we give ground in the battle for our mind. Evaluate what you are thinking about and think about something pleasing.

6. Think about what's ►admirable. This has the idea of being winsome. It's thinking about what is likely to win people, instead of being needlessly offensive. And I think the attack comes here in the form of apathy. You know, sometimes in the church we get a little arrogant about what other people think. "I don't care what they think. I am taking a stand or whatever." And it's just not helpful. As a church, we have an initiative we're calling Conspicuous Compassion. It was born out of our desire to be admired in our community. We want to have a good reputation. But it is easy to become apathetic. To focus and think about everything inside the church or inside our own life. And when we get apathetic, when we stop striving to have a good reputation or be admired, then our thinking turns inward. Thinking about being admired or having a good reputation continually places our thinking outside ourselves. In the battle for our mind, think about being admired by your surroundings. ►

#### CONCLUSION:

So, there are the six things Paul tells us to think about. Notice how he ends the verse.

<sup>NLT</sup> **Philippians 4:8 Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.**

Paul is basically recapping his list like this. "Evaluate and think about things that are morally good and appealing to others." That's what he means by excellent and worthy of praise.

►So, how do we focus on these things when our mind runs crazy with impure thoughts, are arrogance or apathy or any of the other attacks?

1. Remember this is a spiritual battle.
2. Look for a source. On the battlefield, when someone shoots at you, you try to find out where they are shooting from. And the battle for our mind is much the same. Is it something you are seeing, hearing, remembering, is it coming from my past? Where is this thought coming from?

3. Change your circumstances (go do something, take a walk, grab something to read, change the channel, get up from the computer, play a video game on your phone, call your spouse or a friend. Read a section of the Bible we have marked off for this instance. But to ignore or not change it is to lose.

4. If it seems uncontrollable, get some help from your doctor or a pastor or a counselor. I say this all the time because it is always true. Don't lose the battle for your mind in these areas because you're embarrassed to be a sinner. You really aren't any better than the rest of us who've had to help for something.

It is difficult to cover all the components of the battle for our mind in 30 minutes.

But there is a battle for our mind. And it's waged all around us. And it's impossible to isolate ourselves from this battle. We can grumble against society or our neighbors or our friends and about the condition of our culture.

But Paul doesn't tell us to fight against those things. He doesn't tell us to make our society honest and honorable and right and pure and lovely and admirable. He tells us to think about those things in a society that is not those things. It's what makes us different. The battle isn't in what we see or hear; the battle's fought in what we think about and dwell on.

Paul tells us how to win these battles. Think about good stuff. That's what all six of these things are. They are all good things aimed a different attack. Weather the attacks comes from what we see or what we hear or how we feel or what has happened to us in the past or the fear of what might happen to us in the future. We can't not see the bad stuff, but we can not focus on it. Don't meditate on it. When you catch yourself, start thinking these things.

PRAY