

A BEAUTIFUL MIND AND A BEAUTIFUL LIFE FOR A BEAUTIFUL GOD
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Philippians 4:8,9

⁸Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever 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. ⁹Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. KJB

NKJ: ⁸Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

A few years ago a really good movie was released entitled, A BEAUTIFUL MIND, which chronicled the life of John Forbes Nash, a West Virginia native and mathematical genius who battled mental illness to become a Nobel Prize Winner by developing a new economic theory of capitalism based on cooperation rather than competition. Despite his schizophrenia he was able to use the analytical part of his mind to keep his demons in check. The movie depicted the triumph of the human spirit over a startlingly real mental disease. Russell Crowe played the leading role as Nash.

We often give little emphasis to the mind in our Christian faith. In fact, we often give the mind less than a secondary role; and some members of the Christian faith see an educated mind as a threat to their faith. They forget that the Bible commands us to Love God with ‘all our mind’! There must not be a disconnect between ‘faith and reason’ that some seem to have. In fact, we must employ our reason in ‘contending’ for the faith that has been handed down to us, and demonstrate to others that there is no animosity between truth and faith. We must use our minds for Jesus’ sake in our search for truth; and we must accept demonstrated truth wherever and whenever and by whomsoever it is found.

Here is Paul, the greatest mind of his time, one of the greatest minds of the ages, the Apostle with the Beautiful Mind, telling the Philippians, and indeed all Christians, to have Beautiful Minds.

I. HE FIRST DESCRIBES FOR US A BEAUTIFUL MIND.

NIV: ⁸Finally, brothers, 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. ⁹Whatever 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.

A Beautiful Mind is a mind that is first of all based on **TRUTH**. (**IB Truth--** Resting on reality and aiming at reality). Truth is the foundation of all thinking. False thinking leads to the destruction of thought and the destruction of life itself. The Bible says, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Paul reminded the Galatians that he got his Gospel from the Risen Christ Himself; and he constantly battled for the Truth. We need to stand upon the authority of

Truth. Jesus said, "I AM the TRUTH..." All thought systems that leave Him out are based upon the wrong foundation of thought, and therefore must fall. If the presupposition is wrong the entire system crumbles.

A Beautiful Mind is **Honest**. This word means (IB **Honest**. Honorable, dignified, worthy of reverence, the combination of gravity and dignity)

The Christian mind thinks about what is more noble in one's actions. The sensual must give place to the spiritual so that the mind is not lying in the gutter but kneeling before the altar. We are sons and daughters of God, therefore our thoughts must reflect our status. We are to think Honestly, to think Nobly, to think Godly.

A Beautiful Mind is built on Truth, is Honest to God, and is **Just**. (IB **Just**. Righteous relations between man and man, and man and God.) The Beautiful Mind is a mind that seeks to be fair in one's relations to others. Rather than thinking how it can promote only itself, it thinks of others and what their needs are and tries to be just in such thinking. The Beautiful Mind realizes that to sin against any fellow creature is to sin against God.

The Beautiful Mind is Pure, and as the Bible says, "To him who is pure, all things are pure." (IB **Pure**. Stainless, chaste, unsullied.) In Bible School the younger children were taught the chorus—"Be careful little eyes what you see....Be careful little ears what you hear." The point of the chorus was that the impressions on our senses are recorded in our minds. And the more we see, hear, watch, experience, the more entrenched these things become, until--- until they enter so strongly into our being that they become us. "As a man thinketh in his heart, that he is." The Interpreters' Bible exposition says: "Whatsoever things are pure: This is a comprehensive term. Besides actual vices there are many habits and actions which degrade a man in his own eyes and in those of others. He must purify himself of all these meannesses. As he keeps his body clean, he must wash away everything that debases his soul."

A Beautiful Mind is also a **Lovely** mind. (IB **Lovely**. Lovable, endearing, amiable, gracious, charming, pleasing, winsome.) One doesn't have to be stoical and straight laced to be a Christian. The mind that God admires in us is a winsome, charming, gracious, endearing, amiable and pleasing mind.

In 1st Chr. 28:9 "The Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intents of the thoughts." Ps. 7:9 states, "The righteous God tests the hearts and minds."

The Beautiful Mind is a mind that thinks good thoughts about others, and doesn't think about their blemishes. (IB **Of good report**. Attractive, fair speaking.) We often think of others as objects to please us rather than thinking of them as being subjects to be loved by us. A Beautiful Mind looks at the best in each person and thinks the best about them. But a Beautiful Mind thinks the best about everything—if there be any PRAISE, and if there be any VIRTUE, think on these things. Really, the word think means to Meditate. If our Minds are Beautiful, we will constantly meditate on the Best. Goodness, Truth, and Beauty will always typify our thinking.

II. AND A BEAUTIFUL MIND WILL LEAD US TO A BEAUTIFUL LIFE.

It is truly remarkable how our thoughts make us who we are and who we become. As Proverbs 23:7 tells us "As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is." Descartes had a different meaning in mind, but how true his dictum, "I think, therefore I am." Our

thoughts turn us into who we become. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "A man is what he thinks about all day long." C.S. Lewis put it a little differently: "All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be."

So, then, our thoughts can make for us A Beautiful Life or a Miserable Life. Vance Havner puts it like this: "Our defeat or victory begins with what we think, and if we guard our thoughts we shall not have much trouble anywhere else along the line." Someone said, "Every extramarital affair was first a fantasy." Every sin is first a thought, then a reality. We see, we think, we do. John Stott concludes, "Self control is primarily mind control." For good or for ill, our thoughts make us who we are today, and who we will be tomorrow.

