Philippians 4:8 (expanded translation) *From now on, members of the Royal Family of God, whatever is [or keeps on being] true [doctrinal], whatever is honorable [noble or worthy of respect], whatever is just [fair or right], whatever is pure [of proper motivation], 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.*

In our study of *Phi 4:8*, we have come to the phrase “whatever is lovely,” translated from the two Greek words *hosa prosphile*. *Prophile* refers to those areas of your life where personal love exists. It is a compound adjective made up of the preposition *pros* and the noun *phile* (personal love). Love comes in four categories for members of the Royal Family of God.

1. Personal love toward God.
2. Love toward right man or right woman. This is a relationship between two members of the opposite sex designed for each other by God in eternity past, *Pro 18:22, 19:14; Gen 2:18, 22; Ecc 9:9; 1Co 7:17*.
3. Personal love toward friends.
4. Impersonal, unconditional love toward members of the human race.

The third category where personal love exists, which *Phi 4:8* instructs us to dwell or concentrate upon, is **category three love**, which is love for friends. The simple principle here is that the smarter you are, the fewer friends you will have! *Pro 18:24* warns us about trusting too many people as our true friends. True friendship is a very rare to find. You can have a friendship that is stronger than that of your immediate family. Distance and time are no object in this kind of relationship. Some of the best friends you ever have in life could be inherited from your father or mother, because category three love overlaps generations, and age is not a barrier.

Category three love is a giving love, *1Sa 18:1-4*; it gives time, thoughtfulness, and material things. True friends do not try to upstage you or compete with you; they will love you as they love themselves. This is what we see in *1Sa 20:17* where Jonathan and David were true friends: “And Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life.” Category three love is restricted to only your friends and it does not include sex, as category two love does, but rather it is based on a mutual soul rapport. A man and woman can have great friendship love, although there can be a danger of one or both of them mistaking it for category two love.
The principle of category three love is found in passages such as Pro 17:17, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” True friends never stab you in the back, Pro 17:9. They never gossip about what their friends do wrong, and therefore this type of love provides a pleasant, relaxing environment. They do not use what you say against you, and they guard your privacy, and never gossip about you to others. A friend is someone who levels with you and pulls no punches; in fact, this is how a pastor is a friend to the congregation. You can always be honest with your friends, Pro 27:6, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.” Unfortunately, some people never have friends because they are arrogant and proud of their hypocrisy and their ability to deceive others.

Category three love is also outgoing and objective rather than hypersensitive and subjective. It is limited to a few true friends because it takes both energy and sacrifice to have true friends. This energy and sacrifice is compensated by desire and capacity in the soul. Capacity for category three love through Bible doctrine in the soul is the basis for a relaxed mental attitude toward all believers. In life, you will have few true friends, but you must have a relaxed mental attitude toward all believers, including the worst kind. Category three love toward a few good friends overflows in a relaxed mental attitude toward all believers, Pro 27:9-10.

In 1Sa 18:1, “Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.” Notice that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David. “Knit” is the Hebrew word qashar, which means to tie or to be chained together. This reveals the faithfulness that they had toward one another. 1Sa 18:2-4 continues, “And Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father’s house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. [“Covenant” is the Greek noun beriyth, which means a soul agreement of obligation, faithfulness to each other, and sacrifice.] And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.” The robe represented that which could be seen by others, and therefore that which represented one’s character, nobility, strength, and faithfulness to his friend. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe to symbolize that there would be no covering or hypocrisy, but total transparency in his friendship with David. The armor was a protective covering and it symbolized the fact that Jonathan would cover David at all times. The sword refers to Bible doctrine in Heb 4:12, and it reveals the fact that faithfulness is based upon Bible doctrine in the soul, not on carnality and fleshly rapport. The bow was a hunter’s and warrior’s weapon, which represented the fact that if necessary Jonathan would fight and defend his friend. The belt is a symbol of a righteous life and a faithful spirit as in Isa 11:5, “Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist.”

Category three love can be destroyed by mental attitude sins, Job 19:19-22. It can also be ruined by verbal sins, Pro 16:28, 17:9. Loss of friendship love is part of intensive discipline, Psa 38:11, 88:18.

In category three love, true friends help sharpen each other’s appearance, character, and nature, Pro 27:17, “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” Just as iron is shined with another piece of iron, so love between friends shines one another’s character. True friendship is profitable for both people, Ecc 4:9-12. A true friend is never known until one is in need, and this principle holds true even when you
are rejoicing and enjoying yourself! It is good to have a friend with you to share the good times. “A joy shared is doubled, a sorrow shared is cut in half.”

How should friends be chosen? Believers should develop friendships with those who are positive toward doctrine, 2Co 6:14 cf. Psa 119:63, “I am a companion of all those who fear Thee, and of those who keep Thy precepts.” Your friends reveal your character, Jam 4:4, “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” Friends of the world are enemies of God. Be careful of the familiar friend in whom you trust who will betray you, Psa 41:9, who will not have compassion in time of disaster, Job 6:14, who will deceive you for personal gain, 2Sa 13:3, and who contribute to causing you to fall, 2Sa 13. Be careful for those who become your friend because of what they can get from you, Pro 19:6, “Many will entreat the favor of a generous man, and every man is a friend to him who gives gifts.” Beware of those so-called friends who flatter you with their speech, Pro 27:14, who are friendly with you for your wealth, Pro 19:4, who forsake you and flee when you need them the most, Mar 14:50, who use you and never return the kindness that you showed them, Luk 15:16, and who turn against you, Job 19:19. The Word of God is our guiding light, not the viewpoint of the world, 1Jo 5:19, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”

