

## Wednesday Evening Bible Study

July 24, 2024

Series - The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

*The Prison Epistles*

*The Letter to the Philippians – The Joy of Faith*

Text - Philippians 4:8 – 9

*“What Are You Thinking?”*

### Introduction

Mark Twain wrote, “What a wee little part of a person’s life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head and is known to none but himself (and I would add – to God). All day long, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his thoughts, not those other things, are his history.”

This morning, we will examine from Paul’s Letter to the Philippians how our thought life influences our joy.

*“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” (Isaiah 26:3)*

*“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;” (2 Corinthians 10:5)*

Our world is upside-down today in its thinking. The devil has duped us into believing that the things that God says are good are bad, and vice-versa.

*“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20)*

We need to re-capture the thought lives of Christians today before we completely lose this generation.

#### I. Thoughts are the Roots of our Actions

*“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: (Matthew 15:19-20a)*

I heard a story of a mother who was peeling vegetables for a salad when her daughter, home from college, casually mentioned she was going to a questionable movie that evening. The mother suddenly picked up a handful of garbage and threw it in the salad. “Mother!” said the shocked girl. “You’re putting garbage in the salad.”

“I know,” replied the mother, “but I thought that if you didn’t mind garbage in your mind, you certainly wouldn’t mind a little in your stomach.”

Garbage in – Garbage Out

Let’s examine verse 8 closely:

***"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,***

- Finally – Paul is summing up this letter with important truths, but these next two verses are especially critical.
- True

God’s Word is truth:

*"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17)*

God’s Spirit is truth:

*"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." (1 John 5:6)*

Satan is a liar. Much of what is coming through the philosophy of this world is a lie straight from Satan.

Dr. Walter Cavert reported a survey on worry that indicated that only 8 percent of the things people worried about were legitimate matters of concern! The other 92 percent were either imaginary, never happened, or involved matters over which the people had no control anyway. Satan is the liar (John 8:44), and he wants to corrupt our minds with his lies (2 Cor. 11:3). “Yea, hath God said?” is the way he approaches us, just as he approached Eve (Gen. 3:1ff). The Holy Spirit controls our minds through truth (John 17:17; 1 John 5:6), but the devil tries to control them through lies. *Whenever we believe a lie, Satan takes over!*<sup>1</sup>

***"whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just,"***

These words mean honorable or worthy of respect, and righteous. God wants us to think about things that are right.

***"whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report;"***

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 95). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- “Pure” means wholesome, clean, moral, and modest. Think about what you are watching on television. Pre-marital sex, homosexuality, immorality is promoted. Immodesty is everywhere. Drunkenness is acceptable.
- “Lovely” – means something that is beautiful to look upon – not in a lustful way.
- “Good Report” – means something that is worthy of reporting, something that will be of benefit – think about all the negative things we talk about – all of the gossip.

*"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Ephesians 4:29)*

***"if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Philippians 4:8)***

- “Virtue” – means good character or moral goodness.
- “Praise” – means praiseworthy – something that we can praise.

## II. Actions are the Fruit of our Thoughts

***"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do:" (Philippians 4:9a)***

Who you are: the things that you do and say are a direct result of the things that you have been thinking about.

Paul not only recommended that people heed the doctrine that he had taught them, but he also told them to consider his example. Paul practiced what he preached, and he was a great illustration of a joyful, Spirit-filled Christian.

## III. Joy is the Result of Right Thinking and Right Doing

***"...and the God of peace shall be with you." (Philippians 4:9b)***

When you think right, you do right, and when you do right, you have peace. Peace is a tremendous source of joy.

When you think wrong, you do wrong, and when you do wrong, you feel guilty, and guilt is a robber of joy. Guilt leaves you unsettled, without peace.

## Conclusion

### Practical Points

One of the biggest problems facing Christians today is the bombardment of wicked, worldly, or just wasteful seed thoughts into our lives through the medium of entertainment. Most of what is coming into our lives through the television and internet is completely contrary to what God would say is good.

Illustrate – commercials on TV are often worse than the show we are watching. We can control the show, but we can't control the commercials. (Milk Maid Crackers – depicting a “wholesome” family made up of two homosexual men; IFC show – commercial actually depicts a woman sitting on a man's lap having sex; numerous commercials for Viagra; etc.)

**1. Removal - As much as you can help it, stop thinking about things that are outside of the will of God.**

This is where it will get very practical. We mentioned different kinds of negative and harmful thoughts that are influencing our actions.

Identify these things in your life. (Television shows, Internet website, Facebook or other social media, places you go, people you run with (negative people and gossips), music you listen to – run all these things through the test of Philippians 4:8)

How are you going to remove them? What tangible steps are you going to take to eliminate these thoughts from entering your life.

**2. Replacement - As much as you can, put into your mind thoughts that are within the will of God.**

What tangible can you do to add the right thoughts to your life:

- Read your Bible
- Church
- Fellowship with God's People
- Godly Music
- Wholesome television shows
- Busy yourself with service (Illustrate – putting together *John and Romans*; going soulwinning; visiting your Sunday School class)

The reason why so many of us are miserable and depressed is because we are not thinking straight, which is affecting what we do, which is decreasing our joy. What Are You Thinking?