LSB Philippians 4:1 - 9 Pt. 4

1 Therefore my brothers, loved and longed for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to think the same way in the Lord. 3 Indeed, I ask you also, genuine companion, help these women who have contended together alongside of me in the gospel, with also Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your considerate spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is dignified, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, consider these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

By God's design, we learn by copying. We love to watch little bitty guys playing with toys that are tiny versions of what they see their dad doing. The same with girls. I remember being amazed when my first baby girl was strutting around with a purse at two and thinking to myself, where did that come from. It's almost like it was born in. But no, she was copying something she saw.

Little ones copy what they witness their parents doing. And then when they become physically big enough they love to try to emulate what their parents are doing with full size. I love the little video clips of 10 year olds out in the fields driving a tractor.

As soon as physical limitations allow we dive into the work along side of our parents. Especially in an agrarian society, which we have largely lost,

children working alongside their parents was the reality that, over time, produced adults who are confident that they are useful members of a broader society.

This morning as I was bringing the computer up, there was one of those pocket articles and the title was about loneliness in the workplace. Our modern world of cubicles and computers and work at home, work alone.

I've been lucky. My work life has almost always involved comradery of a group effort. Even as a kid working in a gas station there was the constant banter of older peers. Right from the start there is the social acceptance and value of others who are helped by your work along side them, as they teach you their trade.

Being part of a group effort gives you confidence and value. God made us that way. We are visual learners. We learn by watching. The first time I drove a car, no one had to explain to me that turning the steering wheel steered the car where I desired it to go. I already knew about brakes and gas and headlights and blinkers. I'd watched my mom and dad for years.

Nobody had to teach me how to pass slow drivers. My grandma taught me that all my life. She always had a big V8 that could pass slow drivers like they were standing still. Unfortunately, my kids all learned it from me.

We are visual learners. We learn while we're doing. I was tickled last week listening to Nathan Busenitz speaking the first sunday evening after John's passing.

He shared that when he was quite young, MacArthur asked him to come along with him to the TV station where he was going to comment on a topic they were doing a news spot about. Their question topic was; Is Yoga OK for christians. Sort of a nothing burger question. But MacArthur accepted the invitiation and Nathan tagged along.

At the TV station John got out a blank piece of paper and asked Nathan

what the answer should be. And Nathan said, I don't know what the question will actually be. And John just smiled, and said, it doesn't matter what the question is, and started writing bullet points that would present a clear gospel of sin and rescue by Jesus alone.

And that's how we learn. An older guy who always gets the needed job done, and a younger guy who got to watch how that happened, and is now doing the same thing. We are what we see. We are what we hear. We are what we think. *As a man thinketh in his heart; so is he*. Prov. 23:7

