

Philippians

Chapter 4:7b-23



Philemon

Doctrine for the Mind and Heart

Westminster Shorter Catechism Question Q 57.

What is the fourth commandment?

Answer

The fourth commandment is: Remember the sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien/stranger within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

Proof Texts

Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Memory verse of the week.

Philippians 4:5,6 “The Lord is at hand, do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

Psalm of the Week. Psalm 109D. The words are on page 8.

Pray for;

Mon – Danielle Joly

Tues – Sean Russell

Wed – Larry and Lean Sinardo

Thur – Cory, Vanessa, Henry, Samuel and Teddy van der Meer

Frid – Vince, Julie, Samuel, Zakari and Amina Ward.

31st November – 4th December 2020

The notes on Philippians are by Rev. Philip Dunwoody (RPC).

The notes on Philemon are by Rev. Stephen McCollum (RPCS)

They have been slightly modified.

Produced by Ottawa RPC to help family worship.

Monday – Philippians 4:7b-9: Think About Your Thoughts

Some people are fond of saying, "You are what you eat", emphasising the importance of a healthy diet. Today, Paul tells us that "You are what you think about". Our thoughts determine our actions and our priorities in life. So, we need to think about what's going on in our minds.

Paul emphasises the importance of guarding our hearts and minds (see end of verse 7). In Scripture the heart is the inner person, the centre of who we really are. The word "heart" often refers to the same thing as "mind". Countless influences and experiences form that inner being. Many people in our culture do not realise how much their thinking is shaped by what they look at on their phones or TV screens. Some of these things might even have become idols in their lives.

We must therefore be careful about what we allow our eyes to look at, our ears to hear, our minds to think about. This leads to the practice of godly thinking (verse 8). Christians are often accused today of not being great thinkers - sometimes, that's a fair accusation. Ask the average Christian why the Old Testament matters, or what worship is or isn't, and they probably won't give a very good answer. But Christians should be thoughtful, careful, curious people. First and foremost, we should think about what is true (verse 8). The first thing we need to think about each day is God's Word - truth itself. There, we will see what is "honourable" and "just" and "lovely". Indeed, in Jesus, we will see all these things perfectly displayed. We may even find what is "honourable" or "commendable" in the world around us - an honourable way to farm, or work, or take care of money - but we must always sift the practices of the world through the sieve of Scripture. We must think: what does Jesus want from me in my work, my family, my church? What actions or words today will bring most glory to God? We must avoid filling our minds and hearts with the deceptions and vanities of the world.

Questions:

1. What does Paul say we are to guard?
2. Why are we to guard our heart?
3. How can we guard our heart?

Tuesday – Philippians 4:10-13: Christian Contentment

Apparently, people in Canada the UK are slipped from seventh to ninth out of 156 in 2019 World Happiness Index. Happiness though isn't the same as contentment. True contentment is not about holidays or money or possessions; in fact, if you speak to those who have the most, by the world's standards, they'll often say they just want more, or that whatever they have doesn't make them truly happy. We need contentment, not just happiness. So, what's the secret?

Paul says that contentment starts with gratitude. For the remainder of this letter, Paul is expressing his profound gratitude for all that the Philippians have done for him during his imprisonment (see verses 10, 14, 18). Believers, saved by God's grace through Christ, always have something to be thankful for. Christians should be the most grateful people - and gratitude leads to contentment.

Paul also says that contentment is something to learn (see verse 12). There were times in Paul's life when things didn't go the way he'd hoped they would - to put it mildly (see 2 Corinthians 11:24-27). Paul had learned how to be content in both "abundance and need". Notice, by the way, there is such a thing as being content whilst having "an abundance". More and more money will not lead to more and more happiness; contentment is needed whether we are princes or paupers.

Lastly, Paul says that to be content requires supernatural power. He says in verse 13: "I can do all [these] things through him who strengthens me". Paul is speaking about Jesus, our mighty King. He's not saying that Jesus will take all the obstacles out of our lives; he's saying that Jesus empowers us to be content in all circumstances, whether pleasant or painful. We can grieve through him who strengthens us; we can go to the mission field, we can cope with unemployment, get married, go to prison, lead a Bible study, all through the power that Jesus Christ provides. He will never leave us nor forsake us. In that, we can rest content.

Questions:

1. Is happiness our goal in life?
2. What does Paul say we are to seek after?
3. How do we experience contentment?

Wednesday – Philippians 4:14-23 - Joyful Generosity

Paul began his letter giving thanks to God for the Philippians (see chapter 1:3). He does the same thing as he brings his letter to a close.

Paul speaks with great admiration and thankfulness for the generosity of the Philippian church. Acts 16 tells us about Paul's time in Philippi, and you can read on to see where he went next. As he travelled through the wider region, he says here in verse 15 that only the Philippians supported him financially. Wherever he was, the Philippians sent him practical help.

But not only were they generous to Paul, they were sacrificially generous - in verse 18 Paul says that he has received even more than he needed from them. He describes their generosity as a sacrifice pleasing to God. Paul, one of Jesus' greatest ever servants, was funded by the tiny but generous church of Philippi.

