

## PSYCHOLOGICAL LAWS OF THE KINGDOM

Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister  
 Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ  
 of Latter Day Saints  
 Independence, Missouri

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SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:4-8

Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be afflicted for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, 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.

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As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

What do you think about? In your idle moments, driving along in your car, riding a bus or an elevator, or sitting in your easy chair, what is the content of your thoughts? Someone has wisely said, "What gets your attention gets your." If you want to know what kind of person you are, check up on your thoughts, on the things that get your attention, for they will eventually determine the kind of person you become, and the kind of person you will be through all eternity.

Those who are subjects of the kingdom of God will be characterized not only by certain acts, certain external standards of righteousness, but by certain standards of mind and of thought. They will obey not only the economic, social, moral, and physical laws of the kingdom, but the psychological laws. In fact, though we separate the laws of the kingdom into categories for the purpose of discussion, there can be no separation of them in real life; each category overlaps and interlocks with every other category. As we said in last week's sermon, health is wholeness. Life cannot be divided into compartments; it must be lived as a whole.

What are some of the psychological laws of the kingdom -- the laws which will govern the thinking of the citizens and subjects of God's kingdom? The psychological laws of the kingdom are beautifully and clearly summarized in the five verses we have read from the fourth chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Remembering that "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he," and that "what gets your attention gets you" let us give some detailed study for a few moments to these verses.

Paul says in the first of our selected verses, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice." This is a good psychological law -- a law of the kingdom. Be glad! Be of good cheer! Be happy! There are some kinds of joy or happiness which do not last, however -- some kinds which turn to ashes the morning after. Paul is careful to stipulate how men should rejoice -- "in the Lord." The King does not promise you a release from all trouble, from all struggle, from all pain; but he does promise joy even in affliction, if your life is centered in him, lived in him, dedicated to him. With the suffering of the cross yet before him, Jesus could say to his disciples, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Paul goes on to give a reason why we should "rejoice in the Lord always." "The Lord is at hand." That is, he is nigh; he is not afar off. This is sometimes interpreted to mean that the second coming of the Lord is nigh. Perhaps Paul did mean that but interpreted in the light of another similar statement of Paul's, it could mean that "he is not far from any one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being. Citizens of the kingdom of God know God as a friend, as a Father, as one who is immediately and unfailingly available -- a God near at hand and not a God afar off. In this knowledge we may be of good cheer, and rejoice in the Lord.

"Let your moderation be known unto all men." As used here, moderation means yieldingness, pliability, gentleness -- the opposite of stubbornness, hard-headedness, of being proud, unyielding, opinionated, unwilling to change one's mind or to learn. The law of the kingdom is adaptation and change leading to perfection. He who never changes his mind, or improves his thinking, or embraces a new idea, is mentally and spiritually dead. Be gentle, pliable, yielding, willing to learn, if you would belong to God's kingdom.

"Be afflicted for nothing," might better be translated, "In nothing be anxious," or "Do not be over-careful, or full of care and worry." The word "afflicted" in the original Greek carries with it a connotation of pressure. The children of the kingdom do not live under the pressure of worry, care, anxiety, or burdensome care. They make known their needs through prayer and supplication to their heavenly Father, with thanksgiving for the blessings already received, and the peace of God that passeth all understanding keeps their hearts and their minds through Christ Jesus.

In the last verse of this selected reading -- verse 8, Paul lists a number of types of things upon which the citizen of the kingdom should think. That word "think" also has some interesting connotations. Weymouth's translation says "Cherish the thought of these things." Another translation says, "Attentively consider." The word also carries some of the idea of "reckoning," turning them over and over as miser might turn over his gold pieces to be assured once again of their value and number. Still bearing in mind that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," let us now consider some of the things about which the citizen of the kingdom should think.

First, he will think about whatsoever things are true -- that is, whatsoever things are genuine, honest, sincere. Second, he will think about whatsoever things are honest -- or as Weymouth says, whatsoever things win respect. The Greek word which is here translated "honest" means literally "venerable, grave, serious." There are some people who seem never to have a really serious thought. Their thoughts never get above the level of the current gag lines that are popular in comedy shows on radio and T V. A bit of cheerful humor in the proper place is good, but there must be some place in the mind of the citizen of God's kingdom for thoughts of those things which are venerable, grave, serious, honorable, for the things which win respect.

Third, the citizen of the kingdom is commanded to think about whatsoever things are just. Justice is righteousness, and righteousness is justice. We need to think more about dealing justly with our neighbor in practical, economic, social and political ways, if we are to establish the righteousness of the kingdom.

Fourth, we are to think about whatsoever things are pure, that is, chaste, or saintly. The original Greek word connotes chaste; but it is interesting to note that the Spanish translation uses the word "santos," which is close akin to our English word "saint." Fifth, we are to think about whatsoever things are lovely -- those things which are lovable, amiable, which have beauty or worth that makes them lovable. Sixth, Paul says that we should think on those things which are of good report, or in other words, things which are reputable, which sound well, which are gracious.

Then comes a further qualification in Paul's instruction. Not all things which are true or honest or just or lovely or of good report are worth while to think about. Sometimes the things which are well reported, reputable, and of good report are simply popular errors, while the truth of the kingdom is had in ill repute. So Paul adds, "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Virtue, as used in this verse, carries the meaning of force, strength of mind or body, excellence. If these things contain within them anything which will bring strength of mind or body or spirit, if there is in them anything of real lasting excellence, if there is in them anything which will make one worthy of praise or commendation in the sight of God, then Paul says, "Think on these things." And by this word "think," he does not mean simply to let your mind wander over them, or do daydream about them. As we have already noted, Weymouth's translation says "Cherish the thought of these things." Another translation says "Attentively consider" these things. Thinking on these things is an active process which well may employ all the energies of mind and body.

Thus Paul sums up in five verses the most important psychological laws of the kingdom. Rejoice in the Lord as ever near. Have faith, and do not be pressed down by anxiety and fear. Ask God for what you need, and give thanks for what you receive. THINK on the things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, reputable -- on the things which give strength to body, mind, and spirit, and the peace of God shall be with you.