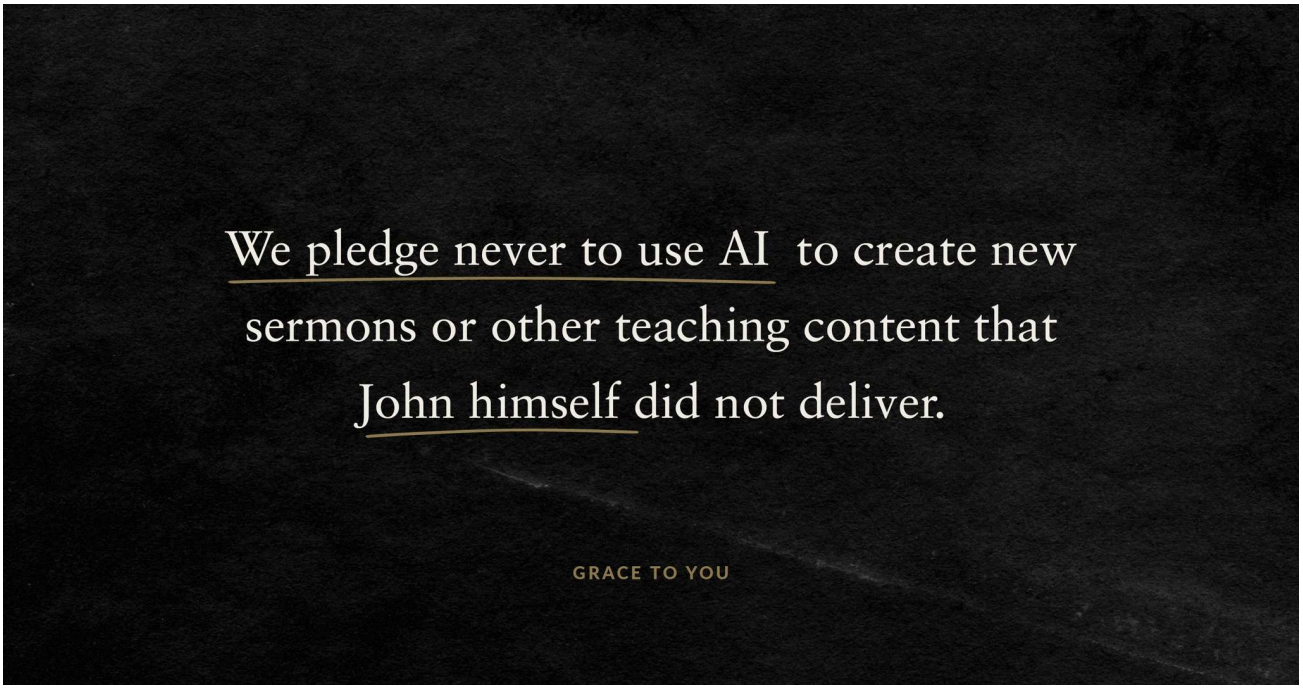
We're all familiar with the pioneering computer term; GIGO. It was programmer lingo amongst the pioneers who were building the first computing platforms. GIGO was the acronym for garbage in - garbage out. You program in garbage, the computer spits out garbage. Our bains work like that.

Paul knows that and the verses we're going to try to tackle this morning are the most important consideration perhaps in the whole Bible necessary for our generation to survive, let alone stand firm, immovable in godly belief and actions.

There has never been a generation like ours with their minds eyes being literally bombarded every waking moment with . . . . stuff. Non stop stuff. Images. Really really good sharp images of everything on earth, all day every day.

And sadly we're right on the tipping point of retraining ourselves to not put any reliable belief in any image our eyes see. Much of it is computer generated non real garbage. Satan knows it's a short jump from dismissing all visual evidence to the next step which is, nothing is real. That's perhaps another sermon for another day.

The afternoon after I wrote that previous paragraph, this sobering message came from the Grace to You team that holds copyright and stewardship over all of the recordings made by Pastor teacher John MacArthur.



"*Artificial intelligence is a misnomer. While this new technology is adept at rapidly finding and reorganizing information, it cannot independently think or create—the best it can do is mimic. Because of that, AI has emboldened and unleashed countless frauds imitating John MacArthur and other faithful Bible teachers, putting words in their mouths that they never actually said. And as time goes on, the counterfeits grow more and more convincing*."

Counterfeit visual and counterfeit audio is still new enough that we haven't even had time to begin to think of the ramifications. But it will have a rapid effect on confidence in truth claims. Satan will be able to effectively undermine any confidence that what you just saw and what you just heard is actually real. Huge win for him. Frightening for christians.

But with that introduction let's look at Paul's exhortation to christian edification so that when storms we haven't even thought of yet, come sweeping over us. We want to be found standing after the storms and the hurricanes and the earthquakes, and yes, the months long doldrums sweep on past us. Paul says, stand firm.

And we've considered carefully Paul's formula for us to achieve that desired end. Unity in the once for all delivered to the saints faith. We all think the same way on biblical things. Then rejoicing. Our joy is the source of our strength. Then some restraint. We are meek. Our power is under control. We wait for our sovereign God to act.

