



## Negativism

*"We are constantly being exposed to things that are untrue and impure, some of them so depraved that it is shameful even to speak of them. If we are not vigilant, we will be led into thinking excessively about them. We must resist the overexposure of our minds to these befouling influences around us. But we must do more than merely fight a defensive battle, just waiting for the enemy to attack and then seeking to repel him. We must be positive and aggressive in our stance and strategy. We must with determination concentrate on the things that are true, pure, and virtuous. We must give our minds and our thoughts to these things."*

So wrote John H. Skilton (*Think on These Things* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972], preface).

Christian soldiers, take heart! My old seminary professor had it right. If we are going to live a purposeful and joyful life, we are going to have to avoid negativism and think of the great blessings of God. This was the Apostle Paul's advice:

*"Finally, 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."*

(Philippians 4:8)

Have you been thinking of such things lately?

Fault-finding is so easy for sinners to engage in. Sadly, we all do it. We can readily become depressed just looking at the world stage, or bemoan the aches and pains of our personal life. It is easy to find faults in others or in the church.

Paul is not telling us to turn pessimism into optimism – seeing the glass half full instead of half empty. No, the attitude for Christians is to see life realistically. It is often thought that when we think of things spiritually we are departing from reality into the realm of mysticism. The invisible things of God, however, are the real and lasting things. The Apostle Paul said, *"...we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal"* (2 Corinthians 4:18).

The glass is full! The cup overflows! But the only way to see this is by faith.

Keep a proper perspective on life. The "things" that God tells us to focus on are His grace, love, and mercy. Focus on the complete redemption that Christ has accomplished for us through the cross and empty tomb. Focus on the hope that is set before us instead of the obstacles on our path. Remember who made and upholds the world. Remember who you belong to.

If we actually would occupy ourselves with meditating on the blessings of God which we have, there would be precious little time to be negative. The truth is, there would not be enough time to express our thanksgiving.

The "things" to meditate on are revealed in the Word of God. Who else could reveal such great news? If we examine the health of the world around us, it is not a pretty picture. But we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven, and that changes everything as we view our lives.

Does that mean all our problems go away? Certainly they don't. But it is because of our sanctification by the Holy Spirit that we are able to see that the *"sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:18). A part of

the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us is that our *minds* are renewed (Romans 12:2, Philippians 4:7). Compare that with what Paul writes in Romans 8:5,

*“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”*

If we lived by sight and not by faith, what a dark world this would be. If we lived our life by looking at our paltry works instead of living by faith, what a negative outlook we would have. We would succumb to doubt and fear because of our failures and sins. But we are saved and live by grace — by grace alone. Our Lord told Paul,

*“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”*

(2 Corinthians 12:9)

If we all began now to count the many blessings of God, we would not finish in this lifetime. And there would be no time left for dwelling on the negative.

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