



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

MESSAGE: "THE FRUIT OF GOODNESS" •

SERIES: "THIS IS THE WAY" •

PHILIPPIANS 4:8; ROMANS 12:9; GALATIANS 6:9-10 • 1/16/2022

MAIN POINT

Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What does it tell you about someone others refer to as “virtuous” or a “good person”?

Why do you think so many people think human “goodness” is what is required for salvation?

Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:5, “Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,” not the other way around. We don’t supplement our own virtue with faith; we seek to

add goodness to our faith. Faith is the springboard for life in Christ, and that faith is based on the grace of God, through the saving work of Jesus on the cross. It is then, and only then, that true goodness can come to life in us.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:8.

How does thinking in the manner Paul described “add to” faith?

Which two or three of these qualities do you appreciate most when you see them?

The first two virtues Paul said Christians are to have and exhibit concerned their thought life. The word “true” has the idea of what is real or genuine, as opposed to what is deceptive, illusory, or false. It applies to speech as well as facts. The Greek term translated “honorable” describes something that is worthy of reverence. It has the sense of what is respectable or honest and conveys the idea of Christian behavior that is inviting. The third and fourth virtues had to do with everyday life. The word “just” has the idea of uprightness. It conveys the sense of giving God and others what they’re due—of doing right by them. The word “pure” described something so clean it could be brought into God’s presence. Believers were to be models of purity.

Virtues five and six describe the results of allowing Christ to shape believers’ thoughts. The word rendered “lovely” also can be translated “attractive” or “winsome.” It has the idea of what is pleasing and inspires love. Christian character is to have an appealing beauty. The Greek term rendered “commendable” literally

means “fair-speaking.” This includes the idea of putting a favorable light on something. The phrase “moral excellence” translates a Greek term that described physical, mental, and moral excellence. The believers’ outstanding moral character was to contrast sharply to the paganism around them.

If we’re supposed to “dwell on” these virtuous things, what should we do when our thoughts drift to something that does not meet the criteria of verse 8? Why do our minds not naturally drift toward virtuous things?

READ ROMANS 12:9.

What connection can be made between this verse and Philippians 4:8?

Why do you think Paul combined the topic of sincere love and clinging to that which is good? What is the correlation between the two?

Do you have to hate evil to cling to what is good?

To “think about these things” that Paul named as virtues in Philippians 4:8, we must also hate what is evil. We cannot entertain sin and evil, and at the same time cling to good and let goodness consume our thoughts. This doesn’t mean we shouldn’t think about our own sin or the lostness of the world. But our attitude about our sin and the lostness of the world should reflect the praiseworthiness of God. The kind of love that reflects the character of God is love that holds fast to what is good, confronting sin with both truth and grace.

READ GALATIANS 6:9-10.

What is the relationship between thinking about goodness (Phil. 4:8) and doing good things (Galatians 6:9-10)?

How does Paul's illustration of sowing and reaping challenge you to continue doing good? What is the promise in these verses?

How does the command to "do good to all" challenge you presently?

It is not enough to simply think good, virtuous thoughts. Thinking about what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, and excellent or praiseworthy leads those in Christ to do good. We don't just do good to those we think have earned it, but to all people, for the praise and glory of God. We should especially be concerned in showing continued goodness to other believers. Jesus said in John 13:35, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." If we cannot show the virtue of Christ to one another in the church, how will we do so to those outside the church? In the gospel, God has given us what we do not deserve: forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Christ. When we do good to others, whether or not they deserve it, we display the gospel to the world.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is one area of your life where you need to abhor evil and cling to what is good? Is this related more to your thought life or your actions? How are the two related? Explain.

How are we doing as a group, helping one another supplement faith with goodness? How can we do better?

How does it show the world where we place our hope when we live lives focused on goodness? Why is it important that we also share the gospel by speaking and not only relying on good deeds?

PRAYER

Thank God for His goodness and His Spirit's power to enable you to think and act according to His goodness. Invite Him to show you areas of your life where you need to think or act differently to better reflect His goodness.

COMMENTARY

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

4:8. Continuing his strong imperative style, Paul suggested what should occupy our minds rather than anxiety and worry. Paul understood the influence of one's thoughts on one's life. Right thinking is the first step toward righteous living. What is right thinking? It is thinking devoted to life's higher goods and virtues. Thus Paul picked up a practice from secular writers of his day and listed a catalog of virtues that should occupy the mind. Such virtues are not limited to the Christian community but are recognized even by pagan cultures.

