

The Monday of JESUS' PASSION WEEK, April 6, 2020

Turn off the outside "noise" for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God's Word.
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9 (TNIV)

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters,
whatever is **true**, whatever is **noble**, whatever is **right**,
whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **admirable** —
if anything is **excellent** or **praiseworthy** —
think about such things.

⁹ Whatever you have learned
or received
or heard from me,
or seen in me—
put it into practice.

And **the God of peace** will be with you.

— PART 3 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

We get to **CHOOSE** what we allow our minds to **FOCUS** on. And Paul encourages us to **FOCUS** on some very specific things. Like...

*"whatever is **TRUE** . . . **think about these things**" —*

*"whatever is **NOBLE** . . . **think about these things**" —*

*"whatever is **RIGHT** . . . **think about these things**" — This word can describe behavior that is "right" or "just." Each word carries slightly different nuances. Doesn't everyone think they are "right"? Often that assumption (or presumption?) causes problems in our interpersonal relationships. I was once struck by the title of a book on marriage: *"Do You Want to be **Right** or Do You Want to be **Married**?"**

The Book of Proverbs urges its listeners to reflect on and live out the wise sayings contained in it can help us "receive instruction in prudent behavior" — specifically helping us learn to *"do what is **right and just and fair**"* (PROVERBS 1:3).

(And aren't those the people most of us would prefer to live with, work with or be neighbors with? As opposed to those who "do what is **wrong, unjust and unfair**"?)

Many times our need to **"be right"** is stronger than our desire to **"do right."** Dallas Willard used to say *"it's very difficult to be right and not hurt anybody with it!"*

So we need to understand that this is a word about **RELATIONSHIPS** and **COMMUNITY...** about **THE WAY WE TREAT OTHER PEOPLE**. That's why Darrell Johnson translates "righteousness" in the Sermon on the Mount "**RIGHT-RELATEDNESS**" or "**RIGHT-RELATIONSHIPS.**"

"As with 'truth,' *what is 'right' is always defined by God and his character.* Thus, even though this is one of the cardinal virtues of Greek antiquity, **in Paul it carries the further sense of 'righteousness,' so that it is not defined by merely human understanding of what is 'right' or 'just,' BUT BY GOD AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE.**"

GORDON D. FEE, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT).

My Old Testament mentor Bruce Waltke cites one scholar who **defines righteousness as " 'TO BRING ABOUT RIGHT AND HARMONY FOR ALL, for individuals, RELATED IN THE COMMUNITY and to the physical and spiritual realms. It finds its basis in God's rule of the world.' "** Waltke goes on to clarify and distinguish:

**"The righteous are willing to disadvantage themselves
to advantage the community;
the wicked are willing to disadvantage the community
to advantage themselves.**

The metaphor in Job 29:14, 'I put on righteousness as my clothing,' shows that **'RIGHTEOUSNESS' IS A PATTERN OF LIFE, not merely specific acts. . . . [and] IS 'A MATTER OF THE HEART (10:20). . . .'** "

BRUCE K. WALTKE, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15* (NICOT)

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Abba Father, we are broken people in our broken world,
often we fail to "do what is **right** and **just** and **fair.**"

**We are often far more concerned about "being right" —
proving that we're skilled in argumentation —
than we are about "doing what's right" —
revealing our commitment to treat everyone we encounter
with respect, grace, dignity, kindness, decency, justice and fairness.**

**Help us become willing to disadvantage ourselves
to advantage others;
and unwilling to disadvantage others
to advantage ourselves.**

**During the final week of his life, Jesus taught his followers
"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet,
you also should wash one another's feet."**

**Help us follow the way of Jesus our Servant-Leader,
who "did not come to be served but to serve"...
and who "gave up his life for his friends."**

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May God's goodness and grace be poured out on you today,

Pastor Doug