



“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whosoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

My Mental State

Central Truth: Wholesome living delivers the believer from depression.

L169. Date: February 1989. **Text:** Philippians 4:4-13. **Topic:** Joy.

Happiness is a choice! It really is. A person can choose to be joyful, or he can choose to be depressed. Happiness does not depend on circumstances but on one's attitude in the circumstances. Paul and Silas could sing praises to God from a Philippian jail. They chose to worship rather than to be depressed.

Look at a rose bush in full bloom. Do you see the blossoms or the thorns? Do you see a beautiful rose made threatening by cruel thorns, or do you see a stem of thorns dimmed by the beauty of the rose? It is all in your attitude. Happiness is possible. Happiness is commanded. The Old Testament encourages us, *“This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it”* (Psalm 118:24). The New Testament commands, *“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice”* (Philippians 4:4).

Your mental state reflects your spiritual state (with the exception of physical illnesses which affect the mind). God has given you a healthy mind (II Timothy 1:7). It is your duty to guard your mental state and strive to keep a healthy mind. The Bible tells you how (Philippians 4:4-13).

I. BE FILLED WITH JOY

“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4). **A. Rejoice continually.** The suffix *re-* added to joy means to do it

again. “*Rejoice*” means to experience joy over and over. We are to rejoice in the Lord “*always*,” at all times. That is continual joy.

B. Rejoice sacredly. The Christian is not to be filled with joy, but to experience his joy “*in the Lord*.” He will sanctify our joy. We must not glory in our wisdom, power, or riches; “*but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD*” (Jeremiah 9:23, 24). We will never rejoice in sinful or harmful things when we rejoice in the Lord.

C. Rejoice obediently. Our joy is not according to our circumstances or our feelings. It is in our Lord. His command is that we rejoice in Him. To do less is to sin. Christian joy is an act of obedience.

If necessary, offer this prayer: “Lord, You know that I do not feel joyful. But You have commanded me to rejoice in You. As an act of obedience I take courage and rejoice in Your person, Your work, and Your personal ministry in me today. Thank You for giving me the grace to experience Your joy.” You can obey His command to rejoice.

II. BE RESPONSIVE TO PEOPLE

“*Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand*” (Philippians 4:5).

What a challenge that is! “*Moderation*” can be translated “forbearance, considerateness, humility, courtesy, or gentleness,” but a good term for it is “sweet reasonableness.” God said, “*The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men*” (II Timothy 2:24). We are to “*speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men*” (Titus 3:2). That is a challenge because it demands a great discipline of spirit.

On the other hand, “*moderation*” is possible because the fruit of the Holy Spirit is “*peace, longsuffering, gentleness*” (Galatians 5:22). We who live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and are filled with the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25) can live gently with our fellowmen. Our expectation of the soon coming of the Lord encourages us to live in His spirit of loving concern. We want to have a reputation for Christian kindness when we appear before Him.

Such a spirit is to be shown “*unto all men*,” even if they show the opposite attitude. A father once advised his son, “*Treat every man as a gentleman, not because he is but because you are.*” That is good advice for Christians, too.

III. BE PRAYERFUL Read Philippians 4:6, 7 very thoughtfully. Pause at every punctuation mark and meditate on what is said before it. Here is the counsel found in this text.

A. Pray away your worries. “*Be careful for nothing*” (verse 6). “Do not worry about anything” is the counsel. Jesus tells you not to worry about food, clothing, shelter, or even life itself (Matthew 6:25-34). When you begin to worry, pray until your worries are gone.

B. Pray in all situations. Take “*every thing*” to God (verse 6). Every need should be brought before Him; every concern should be turned to Him. “*Pray without ceasing*” (I Thessalonians 5:17). “*Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually*” (I Chronicles 16:11).

C. Pray in all ways. “*By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known*” (verse 6). Entreaty, earnest pleading, thanksgiving, and freely asking are all forms of prayer. There are a thousand (or more!) ways to pray. Do not worry about the form of your prayer; just pray.

D. Pray with confidence. Make your requests “unto God” (verse 6). Come to Him as your heavenly Father (Matthew 6:9) who knows all about you and loves you perfectly. Ask in Jesus' name and you will get what you ask (John 14:13, 14). Blessed assurance!

E. Pray with profit (verse 7). The blessing is “*the peace of God.*” Its abundance is that it “*passeth all understanding.*” Its blessing is to “*keep your hearts and minds.*” Its realm is “*through Christ Jesus.*” That is how the Christian can have a healthy mind.

IV. CONTROL YOUR THOUGHTS

What do you think about when your mind is free? Is your mind filled with things that are true, honorable, worthy of respect, pure, right, amiable, high toned, and gracious? If so, you are obeying God's command in Philippians 4:8. What a person thinks is what he is; however, he may try to appear to the contrary (Proverbs 23:7).

You can control your thoughts by “*casting down imaginations, . . . and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*” (II Corinthians 10:5). It is a mark of a healthy mind to think of things which are honorable and decent. Only a sick mind is undisciplined in its subjects. You can substitute good thoughts for bad and keep your mind healthy.

V. FOLLOW YOUR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Faithful men and women of God have gone before us, leaving us examples to follow. We can model our conduct after what we have been taught and what we have seen in them (verse 9). Living continually by the Word of God, as exemplified in His saints, we will be assured of His presence with us and His ministry in us. What a way to live!

VI. LEARN CONTENTMENT

Blessed is the person who can truly say, *“I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content”* (verse 11). Contentment when things are difficult or when they are pleasant, when there is nothing or when there is abundance, when with friends or without friends, is an indication of spiritual maturity.

There are two areas in which you should learn to be content. (1) Be content in all circumstances. (2) Be content without complaint in act or attitude. That is a true sign of a healthy mind.

VII. BE POSITIVE

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (verse 13).

It is no boast of pride to say *“I can do all things”* so long as we add *“through Christ.”* The ability is not ours but His, for it is *“Christ which strengtheneth me.”* That is not some high ideal for which we as Christians seek. It is a blessed reality available to us all. Believe it and live in His sufficiency.

There is no such thing as luck, chance, or accident. God is at work in us. The healthy mind recognizes Him and seeks to know and do His will. *“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (II Timothy 1:7). It is a sign of mental health to trust God.

Questions

1. What is meant by “my mental state”?
2. In what way is happiness a choice?
3. How is joy a sign of mental health?
4. Why is a healthy mind concerned about other people?
5. How does prayer help us to stay healthy in mind?
6. How can your mind obey II Corinthians 10:5?
7. How can you discipline your mind to be content?

8. What does Philippians 4:13 have to do with mental health?
9. How does II Timothy 1:7 relate to this study?
10. How can you cultivate a good mental state this week?