True is that which corresponds to reality. Anxiety comes when false ideas and unreal circumstances occupy the mind instead of truth. Ultimately, thinking on the truth is thinking on Jesus, who is the truth (John 14:6; Eph. 4:21). Noble refers to lofty, majestic, awesome things, things that lift the mind above the world's dirt and scandal. Right refers to that which is fair to all parties involved, that which fulfills all obligations and debts. Thinking right thoughts steers one away from quarrels and dissensions to think of the needs and rights of the other party. Pure casts its net of

meaning over all of life from sexual acts to noble thoughts to moral and ritual readiness for worship. Thinking on the pure leads one away from sin and shame and toward God and worship. Lovely is a rare word referring to things that attract, please, and win other people's admiration and affection. Such thoughts bring people together in peace rather than separating them in fighting and feuding. Admirable is something worthy of praise or approval, that which deserves a good reputation. Pondering ways to protect one's moral and spiritual image in the community leads away from worries about circumstances and possessions that project a different image to the community and which thinking cannot change.

The catalog of virtues Paul sums up in two words: excellent and praiseworthy. The first encompasses what is best in every area of life, the philosophical good for which every person should strive. Here it is especially the ethical best a person can achieve. The second term refers to that which deserves human praise. The catalog of virtues thus reflects the best life a person can live and the best reputation a person can thereby achieve in the community.

Finally, in this verse, Paul gets to his point: think on these things. That, joined with prayer will relieve all anxieties and lead one to praise God and live life the way he desires.

ROMANS 12:9

12:9. The final thirteen verses of this chapter defy outlining. At best, it is possible to identify the hilltops that poke above the plain of Paul's thought on the topic of love. If a single theme is to be identified, it would have to be "love in the face of evil," as that is Paul's first word— hate what is evil; cling to what is good—and his last—"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (v. 21). Almost every other evidence of love he mentions will fit under this theme. The question is, Whence the evil, or persecution, that was tempting the Rome believers to retaliate instead of love?

Most certainly, it could have been from Rome. Within a decade of Paul's writing this letter, he himself would die under Rome's sword. The wickedly infamous Nero was Emperor at the time of Paul's writing, and while the worst of his atrocities against Christians did not occur until nearer the end of his reign, there was steadily growing

pressure against Christians. Jews had already suffered in Rome, having been expelled from the city several years before the writing of this letter by the emperor Claudius, who ruled prior to Nero (Acts 18:2).

But Paul's words could possibly have been directed in reference to strife within the Roman church itself. Jewish and Gentile conflicts were not new in the early church, and it is quite possible that animosities had developed to the extent that words like "vengeance," "conceit," and "enemy" were not out of place among the fellowship in Rome. Given that Paul addresses both categories (the civil situation in chap. 13 and the internal, church situation in chaps. 14-15), it is likely that both were fueling his thoughts on love in this section.

The love of which Paul speaks is, of course, agape, the selfless, unconditional expression of grace and compassion exemplified by the love of God for sinners (John 3:16; Rom. 5:5,8). Just as nothing can separate the believer from the benefits of God's agape (Rom. 8:35,39), so nothing should be able to come between a believer and his or her love for sinners (Rom. 13:10; 14:15). By dissecting sincere, it is easy to see what Paul means. Anupokritos is simply the negative (negative prefix "a" plus "n") of hupokrites, from which derives our "hypocrite." Therefore, sincere is not hypocritical. "Hypocrite" was used in the Greek world of the actor who wore masks to portray the emotion of his character—sincere Christians wear no masks. What you see is (should be) what you get, and Paul says that others should see love. It would be hypocritical to hate what is good and cling to what is evil; therefore, hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

GALATIANS 6:9-10

6:9. One important aspect of sowing to the Spirit is persistently doing good. The phrase may refer specifically to supporting Christian teachers but likely is broader to include good deeds in general. The Greek term for "get tired" has the idea of becoming physically fatigued and of becoming faint-hearted. Christians could become discouraged and disillusioned in doing good and could be tempted to quit. Believers who persevere in well-doing, however, will reap a harvest at the proper time (or "season")—refined character, spiritual growth, and fulfillment in this life and endless life with God in the next.

6:10. Because determined well-doing will result in a sure, Spirit-produced harvest, believers are to grasp every opportunity to work for the good of all. The Greek word for “opportunity” is the same term rendered “due time” in verse 9. Paul may have extended the agricultural metaphor: taking advantage of the season of sowing good deeds is essential if believers are to enjoy the season of harvest. Christians are to do good for unbelievers and for believers, but they have a special obligation toward members of the household of faith. Believers are to seize every opportunity to help one another in the family of faith.