

Habits of Thinking and Acting

Philippians 4:8-9

The psalmist declares in Psalm 19:14 a desire that the meditations of his heart be pleasing to God. And in Mark 12:30, Jesus commands us to love God with all that we are including our minds. God doesn't just care about our actions; He cares about what we think on. Of course He does! Habits of thinking lead to habits of acting. If we are thinking on angry, bitter, jealous, judgmental, sensual, or despairing kinds of thoughts, those thought patterns will work themselves out into actions that are contrary to God's good and pleasing will. May we be encouraged to grow in this as we look at today's passage.

Opening Discussion: What has occupied a lot of your mental attention this past week?

Read Philippians 4:8-9

1. What are the commands and promises in this passage?
2. How would you briefly define each of the words that we are to dwell on in verse 8?
3. What does it mean to have your mind dwell on something?
4. Practically, how can you take stock of what your mind actually dwells upon?

Steve said:

To be honest, until relatively recently, I don't think I took very seriously the idea of submitting the very "meditations of my heart" to God. I felt like I had my hands full dealing with the words of my mouth and the actions of my body; but the meditations of my heart just seemed too untamed and too far out of my control. But I began noticing the Scriptures we're discussing this morning and became convinced that God wants me to "own" my thought life and gladly answer to Him about them. Eventually we all need to grow up and become accountable for the meditations of our hearts. We should acknowledge that our thinking has been shaped by all sorts of influences: the homes in which we were raised, the things that have happened to us (both good and bad), our God-given temperaments, etc. But eventually we need to say, "I am responsible for the deep patterns of thought in my heart. By God's grace, even the meditations of my heart should be pleasing to Him."

5. Do you live with a sense that you are accountable to God not just for your actions and words, but also for the thoughts of your mind?
6. Read Romans 12:1-2. What connections might Paul's instruction in Philippians 4:8 have to what he says in Romans 12:2?
7. What does verse 9 say about the ways Paul modeled the Christian life for the Philippians?
8. If you include the previous passage (4:4-7), with today's passage, how would you summarize what Paul says about how one can experience peace?
9. What is the main thing that you sense God is saying to you through this passage?