**Lesson 15: Filter Your Thinking and Living**

Text: Philippians 4:8-9

**Introduction**

Paul addressed the need for conflict resolution in the Philippian church (4:1-5). There were two dear Christian ladies who needed help to work through their problems. To have the peace of God, they had to have the mind of Christ toward each other. Conflict and other problems should be handled with prayer, rather than worry (4:6-7). We ought to regularly give our problems over to God. Another vital part ingredient to living with peace is right thinking and living (4:8-9). This calls for a filter.

When you live in a world filled with dirt you must have filters. We have air filters, oil filters, and fuel filters for our vehicles. We have filters for the heating and air system of our homes. We have water filtration systems to ensure that what we are drinking is pure. You have to keep the dirt out for things to work properly. The same is true for your life. You have to keep the “dirt” out for your life to work properly. You need a joy filter for your thoughts and actions. This is provided in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. Whether you are working through a conflict or making a decision that comes with daily living, you need to filter your thoughts and actions with the filter provided in these verses.

1. Paul provided a list that serves to properly filter our thoughts. (4:8)
   1. Wrong living is the product of wrong thinking.
      1. Conflict results when two people set their mind on getting their own way. That is true for the toddlers fighting over a toy, as well as adults fighting over an inheritance.
      2. Those who are in despair are thinking about their lives without hope.
      3. Those living an immoral life have filled their minds with impure thoughts.
   2. Use the following list to filter your thinking. Whatsoever things are . . .
      1. True – trustworthy, verifiable, agreeing with facts. For example, if you are in a conflict, it is essential to deal with facts. Dwelling on things are not true intensifies conflicts. Satan deals with lies. Christians focus on that which is truth. (John 17:17) Is it true? Can it be verified? Do you know it to be fact?
      2. Honest – honorable, noble, worthy of respect. “This does not mean we hide our heads in the sand and avoid what is unpleasant and displeasing, but it does mean we do not focus our attention on dishonorable things and permit them to control our thoughts.” (Wiersbe) Is it proper and decent to think this way?
      3. Just – moral, ethical, righteous. Does it fit God’s standard? Will this thought lead you to blameless living? Would it help or hurt your reputation if you acted on this particular thought?
      4. Pure – chaste, innocent, without moral defect or blemish, free from carnality. Does this thought pollute your thinking? Is it a worldly way of thinking? Will it protect or endanger your purity? Since we live in a culture that promotes sexual impurity, you must continually filter your thinking. Remove that which triggers impure thoughts in the form of music, movies, books, social media, and internet usage. Cultivate friendships that are built on purity. Pure thinking leads to pure living.
      5. Lovely – pleasing, acceptable, friendly. Does this thought promote peace or conflict? Will it solve or add to the problem?
      6. Good Report – praiseworthy, commendable. Is it constructive? Will it help anyone for you to think this way? Will it build or tear down others?
      7. Virtue – moral excellence, good quality. Is it admirable? Does it motivate you to do better?
      8. Praise - worthy of recognition. Is it praiseworthy? Is it worth running through your mind?
   3. Paul encouraged them to *think* on these things. This word means to consider something in a detailed manner. We are prone to mull things over in our mind. To remain on a path that leads to godly living, we must make sure to screen every thought.
      1. “We are responsible for our thoughts and can hold them to high and holy ideals.” (A.T. Robertson)
      2. “A believer must constantly strengthen the moral integrity of his thought life.” (Robert Gromacki)
2. Paul provided a godly life that serves to filter our actions. (4:9 )
   1. “In Paul’s ministry, he not only taught the Word but also lived it so that his listeners could see the truth in his life” (Wiersbe).
   2. The Philippian believers were blessed to observe the example of Paul first hand.
      1. They *learned* from Paul. They added things up from his life and came to understand important truths as a result. This came from what they heard and saw in his life.
      2. They *received* his example. It is one thing to observe something in a person’s life and another to accept it into your own way of life.
   3. Paul exhorted them to practice what they observed in his life. They were to carry it out.
   4. If they followed his example, they would enjoy God’s presence and the peace He brings. Through prayer they could enjoy the “peace of God” (v. 7). By living out what they had learned they could enjoy the “God of peace” (v. 9). What a great way to live!
3. Central Idea: Paul exhorted the Philippian believers to filter their thoughts and actions so that they might enjoy a relationship with the God of peace.
4. Application: You must filter your thoughts and actions to enjoy a relationship with God.
   1. Do you filter your thoughts or allow them to go unfiltered? What needs to change in the way you are thinking?
   2. Are you following the example of those who are positive role models for Christ?

**Conclusion**

Joy is produced when we filter our thinking to think godly thoughts and follow the examples of those who have lived for Christ. Just as we must regularly monitor the filtration systems in our homes and vehicles, we must carefully monitor how we are filtering our words, thoughts, and actions. This is essential for your life to work properly. It is essential in the process of finding joy in Christ.