The Bible is very clear that generous giving is both commanded and rewarded by God (see Proverbs 11:17, Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15). Generous giving shows a heart marked by appreciation of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ - who generously gave his very life for us on the cross. This is one way that you might be able to serve God in a wonderful way. You may not be called to be a preacher or missionary, but you can partner with those who are by giving generously to their work.

As Paul closes his letter (verses 21-23), he gives us a fascinating glimpse of his situation: he says that "those of Caesar's household" send their greetings to the Philippians. God's Word was being preached to and believed by soldiers and Romans and even those who spent time with Caesar himself! What an encouragement for the Philippians: "every saint" in Philippi was contributing to the work of Jesus in the capital city of the world. Jesus the generous and gracious Saviour was building his church - and he still is today.

He deserves all that we can give him in return.

Questions:

1. How does Paul describe the Philippians generosity?
2. What does such generosity speak of?
3. What does the fact that greetings are being sent from Caesar's household tell us?

Thursday - Philemon 1:1-3 - A Gospel Picture.

Today we begin a short series using notes by Rev. Stephen McCollum (RPCS).

This is a short book, written to an individual who is a leader in the church at Colossae. Paul writes three letters from prison and gives them all to a man named Tychicus to deliver. One letter goes to Colossae which we have in Scripture- the book of Colossians, another letter goes to a neighbouring church in Laodicea which is around 10 miles away from Colossae- we don't have access to this letter, and the last of the three letters is the book of Philemon, a personal letter to Philemon who is in Colossae. Paul writes to Philemon about a runaway slave called Onesimus. Onesimus perhaps has stolen from his master Philemon and fled. Somehow Onesimus meets Paul, and by the grace of God Onesimus is converted. Paul writes this letter to encourage Philemon to accept him back into his household, to recognise God's gracious working in Onesimus' life.

This letter is important because it gives us a Gospel picture and a glimpse of the glory of Christ. In those days a slave has very few rights. By running away, he can be killed or at the least put in prison. Onesimus therefore will be scared to go back to Philemon. Just because he knows that God has worked in his life, and because he has a Christian master, Onesimus cannot be sure that Philemon will waive the punishment. But the right thing to do is for Onesimus to go back to his rightful master, even though it is a big risk. This is where we get to the Gospel picture. Paul writes this letter to intercede on the behalf of Onesimus to Philemon. Paul acts as the go-between or the mediator. We will look more at this intercession tomorrow.

Questions

1. Who was Philemon and why is Paul writing to him?
2. What does Paul want Philemon to do about Onesimus?
3. What was the right thing for Onesimus to do?

Friday – Philemon 1:4-7 - Christ Our Intercessor

Paul in verse 17 pleads with Philemon: receive Onesimus as you would receive me. Accept him as you would accept me. Love him as you would love me. Treat him like family. It is not difficult to see the Gospel picture here. As slaves of unrighteousness, we owe God a debt that we can never pay. We have rebelled against Him, turning our backs on Him. We deserve death for our crimes against Him. Yet the Lord Jesus Christ is the intercessor between God and man. As intercessor, He pleads with his Father in heaven. Receive them as you would receive Me. Accept them as you would accept me. As you would receive me, so receive them. Declare them righteous in your sight, as I am righteous. Adopt them into your family as sons, as I am your beloved son. Jesus Christ can pray this way because He lived a perfect life and died for His people.

Paul pleads that Onesimus' debts be charged to Paul (v18). No matter what Onesimus owes Philemon, Paul will cover the cost. So too with Christ. The cost for our debt was death. The wages of sin is death. But Christ took this debt unto his body and unto his soul when he hung on that cross. The wrath of God appropriate for our sin was charged to his account.

How much more confidence ought Onesimus to have returning to his master, holding in his hand this letter from Paul. This letter will make the difference. So too with Christ's intercession for his people. Today if you are believing in Christ you have much to be confident about. You cannot boast in your achievements or merits. You were a guilty slave. But you can boast in the intercessor Jesus Christ who is the one who presents you to the Father faultless. And we are confident that once we are accepted, once we are justified in the eyes of the Father, we remain justified forever. Christ's intercession is complete. It is perfect.

Questions

1. In what way does Paul want Philemon to receive Onesimus?
2. What does Paul say he wants Philemon to do with Onesimus's debts?
3. What does this tell us about how we should respond to Christ's sacrifice for us?

Psalm 109D I Am Very Poor and Needy

9. I am very poor and needy;
I am wounded in my heart.
My life passes like a shadow,
Like a locust shaken off.
Both my knees are weak from fasting;
Gaunt my body has become.
I am scorned by my accusers;
Seeing me, they shake their heads.

10. Help me, LORD, my Lord;
O save me In accordance with Your love.
Let them know that this is Your doing;
That Your hand, LORD, did this all.
Bless me even though they curse me;
When they strike, they're put to shame.
But may gladness fill Your servant,
While dishonor covers them.

11. Clothed with shame be my accusers,
Wrapped up in their own disgrace.
With my mouth then I will offer
Great thanksgiving to the LORD.
In the multitude I'll praise Him;
For He stands beside the poor
At their right hand; and He'll save them
From those who condemn his soul.