We often stand down, restraining our own fleshly powers. Christians are classy folk that way. We don't whine about what we didn't get that we thought we were due. We don't complain about what the world gives us because we are christians. God's in control. Then we add prayers. We replace anxiety with prayer and thanfulness to God, and God floods us with peace and joy in whatever outward circumstance we find ourselves.

If we do those things, the onlooking world will see something quite different from the status quo they see on their TV sets and computers. Living within Paul's exhortations here, in order to stand strong and restrained in a bizarre AI culture makes us stand apart from the world.

But Paul's got one more finishing exhortation. Self control over what you are allowing yourself to be taking in. Remember, garbage in, garbage out. Just as true in 68 AD or whatever year this was written in the first century, as it is now. Those computer guys hadn't discovered anything new. They were re-stating an ancient axiom. It's right here for us, in verse 8.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is dignified, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, ***think*** *on these things.*

We're going to take the time to consider every one of those adjectives this morning. But first we must consider the challenge of our current culture, our current generation, and ask the ultimate question;

Who gets to set these standards? Who says something is true and

something is false? Who defines what is dignified and what is not? Who has the audacity to claim something is always right and something is always wrong? How do we know what is pure? Who gets to decide what is lovely and what is not? And on and on and on.

This verse is meaningless unless there are absolutes. Absolute black and white standards. Otherwise, all we have here is a lot of micro triggers. If we can't define dignified, we must ignore what Paul says here. We need a standard of comparison so that we can say, that's dignified behaviour, and that is not dignified behaviour. Who gets to set that standard?

Paul exhorts me to meditate on truth, but I live in a world that often quotes Pilot's answer to Jesus about truth. *What is truth*? the world says, and artificial intelligence has just compounded and magnified that question to a level Pilot never dreamed of!

Francis Schaeffer, a man way ahead of his time, quoted the little phrase; true truth. The idea compounds Pilot's question. True truth. Absolute truth.

The world says all day long in a million ways; There are no absolutes. You have your truth and I have my truth. That actually means nobody really has any truth. Truth is meaningless unless there are absolute standards written down that are unchangeable as the mathematical formula's built into the universe.

The world doubles down. Since there are no absulutes, feelings become the new absolutes. Have you seen the rainbow flag with the words Love is Love. If it feels good, it's love. If it's what you decide to do, it's truth. Our thrift store is flying a rainbow flag. The salvation army doesn't want old clothes, so I may have to take stuff to the dump. I won't be using our thrift store as long as they fly that Love is Love flag.

So what is true truth. Absolute truth. I have a possible solution for you. A man who died and rose again from the dead after 3 days, exactly as He said

He would, also made a statement about this problem of truth. He said ***"I am the truth"***.

John the apostle begins his account of Jesus by saying He was the Word. The logos. He was the embodied Word of God. The living truth. And Jesus Himself made the connection between Him as living walking true revelation to ALL of this book. He states that He is the Truth in John 14:6 and then in the high priestly prayer in John 17:17, Jesus the truth says this;

Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. John 17:17 This book is God's Word. This is absolute truth.

There is a standard. We can know the truth. It's written down in a book. It's 5th grade level writing. It isn't hard to understand. The absolute truth standard is available. It is more to be desired than gold. More precious, more valuable.

I wonder how many Bibles went to the dump on that old Chevy truck when Tucker cleaned out the bookstore on main street. Shocking. Truth worth more than gold, so worthless to our culture and our world that it literally goes to the landfill and gets buried.

We possess in our hands the standard by which all truth is measured. If it agrees with this book, it is truth. If it disagrees with this book, it is lies. Pretty simple stuff. So, then, with that foundation let's look at what Paul exhorts us to do so that we can weather all storms and be found standing firm in the truth.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is dignified, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, consider these things.

