

Colossians 8 – Get Set
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Most people spend their lives enslaved to their own thoughts and feelings. Their thinking is stinking and their feelings need healing and until that changes – they are stuck in a never-ending cycle of disappointment, despair and defeat.

The Apostle Paul was thrown in prison in Rome because of his faith. But he was not down, disappointed or defeated. He used that time to write letters to encourage churches and those letters are now books of the Bible that still encourage us today!

We are preaching verse by verse through one of those books. It's called Colossians because it was written to believers in a city called Colossae in what is now Turkey.

The theme of Colossians is Christ Above All. In this letter, Paul shows how Christ is supreme – all sufficient – not just part of a philosophy or religion – He is Lord of all.

We saw last week that Christ is Above Self-Help. Living a victorious Christian life does not happen by trying to help yourself, but by dying to self!

Most of us rely on our own self-effort and will power. But we need less will power and more of God's power.

Being a Christian is all about change! When you are born again, you change kingdoms and families. And you have a changed heart. And you begin the process of total life change.

But we can't change our-self with more of self. More of self does not result in less self. The ability to live and love like Jesus doesn't happen by addition alone. We can't just ADD Christ-like character to our lives. The ability to live and love like Jesus also happens by subtraction. It's less of me and more of Him. I must decrease and He must increase. And the key to life is surrendering to His Lordship because Christ in us is the hope of glory!

In all his letters Paul starts by first teaching doctrine: who Christ is, who you are in Him and who He is in you. Then he moves to the practical outworking of that truth.

He does not begin with what we must do – he begins with what we must believe! We can't behave our way into belief! Faith comes first, but then – what happened in us must show its effects in who we are and what we do. What God works in us must be worked out into our lives.

Paul starts out telling us how to do that in Colossians 3:1-4. I'm going to preach on that today in this message entitled: Get Set.

The word set means, “To put firmly in place. To put in proper position.”
 As in, “Set the overturned chair back into proper position.”
 Another meaning is, “to put into condition for use.” As in, “Set a trap.”
 Set means to be resolute. As in, “Set your mind to the task.”

With that in mind – let’s read Colossians 3:1-4.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Paul starts out by reminding us of who we are in Christ. Our identity is found in Christ. Where He is, there we are. We died with Christ – we were raised with Christ – our life is hidden with Christ in God.

This is called positional truth.
 Positional truth is about our position with God.
 Positional truth is truth about who we are in Christ.
 Paul teaches positional truth first – then he deals with our condition.

Teachers get off track when they only talk about your condition without teaching you about your position in Christ. That results in you trying to behave your way into righteousness.

Others get off track because they only teach positional truth. But they neglect to teach truth about our current condition. That can result in us just excusing our sin.

It is true that in Christ we are righteous and seated in heavenly places. But we still have some changing to do. That’s why one of my favorite verses shows the balance between truth about our position and truth about our condition.
 Hebrews 10:14 says:

By one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Positionally - we were saved the very moment that we commit our lives to Jesus Christ. We were saved from Hell and saved from the wrath of God. And we are made righteous – perfectly right with God.

But – we’re not holy yet. How can that be? Well – the Greek word for perfect is teleios which means: Brought to its end, finished, complete.

When Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished,” the same Greek word is used. There is nothing else needed for salvation. We just need to believe what Christ did for us on the cross. That makes us totally righteous – in right standing with God.

Some people confuse righteousness and holiness.

They confuse their position with their condition.
 Righteousness is the made perfect forever part.
 Those who are being made holy is the holiness part.

Yes, I'm righteous in Christ – but in myself I still have some changing to do! I still have some growing to do! This is the balance we need to keep in mind! After we are born again – our condition – the actual life we live – must be brought into sync with our position.

So, Paul teaches us who we are in Christ – then he teaches what we should do as a result. What you do flows out of who you are. We need to become in condition who we already are in position. Sanctification is the process of becoming who you already are in Christ! It is the process where we are set apart from all those things that are ungodly in us and we become conformed to the image of Christ.

When Deb and I went to Florence Italy, we went to the museum that houses Michelangelo's magnificent statue of David. I'll never forget going through the museum and then rounding the corner and seeing the David in the distance. But before you get to David in that museum, you walk through what is called the Hall of Prisoners which contains some unfinished statues that Michelangelo was working on when he died. Those statues are called "Prisoners" because it looks like the people are imprisoned in the stone.

When I saw those, I was reminded how someone once asked Michelangelo about how he created such magnificent sculptures. He answered, "I see something inside the stone, like an angel or a person, and I cut away everything that's not them until all that's left is them."

That's what God does in sanctifying us. He sees who we are in Christ and He cuts away everything that's not like Christ until all that's left is who we are in Christ. Our condition then matches our position.

So, in Colossians Paul has addressed our position by telling us: You have died, been buried and resurrected with Christ. Your life is now hidden with Christ in God. So now what? Colossians 3:1-2 tells us

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Before Paul tells us what to do – he tells us how to think. That's important because you will never change your life until you change your mind. By the way – that's the definition of repentance – a change of mind. It's all about mindset. Paul tells us to set our hearts and minds on things above. Our desires and thoughts, our wishing and thinking, all our emotional and mental energy is to be directed toward things above.

What are things above? This is obviously speaking of heaven, where Christ reigns with our heavenly Father. So, you should first:

1- Set your Mind on Christ

Notice it says set your heart on things above...where Christ is. The word set in the New Testament also means to seek – earnestly seek.

