

Think and Practice These Things Philippians 4:8-9

What are the things Paul wants us to think about? (8)

One possibility is that he wants us to think about things that are true or excellent *in general*.

Another possibility is that he wants us to think about things that are true are excellent *in our culture*, as a way to connect with our culture evangelistically.

- The words Paul uses are not commonly used by him, and are commonly used in the culture of that day.
- The phrase "if there is any" might make more sense if Paul is saying "if there is any excellence in the surrounding culture" then recognize it and use it to advance the gospel.

But there are problems with the above possibility —

- If that's what Paul wanted to say, he could have said it much more plainly.
- Most of the words Paul uses in verse 8 are words he uses elsewhere in his letters.
- The phrase "if there is" is also used in 2:1 to mean "because there is."

But then I thought of a 3rd possibility: that Paul wants us to think about what is true and excellent *in his own life and words and teaching*.

- Verse 9 sounds a lot like verse 8, which made me wonder if verse 8 was also talking about Paul's own life and words and teaching.
- The word "finally" at the beginning of verse 8 makes it sound like this verse is a conclusion to Paul's entire book, which fits a focus on Paul's life and words and teaching.
- The words "these things" at the end of verses 8 and 9 could show that both verses are talking about Paul's life and words and teaching.

My tentative conclusion is to go with the 3rd possibility; but I'm not certain. But I am certain about the meaning of verse 9, so let's focus on that —

What should motivate us to practice these things? (9)

Paul promises that the God of peace will be with us when we practice these things.

What things have we learned and heard and seen in Paul?

1:13 – be bold to share the gospel, even if you are surrounded by soldiers who could kill you.

1:18 – let Christ's worth overcome any divisions there might be between you and other believers.

1:21 – live for the joy of knowing Christ, and fight to see the worth of Christ so clearly that you see death as gain, because it will bring you to him.

1:27 – work together to advance the gospel and bring people to faith.



1:28 – fight to see what a treasure you have in Christ so you will not fear whatever persecution people can bring you.

2:1 – pursue humble and loving unity with your brothers and sisters, by seeing all the encouragement and love you have in Christ.

2:14-16 – don't grumble or question, but hold fast to the word of life.

2:19-30 -- be like Timothy and Epathroditus, who were genuinely concerned for the welfare of others.

3:1 – rejoice in the Lord by praying over the truth of Jesus Christ until the Spirit fills your heart.

3:8 – be like Paul who counted everything else as loss because he saw and felt the reality of Christ as his all-satisfying treasure.

4:6-7 – do not be anxious about anything, by praying, thanking God for all you have in Christ, and pouring out your requests before him.

HOME GROUP DISCUSSION OF SUNDAY'S TEACHING

(Sometimes in our home groups we talk about Sunday's teaching, so we can work together on responding to God's Word — asking questions, sharing insights, talking together.)

Share about times when, as you have obeyed, you have experienced the God of peace making his presence real to you.

Why do you think Paul uses this promise to motivate us? Does this promise motivate you? How often do you use this promise to motivate your obedience?

Which of the above 12 commands from Philippians is the Holy Spirit impressing upon your heart that you need to obey? Share it with your home group, and pray for each other.

