

Final Exhortations

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Think on good, be content, be generous, trust God. Think on good, be content, be generous, trust God. These are Paul's final exhortations to this church that he planted some years before he wrote the letter to the church at Philippi.

He planted it, and he really was fond of the church. They had some issues with disunity that we've looked at, but on the whole, they were filled with joy.

They were a generous church, and it's now come time for him to give his final words of exhortation to this church that he loves. Think on good. One of our kids, when they were young, famously referred to a poor person as a person being low on rich.

We always thought that was very clever for a probably three, four year old. Yeah, I won't say he or she, but they said, that person is really low on rich, aren't they? Yeah, they are.

So that's what inspired this idea of think on good. I thought low on rich, think on good.

Finally, brothers and sisters, poor rights, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything's excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put into practice and the God of peace will be with you. Think on good. It's now beyond a question and beyond doubt scientifically that our thinking affects our bodies.

Our minds affect how we feel and how our bodies function. Paul was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit 2,000 years ago when he said in Romans 12, renew your mind. You need to renew your mind for your body's actions to follow accordingly.

I heard a neuroscientist recently say on his podcast, something that you could very easily disagree with, but he said, the mind affects the body so much, I say to people, choose your placebo.

Choose a placebo you can believe in because your mind will affect your body so much. Now, we take that with a grain of salt, but I just think it's really important to remember Paul's onto something before his time, how we think affects us deeply.

And so, he says repeatedly, whatever, whatever you find that is wholesome and glorifying to God, think on such things as these. Now, as Christians, we're told to be holy, which means set apart.

And that's why Christians often stay away from the world, the polluted world. But Paul here is saying, you know what, you can find good and wholesome things that don't have a Christian badge on them.

And if you do, whatever is true and noble and right and pure, whatever is admirable, excellent and praiseworthy, think about such things as these. Dwell on them, be marinated in such things. He didn't have this on his mind, but we do.

A good movie, a good book, music, art, nature, a great podcast, great conversation. If it's good and noble and upright, take it in and filter it through the truth of God's word.

See out of the good you're reflecting on, see what reflects God's general revelations. Psalm 19 says the heavens are declaring the glory of God day after day. They pour forth speech.

God is amazing, generally. It's not saying stuff about Jesus. And that general revelation is made manifest in so much of what we find in popular culture.

And Paul is simply saying, if you find something that is good, dwell on it. And of course, the opposite is true. The opposite is true.

If you are marinating your mind in that which is false, ignoble, wrong and impure, whatever is unadmirable, appalling, unpraiseworthy, worldly, evil, do not think on such things as these.

There is a godliness filter we need to apply to what we watch and read and listen to, amen? It's the truth. We are living in a uniquely relevant time to this issue, aren't we, with the internet and streamed content.

We need to listen to Paul's classic teaching from Philippians 4:8. Whatever is true, whatever is noble, right, pure, whatever is lovely, admirable.

If anything is excellent or praise worthy, it may not get the highest ratings on the television or on the internet. But think about such things as these and put them into practice.

Allow the mind to control the emotions in the body and put into practice what you're dwelling on. And the peace of God, which comes from the God of peace, as we learned last week, will follow you when you live this integrated type of life.

Now, integrated is integrity, integer. It's all about integer being a whole number. It's not a fractured life.

You don't have peace, do you? If you live this way with this sort of people and this way with this sort of people and this way, peace comes when the God of peace can be with us at all times.

And that is much easier for God, when we're not grieving His Spirit from the way that we are acting. Put into practice what is good. Think on good.

First, exhortation. So how do you go at thinking on good? Maybe we need to change some of our habits.

Think on good. Final exhortation number two, be content. I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last, you renewed your concern for me.

Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I'm not saying this because I am in need, for I've learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

This Philippian church, notwithstanding the issue of disunity between Euodia and Syntyche, have been a really standout church. They are filled with generosity, and they're filled with joy.

And they had sent, out of their concern for Paul, epaphroditus from Philippi to Rome, which is no small task. It's about six weeks' walk to get this. So, epaphroditus had struggled with health a bit later on.

Now, it's possible that Paul is imprisoned at ephesus, which is sort of across the ditch, across from Greece, across to Turkey.

We don't know for sure, but it seems more likely more commentators think that he was imprisoned in Rome, which means epaphroditus really travelled a long way. Paul says, thank you so much, Church at Philippi, my brothers and sisters.

Thank you for sending your love in the person of epaphroditus. And then he says what is one of the great memory verses in Scripture, isn't it? It's just one of the cracking memory verses.

I have learned to be content. Whatever the circumstances, I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty.