Before we consider individual words, we need to understand the purpose of the exhortation. Paul tells us to be selective about what we think about.

At the end of the sentence the words, consider these things is the purpose. It means to meditate. To think about. To consider. To dwell on in your mind. I prefer the older versions that say simply; think on these things.

Unity of believers is based in "thinking the same way". We looked at that in depth in verse 2. Euodia and Syntyche need to "think" the same way. Agree on truth.

This exhortation from Paul in verse 8 is a recipe for unity. We exercise self control on what we think on. What we dwell on, meditate on. And GIGO takes care of unity. Good stuff in, good stuff out. It really works. So Paul is giving us an outline of things we should be meditating on with the Holy Spirit as our engine.

Let's look at words. Whatever is true. Do you feel like we covered this one? We did. We've established that the Word of God is the source and standard of all truth. But then, it's a no brainer. You need to have a working knowledge of this book.

whatever is true*, whatever is dignified, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, consider these things.*

All of it is impossible without some working knowledge of this book. Truth = Book = Truth. That connection is imperative. It's high time for most of us to set up some kind of daily reading, study, meditation, reflection, every day, every day, every day from this book.

My kids began listening to MacArthur's daily 30 minute podcast on Grace to You and it's astonishing how quickly this puzzle can begin to come together. It's literally never been easier. Download the app and listen to your phone for 30 minutes of faithful trustworthy Bible teaching every day. Put your ear buds in and listen while you dust the house or whatever it is you need to do. gty.org

Listening to me 35 minutes a week is not enough of a jump start to get proficient in this book. It's more than most christians are getting in our land, but it's not enough. 30 minutes of good Bible teaching daily will change your life. I challenge you. It will either give you a greater hunger for God's book, or you'll find out, you're not actually a christian at all.

Get a working knowledge going, and then as the TV set vomits lies at you, you'll be thinking, that's not what God said in Genesis, is it.

In John 14:26 Jesus tells us; "*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you*.

Let me state the obvious. The helper can't put those things in your memory banks that He promises to call up later for you. You must have some diligence to hear and understand this book. He doesn't call up what isn't there. Diligence in the book, **in the truth** is the first thing in Paul's list of what we should think upon.

whatever is true, whatever is dignified

What does the adjective dignified mean? What does it mean to be dignified. The word is semnos. It means noble. It has the sense of something that is venerable. Long proven over time.

When I drive my 96 year old wooden station wagon to town it often attracts admirers. Why. People are drawn to it's dignity. Something so well made, so venerable that it has a kind of nobility. 96 years old and I've driven it on trips over a thousand miles. We are drawn to well proven things of quality.

The word is only used 4 times in the Bible. Here. two times in 1 Timothy, it is used of deacons and deacon's wives. Then to Titus Paul calls for older men to be dignified.

Isn't it interesting that Paul puts so much gravitas on what is venerated and proven by long use, what is noble, and our modern church seems to dismiss the old and follow after never ceasing always changing new trends. Here's what's working this month. Pragmatism dismisses the venerable, the old, the proven, and dignity becomes sort of a negative thing.

According to what Paul says here, should we be thinking about the latest christian rock stars who've been a so called christian for 5 minutes, or should we be thinking on the lives of the Puritans of the 17th century.

When MacArthur died, one of the remembrances was done by Todd Friel, the Wretched Radio guy. And he brought out this idea of dignity. Something we don't value much these days that Paul says is important to think upon.

I'll give you a clue. The world is NOT dignified. Dignity is associated with people who are living restrained lives within the parameters of God's design defined by this book. If you're trying your best to look like the rest of the world . . . you probably don't value dignity.

whatever is right
This one is simple. Whatever is correct. Don't waste your time thinking about error. This goes right back to the idea of absolute black and white truth. **Someone is wrong, someone is right**. Know your book. Know the difference.