Most of us how our hearts set on things below – things of the world. Our hearts are set on getting more of those things. But we've got it all backwards! Jesus said in Matthew 6:33

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

If you seek things only – you miss out on Jesus. But if you seek Jesus only – He gives you things as well!

This does not describe a casual seeker, but rather seeking for something so intensely that it takes your whole effort. God rewards diligent seekers – not casual inquirers! So – you need to get set!

Set also means to focus your thoughts. To intentionally and intently focus on Jesus. That means pray, worship and seek Him wholeheartedly. That means we get in His word and get His word in us.

That means we seek first His kingdom. Setting our minds on things above also means:

2- Set your Mind on Heaven

Paul is telling us to love heavenly things; study them; let our hearts be entirely engrossed by them. Yes – we should focus on Jesus and the benefits He has given us on earth. But Paul says that there are many things above that we should set our attention on! What are some of those things above?

Heaven will be so awesome that it's impossible to list all the blessings that await us there. But here's a few:

- In heaven we will be reunited with our family members, friends, and acquaintances who have already died
- In heaven we will receive rewards for our obedience to Christ
- In heaven we will all live in mansions and walk on streets of gold
- In heaven we will have no tears, no pain, no grief and no death
- In heaven we will have a perfect glorified body.
There will be no need for glasses, hearing aids, or wheel chairs. There will also be no false teeth, wigs, toupees, hair dye, hair extensions, wrinkle cream, make up or cover ups. Can you say Amen to that!

When we are tempted to feel that we aren't blessed or that we've suffered too much or that we lack what others possess, it's time for us to set our minds on eternal things and not on things on the earth.

- When you're struggling to make a living and pay the bills – set your mind on the fact that there will be no more bills in heaven!
- When your struggling with relationships – set your mind on the fact that there are no relationship problems in heaven!
- When you are struggling with health issues – set your mind on the fact that there will be no sickness or disease in heaven. There will be no disfigurement, no disability, no blindness, no deafness, no diabetes, no cancer, no heart attacks, no tooth aches, no joint pain... no pain at all!
- When you are struggling with doubts and questions – set your mind on the fact that in heaven all your doubts and questions will be answered!

I encourage you today to set your hearts and minds on things above. Don't get stuck in low-level thinking about temporary things here on the earth.

You really are the one who decides what you set your thoughts on. It's up to you to maintain your focus on Jesus and the "things above" that He has waiting for you to enjoy.

Some of you don't even realize that you can control what you think. But this is so important because what we think controls how we live. Romans 8:5-6 says:

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

Whatever controls your thinking controls your life. How can you tell what is controlling your thinking? Selfish thinking leads to sin and death. Spirit-controlled thinking leads to life and peace.

Any area of your life where you are not experiencing God's life and peace is an area where you need to change your thinking and set your mind on things above! Proverbs 23:7 says that *as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.*

So, our beliefs - not our circumstances - are the determining factor in how we live. It is our belief system that we must identify in order to change our behavior. It is up to us to control our thoughts and discern what is true and what is a lie. The question is how do we control our thoughts? Most of us believe we are at the mercy of our thoughts. However, the word of God teaches that we can take control of what we allow into our minds. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 says:

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Our mind is a battlefield. We must take our own thoughts captive and make them obey. Otherwise our thoughts will take us captive.

So, how do we win this war to control our thoughts and take them captive? First, we must recognize their source – God, self, others or Satan. How do we know which source? By asking ourselves three questions:

1. Does it line up with God's word?
2. What does it produce in me? Does it produce life or death? Pride or humility? Does it build me up or tear me down?
3. Does it glorify God?

Once I've determined the source, then I have to respond accordingly. If it's a thought from God – I believe it and obey it. If a thought is not from God, we must reject it as a lie and replace the lie with the truth – the word of God.

3- Set your Mind on God's Word

This is how you renew your mind. You continue in the Word and the truth will set you free! So, when you recognize thoughts that are not from God, find a scripture that replaces that thought.

And when that thought comes to your mind begin to resist it out loud and speak the truth over yourself. For example:

LIE - I never do anything right. I'm such a failure.

TRUTH – Phil. 4:13 - *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

LIE – I'm so stupid. I can't remember anything.

TRUTH - 2 Timothy 1:7 - *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind.*

LIE - I'm so afraid bad things are going to happen to me.

TRUTH - I John 4:18 - *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.*

What you think today is who are will become tomorrow. So, set your mind on things above! Choose to move from worldly thinking to heavenly thinking. Move from selfish thinking to Spirit thinking.

Remember your position in Christ and let God work on your condition. Before you were born again – you were like one of the prisoners in stone. But when you give your life to Christ – He begins chipping away at everything that is not like Him. We are all somewhere in this process. None of us are finished yet – but one day we will be. Colossians 3:4 says:

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

And you won't just appear with Him! 1 John 3:2 says:

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

You might not be totally Christ-like yet – but set your mind on the fact that you will be!

You might feel like one of Michelangelo's prisoners - still bound up by some things – but you can see down the hall there's a finished work! So – you don't set your mind on how bound up you are – but on how free you will be.

You set your mind on things above where Christ is interceding for you!

You set your mind on God's word which is working in you and on you!

You set your mind on Jesus and as you behold Him – you will be changed into His image from glory to glory!

So today and every day, no matter what's going on around you, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and your heart open to receive the victory and blessing He's provided for you, both in this life and in the life to come!