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Last week, Ben did a sterling job unpacking Philippians 4, 4-7, where Paul wrote, rejoice always, even in the presence of anxiety. because the presence of Jesus is with you, the Lord is near. Do you remember that amazing truth last week?

He said rejoice through anxiety, not just despite anxiety. Rejoice through the hardship, in the midst of the hardship, not despite the hardship. Now Paul is extrapolating this truth even further, stating that he has learned the secret of contentment.

And he says contentment no matter what the circumstance. because obviously his hearers might be thinking, well, you probably are entitled, you're a Pharisee, you're pretty wealthy, you're well off, you come from good standing in your family.

But Paul says, no, in case you think that, I want you to know I have lived without. And he doesn't go into a full explanation of how many times he was beaten and shipwrecked and nearly drowned.

But he's been hungry, he's been in want, but he has learned the secret to contentment. And so we say, do tell Paul. Do explain, Paul, please.

He gives the answer in verse 13. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. The answer has something to do with the Lord is near, doesn't it?

How can you be content no matter what the circumstance? The answer has something to do with what he said earlier, that he wants to know the power that raised Christ from the dead, which is in him by faith.

I can do all this through him who gives me strength, he says. How do you stay content? Well, before we get there, let me ask you a different question.

Have you ever had to slay the green-eyed monster? I see a few people nodding. Have you ever been so envious of another human being that you felt like there was a green-monster trying to devour you?

I can vividly remember a time in ministry when I felt extreme envy.

I worked with a guy who was an associate, I was a senior pastor at another church, and he was like he had that strength called woo, like he was incredibly charismatic, and it didn't matter, and I'm revealing that I was needy at the time, clearly.

But we were a growing congregation, and I would make friends with people, and we'd be, you know, oh, this is a friend. And then very soon, that person would be better friends with this other pastor.

It was like no one I could be a friend with, without them being drawn to the tractor beam. Is that what it is, tractor beam? Got to get my sci-fi right.

Like a tractor beam, they were drawn to him. And this is 20 years ago, over 20 years ago. And I think I've been healed and grown from that place.

But I remember being at the front of our house in Miranda, and where I do my therapy, as I've told you, I do my therapy, personal therapy when I'm mowing the lawn. And I was mowing the lawn, and I just was thinking and dwelling and ruminating.

And all I can describe is I felt suffocated, like I was having an anxiety attack. And there was literally a demonic green monster of envy that wanted to eat me, because I wanted to eat him, I wanted to hurt him.

I won't ask you to raise your hand if you know what this is, but what do you do in that situation? I'll tell you what I did. I called out for mercy from God.

I said, God have mercy, Lord help. And I said, go away in Jesus' name. And I was able to work through that.

And sometimes it's not as easy as that. Why couldn't I just be content? Why did it matter to me whether he, like they're free agents, the people I was becoming friends with.

I can't make them be my friends more than him. But I struggled with that. We struggle with this, don't we?

We compare ourselves to others. We're social beings as humans. What's the need that you feel most acutely to be filled?

And you look at others and you think, they have that, I want that. How can I be content without that? Without that need filled.

Needs are tricky little things, aren't they? Have you found that? What drives our behaviour?

The need for approval. The need for people to approve me. That's probably part of what I was struggling with.

Some of us have this need to be the smartest person in the room, and you need to make sure everyone knows you are. Some of us have the opposite.

We need to remind ourselves that we are not the smartest person in the room, because our parents told us that. And we've had an inner wound all our life. I'm not the smartest person, and I just need to make sure that I know that.

For some of us, all over we find them, we certainly find them in the church. They need desperately to put others down. They feel better about themselves in a very broken way.

They're called bullies. They have to put others down with their words or actions so that they somehow feel better about themselves until they start feeling worse about themselves. There's no more needy person in the world than a bully.

They're so needy. That addiction you feed, just being general, it's because you're needy. You're self-medicating because you're needy.

Every gossiping tongue doesn't just do it for fun. It's because that person is desperately needy. Every stingy heart, every angry outburst, it comes from a place of vulnerability.

Would you agree? Neediness. I have discovered that the bigger my inner world is, the bigger the realm of me being able to articulate God's favor on my life, the less needy I am.

If I can articulate what God has done for me and what he has given me and the favor he has bestowed on me, if I can articulate that to myself in times of sub-salt scripture Sunday, in times of supping with the Lord, if I can get stronger at being

able to know in here what God has done for me, the less needy I am. Does anyone else experience that? Think about this.

If Adam and Eve could have articulated in a meaningful way their blessed state in the garden, do you think Satan would have had a chance? That's the problem, friends. We don't spend enough time convincing ourselves of what God has done for us.