This is revolting to our world. Tolerance for all things wrong and intolerance for anyone who might dare to say there are absolute moral boundaries of right and wrong given by a loving God for our ultimate good.

whatever is pure
The word is hagnos. A derivative of hagios which is defined as pure, chaste, free from sin, innocent

If you're confused about what this word means, we can narrow it down by

considering it's opposite, which Paul tells us not to do, but for the sake of definition; If you're confused about what the word pure might mean, click on your computer screen or TV set and gaze at what the world is showing you ad infinitum ad nauseum. The opposite is this word.

Hagios was the word used for the condition after washings, cleansings. Clean. Clean~ness. It's the same idea as the wedding garments we will have at our wedding ceremony with Christ. Fine garments, white and clean. Spotless in His righteousness. Pure. Think about clean things. Clean in, clean out. Pure in, pure out. It's the GIGO thing in reverse.

whatever is lovely
A compound word made up of the word for being drawn to, attracted to, and the second word is the word for brotherly love, not romantic love. We could say it this way. lovely means user friendly for christians. Some things are uplifting, and some things drag me down. Think on the things that build you up. Positive truths that edify, not negative things that move me backwards.

Why is it that driving in the dark canyons of the city make my spirit sad and driving in the piney mountain or velvety sage brush vistas make my spirit soar. God's creation is user friendly that way for christians. My spirit glorifies the creator when I'm enjoying His beauty.

Music is this way to some point. Music can be a shunt to my soul. It can bypass my brain and affect my heart. Is there a connection that the music of the 17th and 18th century after the christian reformation is arguably some of the most sophisticated and beautiful music, and now that culture has abandoned God, the music is dissonent and dark. I believe there's something to that. The order of beautiful music and the chaos and darkness of modern godless music.

You can argue that music is totally relative and I'm nuts. Fine. Then it's just me that has a spirit that soars with beautiful music and my spirit goes dark and depressed and angry with dark minor key throbbing death music.

This word lovely, moreso than some of the others, has an attraction that has a direct connection to the glory of the Creator. The closer something is to the glory of the Creator and the unmolested creation, the more it uplifts. And likewise the more God is removed and it is manmade by godless men devoid of the Creator the more it saddens and drags me down.

Think on the lovely things.

whatever is commendable
euphēma from eu which is well, and phema which is spoken. Well spoken of. Good reputation.

Are you seeing a pattern here. Think about our environment. We live in a fallen world. Sin damaged God's creation, but it didn't obliterate it. Evidence of the glory of the Creator is everywhere. The mathematical order of the solar system, so reliable that we can build things.

But then the problem of sin. Satan rules this world at this time. He is darkness and disorder. Evil. Negative. Fear. Death.

The common thread is that each word Paul has chosen to exhort us to spend our time thinking about are positives that remain in God's creation. Good and evil co-dwell here. Paul wants us to avoid Satan's darkness and evil and think about good godly things. Dwell on things that have a goodness.

You understand, right, that the overriding theme of the totality of this book is that God's ultimate plan is to retake this world and the rule here that Satan usurped.

Jesus is rightful Lord and King of this world. God has a schedule and a plan to the nano second of retaking this planet, crushing evil and Satan, and restoring the glory and the goodness. That's the story. Paradise lost in Genesis 3 when sin and rebellion entered. Paradise regained in Revelation.

We couldn't be part of that plan unless sin was completely eradicated. Forgiven, yes, but also removed as far as the east is from the west. That's why it's taking so long. God has a plan for the last elect person to come into His kingdom and then the curtain falls, and judgement begins on evil.

Jesus could have just crushed the rebellion and sent everyone to hell and started over. But God loves us. And He sacrificed His Son to death on a tree to pay for our sins, so that we could be included with Him in the future glories of a planet, not in sinful rebellion. Glories we really cannot even imagine yet.

For now though, as much as possible, we dwell on, we think on the good things. Things of good reputation, good report. Leave the dark things to the God haters who actually want Satan and evil to endure.

if there is any excellence
areté The greek word has the idea of virtue. Moral excellence. Virtuous things of moral purity.

