

*I press on
toward the goal to
win the prize for
which God has
called me
heavenward
in Christ
Jesus.*

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philippians ...

Your Mental Environment

The mind is going to live someplace. Whether it lives in the depths of despair or whether it lives focused on the courts of glory depends on the cumulated decisions of the individual Christian.

The word of God emphasizes that all attitudes and actions of members of the human race are decision-based. Therefore the Judge of all mankind holds each person accountable for all those decisions. From the time of Adam and Eve onward, however, the natural tendency of people has been to duck that accountability and blame others or circumstances for their decisions and attitudes.

The word of God, to correct that misunderstanding, brings an individual face to face with himself. Using the righteous principles of the law, the scripture speaks, "that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God" (Romans 3:19). No one gets to blame anyone else; everyone is held accountable for his own decisions. Thus the apostle Paul lets Christians know where to build the dwelling place for their minds.

▼ **List of positives** — After commanding the brethren to rejoice always, to exhibit their forbearing spirit, and to pray so that the peace of God would guard their hearts and minds, the apostle then brings in his list of positives to the table for the brethren to consider. "Finally, brethren," says he, "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things" (Philippians 4:8). These are all powerful, uplifting concepts. And the command is for each saint to have his mind dwell in the midst of these.

▼ **Training the mind** — The mind of the saint has to be trained to reject the negative instantly and get over to these positives. Every time a falsehood pops up, the disciple of Christ immediately needs to have his mind focus on what is true. The dishonorable needs to be rejected, and that which is honorable instantly upheld. Wrong must be put in its proper category, and whatever is right needs to be exalted. Impurity must be shunned, and that which is pure pushed to the forefront of the mind. That which is dark and ugly is to be discarded, and that which is lovely is to occupy the frame of vision. That which is disgusting and downward is to be shunted off to the side, so that the things of good reputation stand forth. That which pulls man into Satan's darkness is to be repelled, and anything of excellence is to be lifted up for example. That which is critical and destructive is to be turned away from, and that which is praiseworthy needs to be seen by the reformed mind and held in high regard. The saint really must see how destructive negative thoughts are, and make the continuing conscious effort to retrain his mind immediately to jump to these scripturally specified positives. The proper name for this is repentance!

Every holy one of God is responsible for creating the proper mental environment in which his mind dwells, as the apostle emphasized, "Let your mind dwell on these things." If a brother or sister lets his mind live in the midst of Hollywood hype or hiphop culture, then all the twistedness of those environments will be what drives his mind, even though he claims to be a Christian. If a Christian allows himself to hang out in the "gloom and doom room," then his attitude is going to stink, and he will not be an effective purveyor of the gospel, someone easy to live with, or a brother that others like to be around. The solution for so many mental battles the saint fights is simple: live in the positive mental environment specified by the Holy Spirit!

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JAY WILSON