Amen. Adam and Eve needed to say, what do you mean? We know God.

He made us. Adam named the animals. Like, what do you mean?

You're a liar, serpent. because I have an inner world that you can't get access to. We need to focus on what we already have by grace, not what we think we need to have to save face.

Some of us in this room, many of us are Christians. I'm a Christian. I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sin and rose again to rescue me from sin that would cause judgment forever, eternally.

He's rescued me from that. And he's also rescued me from the effects of sin now. He wants to set me free, show me how to live a life that's blessed.

I, as a Christian, I have God, I'm articulating my inner world. I have God, the God who created the universe by His words. In fact, He just thought it and it was there.

Hallelujah. He thought it. He created through His imagination.

I have the power of the resurrection in me. The power that raised Christ from the dead is in me. It's a mystery, but it's the truth.

Ephesians 2 says, because I'm in Christ, there are good works prepared in advance for me to do. There is so much good for me to do to make my life on this planet worthwhile.

And I get to just keep my eyes out for it and do the good to give glory to my Father. And I'm going to live forever. No one can touch that.

In fact, I have an inheritance as a Christian that can never perish, spoil or fade. I have been called by Jesus to serve him in his kingdom.

And serving him in his kingdom is a kingdom that's eternal, where thieves don't break in and moth doesn't come and rust destroy. I'm working for my life to make a worthy investment in this world, in history.

And if you're a Christian, you're the same. We live for a kingdom that is eternal. That's what we're doing.

And if it's not what you're doing with your life, you can. You need to confess Jesus as your Saviour and Lord. Is anyone else with me?

This is the articulating of the inner world that brings us to a place where we can find contentment. Sometimes we forget all of that stuff, don't we? We just forget.

We believe the lie that we don't have enough, and we become more and more needy. Now, Paul has got this thing down pat. He's focusing on his inner world.

He's in prison. And these are some of the memory verses we've been looking at. Philippians 1, 21.

He's already decided inside where no one can access, no one can steal it in his inner world, that for him to live is Christ and to die is gain. He's decided that.

He's decided no matter what for him, he's going to live a life in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ by the grace of Christ. Philippians 1, 27.

He's decided that whatever were his gains or the gains of others, he's going to consider them garbage compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ. Philippians 3, 8. And this is why we come to church, isn't it?

Anyone? This is why you come to church, to be reminded of what is true, so that in my inner world, I can be robust and less needy, less vulnerable, to be reminded as I come to church, that it's true.

We can do all things through him who gives us strength. You can do all things through him who gives you strength. That's how we can be content in plenty or in want.

Success, failure, health, sickness. Strength comes from this truth of the gospel. God is with me by grace, through faith, and my future is in his hands.

And I believe it. I think that's a lot of why God has designed us coming to church every Sunday. We can't go too long.

Now you don't get those reminders just from church on Sunday, but it's a powerful way to come around communion, to be reminded, my future is in his hands. And some of you are here today because God wants you to remind you of exactly that.

You can be content at peace because your future is in his hands. What is stealing your commitment today? Your contentment today?

What's the greatest challenge to the stability of your inner world? Paul writes, I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Paul is trusting everything on Christ, being who he says he is.

Now, I've written so much more on the first two points than the second two, so don't be stressed, we're going to make it to the end. Think on good, be content, be generous. Paul writes, yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

Moreover, as you Philippians know in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only.

For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. Not that I desire your gifts, what I desire is that more be credited to your account. I have received full payment and have more than enough.

I am amply supplied now that I have received from epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice pleasing to God.

Paul commends the generosity of the Philippian believers, not just here, but also in the second letter to Corinthians in chapter eight, he's meaning the church at Philippi, because he left Philippi at the top of Macedonia, and he traveled down

through Thessalonica, through Borea, down to Athens, and then west to Corinth. And he's needing funds. But it's the church of Philippi who have supported. Who knows?

We don't know for sure, but maybe Lydia, the fabric trader of purple cloth, maybe. That first person that got saved was a wealthy woman down by the river, you know? God in His sovereignty.

Isn't that cool? God in His sovereignty. You'll need support.

And I'm going to turn the hearts of these Philippian believers. The Roman church. You wouldn't expect it.

You'd expect it from a different church full of Jews, the people of God. But no, no, I'm going to use the Gentiles to support the mission work. So he's commending their generosity.

But at the same time, he wants them to know, I'm not here fleecing your money. because at the time, the Stoic philosophers in particular, history tells us, they used to come in to towns like Philippi, and they would be really articulate.

If you go to Athens, there's a huge Stoic philosophers relic of a big building where they had a training ground.