Continuing in Phi 4:8, we read, “From now on, members of the Royal Family of God, whatever is true [doctrinal], whatever is honorable [noble or worthy of respect], whatever is just [fair or right], whatever is pure [of proper motivation] whatever personal loves exist, whatever is of good repute…” The final adjective in this passage is translated “of good repute,” from the Greek word euphema which means that which is commendable, or that which is well spoken of; this is the origin of the English word “euphemism.” (A euphemism is the act or an example of substituting a mild, indirect, or vague term for one considered harsh, blunt, or offensive.) This word means that when one is being critical, it is legitimate criticism given in a gracious way. Anyone who has command responsibility has to judge and evaluate those under his command. Judging must be distinguished from evaluating people as one in authority. This is why our Lord said in Joh 7:24, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

The judging that is forbidden in the Word of God is assigning a sin (real or imagined) to another person in your conversation, and it makes no difference whether they have actually done it or not. As God said to Job in Job 40:8, “Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?” Sin is between the individual and the Lord. We have no right to judge, malign, or gossip. Maligning is seeing the sin and telling others, whereas gossiping is repeating something you did not see yourself.

Eph 4:29 says, “Let no corrupt communication proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.” Many people do not recognize that the sins of the tongue destroy your life, and out of the seven worst sins, from God’s viewpoint, three are verbal sins. Pro 6:17,19 teaches that out of the seven which the Lord hates are: “A lying tongue… a false witness who utters lies [perjury] and a person who spreads strife among the brethren [gossip, slander, maligning, judging].”
The self-righteous arrogance of the evil believer assumes the prerogative of replacing our Lord Jesus Christ as the presiding judge of the supreme court of heaven. We are not responsible to self-righteous people who create false standards. In fact, a favorite term used by self-righteous people is “duty” or “responsibility.” The self-righteous Pharisees thought it was their “duty” to destroy the perfect Son of God. The legalistic Judaizers also thought it was their “duty” to discredit the grace ministry of Paul and kill him. Avoid these individuals who consider it their duty to speak evil and discredit other people.

It is a double standard of arrogance to judge, slander, malign, and condemn the sins of others, while at the same time being blind to your own sins. Those with such self-vindication and self-righteousness regard it as their duty to judge others, whereas our passage says, Phi 4:8, “From now on, members of the Royal Family of God, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.”

It is neither the duty, responsibility, nor prerogative of the believer to assume the role and function of Jesus Christ as the supreme court judge. It is however, the responsibility of believers to self-evaluate, and judge their own lives according to the standards of Bible doctrine, Rom 14:4,10.

All of us are the servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are members of the Body of Christ, the Royal Family of God, and the evaluation of our lives is the responsibility of our Lord. In the case of criminality, that responsibility has been delegated by our Lord to the government. However, regarding another believer with contempt indicates a tremendous function of arrogance in your life because you do not know the stage of his spiritual growth. If you exercise contempt for another believer, it is inevitable that you will find some way to malign, slander, or judge him. After the resurrection of the Church, all believers will be evaluated by our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom 14:12, 2Co 5:10. This evaluation will have two aspects: (1) the rejection of all of the worthless deeds we have done, which is the shame at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and (2) the rewards and blessing for everything we have done to execute God’s plan.

Our study continues in Phi 4:8, “…if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.” “If” is the conjunction ei, a conditional particle that introduces a first class condition. There are four conditional clauses in the Greek:

1. First-class condition, a statement of absolute fact (“if, and it is true”).
2. Second-class condition, a negative statement (“if, and it is not true”).
3. Third-class condition, a probable condition (“if, and maybe it is true, maybe it is not”).
4. Fourth-class condition, a statement of desire (“if, and I wish it were true, but it is not”).

The indicative mood of the verb “is” indicates a first class condition (“if, and it is true”). With the conjunction ei, translated “if,” we have the Greek noun arete (translated “excellence”), meaning virtue, which is moral goodness, or moral excellence of conformity to the laws of establishment.

Virtue is the foundation of that which is true, honorable, just, of proper motivation, and commendable. Virtue in the believer is the visible manifestation of the invisible, i.e., metabolized doctrine and the power of the Holy Spirit (whereas arrogance
is the visible manifestation of Satan’s invisible cosmic system). Virtue, which is the distinctive characteristic of the Royal Family of God, can only be produced in the predesigned plan of God, and is the basis of all true happiness in life (whereas pseudo-virtue produced in the cosmic system is the basis of hypocrisy).

The arrogant believer is locked into Satan’s cosmic system with a sense of superiority, and arrogance will make anyone stupid. Ignorance of doctrine suppresses curiosity and capacity for life. If you are not curious about what God has done for you, you have no capacity for life in any area. As Solomon teaches us in the book of Ecclesiastes, there are those who seek for pleasure, success, and happiness, and there are those who have pleasure, success, and happiness searching for them, Ecc 6:2.

The arrogant intellectual type of believer often has gnosis, academic doctrine, but no metabolized doctrine, 1Co 8:1, “We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.” Failure to metabolize Bible doctrine and apply it results in ignorance of the divine plan of God. The ignorant and apostate, sincere, sweet, kind, arrogant believers are classified by the Word of God in at least nine categories. They are (1) enemies of the Cross, Phi 3:18, (2) enemies of God, Jam 4:4, (3) haters of God, Joh 15:23, (4) double-minded, Jam 4:8, (5) anti-Christ, 1Jo 2:18-22, 4:3; 2Jo 1:7, (6) carnal Christians, Rom 8:7, 1Co 3:1-3, (7) disciples of the devil, 1Jo 3:8-10, (8) grieving the Holy Spirit, Eph 4:30, and (9) quenching the Spirit, 1Th 5:19.

The Apostle Peter gives us a great dissertation on virtue, which we will study further, in 2Pe 1:1-11, “Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

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