Martin Luther King, Jr., whose holiday we celebrate tomorrow, said that as a student at Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta, Georgia, he had to ride across town to the school, and back each day. Since the racial restrictions of the Jim Crow Laws forced him to ride in the back of the bus, he says that when he got on the back seat of the bus he left his mind on the front seat, and said to himself, "One of these days, I'm going to put my body up there where my mind is." And sure enough he did, and did the entire world a great, great, favor.

But listen to what Paul says **⁹The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. NKJ**

It is almost as if Paul is saying to the disciples, Only a Beautiful Mind can give you God's Beautiful Peace. And God's Peace will keep your hearts and minds. We must, then, do the disciplining of our minds to make them Beautiful, and from them will come a Beautiful Life.

And he points to his own life as an example for them to follow. I would to God that each of us could point to ourselves and say to other Christians, "Live by my example." Too often Christians live more by the world's standards than by God's standards, because they are being programmed to think the way the world thinks and not the way God commands. Pornography is blighting the minds of so many. The misuse of the Internet, and the ease of purchasing X, XX, and XXX-rated movies has entered the home and the church. At a Christian Retreat a few years ago we were told that a too high percentage of Baptist Men watch pornographic movies, and that a lesser number are actually addicted to pornography. Paul said, "What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace will be with you." If our minds are beautiful, our lives will be beautiful too, and we can say, as did Paul, "Use my life as your example."

Paul's mind was Beautiful indeed: And Paul's life was lived so much like His Master that when we think of Paul, we automatically think of Jesus. Can you as a Christian lay your life out before others and say, "What you see in my life, what you have heard from my life, that do.; and if you will follow my life God's peace will fill your life?" When others watch you in your office, at your work, in your school, in your home, do your attitudes and habits reflect the Beautiful Life of Jesus? Does your life appear beautiful and winsome? Do they want to be like you? We must all confess that there are times of weakness when we allow the flesh to dominate the situation; but such times should be rare, and followed by contrition.

A Beautiful Life is a life of genuine Christian Character which comes from a Beautiful Mind. The old maxim is correct which says: "Thoughts produce acts, acts

produce habits, and habits produce character.” Let me rephrase it: “Beautiful Minds produce Beautiful Thoughts that result in Beautiful Habits which produce Beautiful Lives.” As someone has said, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” If our lives reflect Jesus, others will see and know that we are indeed Christians. But we must not forget that God is the Great Beholder of our lives, and that we are accountable to live Beautiful Lives for His sake.

III. A BEAUTIFUL LIFE IS LIVED WITH A BEAUTIFUL PURPOSE—TO GLORIFY A BEAUTIFUL GOD.

The Westminster Catechism tells us what that Beautiful Purpose is—To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Perhaps I am using the word Beautiful too much. But if Hollywood can use it we can use it too. And, I think for the most part, we agree upon what is beautiful, although I realize that the word has a cultural bias for us as it does for all societies. But for the Greek world of Paul’s time the virtues of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty were very important. And they are still important today.

When I say that God is Beautiful, I am not using the jargon of the beatnik age. For in His Essence, God is Totally Beautiful, Totally True, Totally Good. Was it Keats who said, “Beauty is Truth and Truth Beauty. That is all you know and all you need to know”?

Jesus was the Image of the Invisible God. His virtue was Absolute; so was His power; so was His beauty. Virtue emanated from Him and healed the sick; power emanated from Him and calmed the storm; compassion emanated from Him and gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead. His Life was lived with absolute Love and Virtue. He was the Image of God. When others saw Him, they saw the Living God, full of Grace and Glory.

If the God and Father of Jesus Christ is the epitome of Absolute Virtue, as we believe He is, He is Absolutely Beautiful and Eternally Beautiful. Unlike what we label as beautiful, His Beauty will never fade. He is the Essence and the Personification of all that is Good, True, Beautiful. John says, “God is Love.” That is, “God is Absolute Love”, Agape Love, Love that is Beautiful and from a Different Dimension, a Love that is Unchanging. The words we use to describe God are too weak. They simply do not, and indeed cannot, describe Him Who is ineffable. But we can know Him by faith in His Son Jesus.

If we possess a Beautiful Mind, and Live a Beautiful Life, we will one day behold Him in all His essential glory and beauty. The best picture the disciples ever got of God was when Jesus was Transfigured in Glory before Him, and when He was Resurrected in Glory and appeared to them, as He did to John in the Revelation. Our God is an Awesome God, awesome in Truth, Awesome in Goodness, and Awesome in Beauty.

Can you imagine the Absolute Beauty we will enjoy when we all get to Heaven? We will see all our glorious and Beautiful Family who have gone on before us; and we will see all the Beautiful Saints of God in all their Glory. Above all, we will see the Beautiful Savior who will shine in glory equally in the Godhead, a light that lightens that Celestial city; and we will behold for ourselves, throughout eternity, the Beautiful God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we could see God now, we would be consumed by His Absolute Beauty. If we saw the Triune God in His Glory, we would despair of life

lived on this low plane. But if we, in this life, glorify God with Beautiful Minds and Beautiful Lives we will be utterly astounded at His Absolute Beauty as we enjoy Him forever. Amen.