We are drawn to excellence. Men have achieved truly excellent things. But this word inclueds virtue in that excellence. That narrows the field. Instead of thinking about the achievements of someone like Elon Musk, hard to ignore the excellence, but he thinks we'll all go to live on Mars after we've wrecked earth, and he thinks having 100 children and literally no wives is probably OK.

There are men whose names you can't think of, who went to other lands and built spiritual excellence in lives given for others that actually accomplished far more than the rock stars the world would have you think about.

Go listen to some of Pastor John Piper's biographies that he has given at his pastors conferences. Get some real rock stars to think about true excellence that far surpasses this world's excellence and had lasting virtue.

In eternity, we won't be talking about Elon Musk, but we will be visiting with and talking about Hudson Taylor and Isaac Watts. There's a list to get you started at; https://www.desiringgod.org/biographies

and if anything worthy of praise
commendable things. Things we can recommend to others for their benefit and edification. Things that build up not tear down.

Here's the elephant in the room. In our culture of continual bombardment of our senses of images and words, this list of Pauls has become more constricted and narrow with every passing year of my life.

It's almost as if I need to have blinders and noise cancelling earphones in order to live in this world and be faithful to Paul's exhortation here. Working alone in the back yard on a '39 Ford suddenly looks pretty good. At least it's neutral.

The world has become pretty dark. Very quickly AI is going to be at the center of all information at all times, and guess who's driving AI. It will be Satanic. It's like he's doing his best to blot out any remaining trace of anything excellent and worthy of praise.

In our future it will become increasingly more difficult to find the things Paul lists for us to dwell on, think on. Here's why. AI will poison everything. Confidence that anything is true truth will be eroded.

I've said it before and will continue to say it. Hold onto your hard copies. In the future we may need a safe with a 1700 degree 2 hour rating to store our books. Our hard copies. Printed before AI took over and poisoned everything.

Here's a list of hard copies every christian should get NOW and protect for the futuer. Strong's concordance. Vine's dictionary of new testament words. Find an antique copy of R. A. Torrey's Tresury of Scriptue Knowledge. 500,000 cross references arranged in verse by verse order.

I inherited a copy from my father. Printed by Fleming H Revell company probably between 1890 and 1910. Mine is literally falling apart. I checked on ebay. You can get a copy for $9.12. Do it now.

A library of hard copy books written and printed before AI is going to become priceless in the future. I make no claim to be a prophet, but if I were you, I'd build a library of hard copy books and bibles . . . NOW.

Finally, Paul wraps up this powerhouse life changing verse with the obvious purpose clause. Think. Think on these things. **THINK!**

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

And very briefly, because we're out of time, copy faithful men of proven worth over long periods.

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

We are little children. We copy. We can't help it. God built us that way. We began doing it when we were 6 months old. Baby Anna will begin copying her mama and daddy before she's a year old. God did that.

Paul says, copy what is *is true, what is dignified, what is right, what is pure, what is lovely, what is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, consider these things*

Think on these things. Copy these things. You're going to copy something. Copy these. Emulate these. Paul copied Jesus. Paul says, you can copy me, because I'm faithfully copying Jesus.

How many times have you heard me say, John MacArthur was / is my mentor. He was a person I'd love to be a carbon copy of. Not perfect, but definitely someone God used in ways that will be recognised for eternity.

He'll be in the line up of guys you want to visit with in eternity.

Hebrews 13:7 is a good place to end today.

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Heb. 13:7

God designed us to be imitators. He built us that way. Turn off the computer and the TV and read some biographies of some of the men and women God used to turn the world upside down.

John G. Paton Missionary to the New Hebrides You can't put it down. Men of whom *the world was not worthy*. Hebrews 11:38. Read them. Think about them. Turn off the TV and live like them.