The Stoic philosophers would come in, they would win people over, they would make converts, and then they'd sort of fleece them for money. And people knew this, that these teachers, these disciple makers were always out for money.

And Paul is like, that's not me. I appreciate your money. I really do appreciate your giving and your love.

But I'm content. I'm not here to take money from you. I'm pouring my life out on the drink offering in the Old Testament idea of my life being poured out as a worship offering of Yahweh.

And he's saying, what I pray for you, my friends at Philippi, is that your giving would be exactly that too. It's you offering the best of yourself, of your resources, not to get something back, but you will get something back.

It will be an offering of worship to God, and he'll bless you too. That's what he says. I want you to know, church, you've got skin in the game.

You're in this kingdom moving forward and you're part of it. And then he wraps up this whole section with this one all-encompassing truth. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ.

We can be generous when we get this truth, he's got our needs covered. That's easy to roll off the tongue. It is profound to get to a place where you believe it.

Amen? Well, you believe it. You trust.

He owns the cattle on a thousand hills and the wealth of every mind. He's got my needs covered. Not necessarily all my wants, but I'm going to trust him to give me divine discernment of what my wants and needs, how they meet together.

But he's promised to look after my needs. Now we know this verse has been taken out of context for centuries. But Paul is, he means it.

God will meet your needs. You can trust him. Think on good, be content, be generous and trust God.

He will meet all our needs. That means the small details. because remember he's been saying whatever, whatever it is, don't be anxious.

Even the little things. Bring it before your father in heaven by prayer and petition, present your request to him and trust him. Amen?

That's his point. trust him. And he's like, trust him in everything, the little details and trust him in the big things as well.

The big things like, where am I going to live? Which job am I meant to take? Am I meant to be married?

Who would it be to? These are big decisions. I'm earning good money now.

What do I do with all this money? Ask God and trust that He will give you an answer, and as you step out in faith, He will provide everything that is required. It's possible.

It's possible to trust God. That's what Paul is saying. I've learned to be content.

I've learned to trust him. I'm in jail right now as I write this. And I know if you're wondering about this, there are dozens of people in this room.

I'm just going to ask, if you agree with what Paul has said from a lifetime of following Jesus, that he will provide all your needs, could you raise your hand? There's lots of people, hey? What a wonderful testimony.

Glory to you, Lord God. Our God is trustworthy. He's trustworthy.

You can trust him with everything. That's Paul's testimony. That's his last final exhortation.

trust him. Get in the game. Throw your life in as a fragrant offering.

And to our God be glory forever and ever. Amen. He gives them a little doxology.

He gives them their own little doxology in Philippians. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet all God's people. This is customary for Paul to finish his letter. He reminds people, you know, we're part of a team.

I've got some other brothers and sisters working with me. Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me.

Send their greetings. All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Amen. You see what he's doing? It's tricky.

It's pretty cool. It's like, just in case you think I'm not seeing fruit, Caesar's household are now believers. You know, the beginning of Philippians, the beginning of this letter, he says, don't stress about me.

I didn't expect to be in prison. But you know what? It's turning out pretty good.

The Roman soldiers are coming to faith in Christ and I'm finding some good evangelists amongst them. That's what he's meaning. He's saying to the people at Philippi, you know what?

I'm not on my own. Don't sweat what is going on in my life. It's okay.

I remember I went to college with a guy, a Finnish guy, his name is Joel. He grew up in Papua New Guinea as a missionary. And he always said, I'm going to be a missionary.

I'm going to be a missionary. He ended up being a missionary to a lot of the Stan places. And he's still a missionary today.

He's been doing it for 30 years. But I remember he said to me, don't ever feel bad for missionaries. They're loving their life.

They're living their best life. And he wasn't saying they're on the gravy train. He wasn't saying they were fleecing anyone.

He's just saying they are living their best life. Don't feel sorry for them. Pray for them.

And I think that's what Paul is trying to say. I'm on mission. I'm making my life count.

I might be in prison, but I'm seeing Roman soldiers come to salvation. And you're part of it, Philippi. We're a team together.

We're in this in community. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul, his co-workers, the Philippian believers, they're people of the good news, aren't they? They're the people of the eternal kingdom. And so are we.

That's why in our youth group, they've been talking about good news. No wonder we and they think about good. They're citizens of heaven.

Of course they do. That's who they are. No wonder these Philippian believers, and we too, have learned to be content because we live under the favor and blessing of God.

Is there an amen? No wonder they're generous. All their needs are met by their generous God.

No wonder they trust God because he has been proven faithful over and over again. NorthernLife, whatever happens by God's grace, may we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Think on good.

Be content. Be generous. trust God and our God will meet all our needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen and amen.