

# Is Your Mind Set

Message 24

11.17.24

## Introduction to the Text:

### **A. There is no such thing as neutral thinking.**

1. Today's passage makes this bold, but clear statement.
2. Whatever gets our attention sets our direction.
  - a. A great example is our YouTube algorithm.
  - b. Millions of topics and content channels, but I only see about 20.
  - c. And they all focus on guns and guitars.
  - d. But this week, I started a search on investing.
  - e. Now, all of YouTube is trying to show me how to be rich by buying these 3 three stocks.
3. Whatever gets our attention sets our direction.
  - a. The Apostle Paul understands this.
  - b. "This passage makes it abundantly clear that the way one thinks is intimately related to the way one lives, whether in Christ and in the Spirit by faith, or alternatively in the flesh, in sin, and in spiritual death."<sup>1</sup>
  - c. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

### **B. I approach today's message with more trepidation than usual.**

1. Preaching is always a serious thing.
2. But today's passage makes me more nervous than usual.

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<sup>1</sup> Silva, Phroneo, 619.

3. Partly because there is so much for me to try to get across.

4. I'm also very aware that I can't say it all, cover it all, or explain it all.

a. Will this message be clear enough?

b. Will I get across the importance of setting our mind on Christ?

C. Let me give you a summary up front:

1. Worship follows focus.

2. What I'm focusing on is what I'm worshipping.

3. If my mind is focused on anyone or anything other than Jesus, then I'm not pleasing God, and I'm not participating in the life that the Spirit provides.

Romans 8:1–11 (CSB)

Primary Verse: 5-9

<sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit.

<sup>6</sup>Now the mindset of the flesh is death, but the mindset of the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>The mindset of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.

<sup>10</sup>Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you.

## 1. Mindset begins with Action

A. If these passages seem complicated, don't worry.

1. Paul's writings in Romans are extremely complex.
2. This week, I had to slow my sermon prep way down because I found myself getting confused with the idea of a "mind set" and a "mindset."
3. Part of the reason it's confusing is because, in English, it's easy to confuse parts of speech Paul is using.
  - a. What I did in my study because I have the time, training, and tools is I looked at the Greek to see which part of speech Paul is using.
  - b. One thing every one of us in the room can do with difficult passages is to read them in multiple versions.
4. Reading Verse 5 in the New Living Translation is helpful here:

1. NLT: 5 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.

2. Romans 8:5 is about action, setting our mind on either sin or on the Spirit.

3. Verse 6 is the result or product of setting our mind on either sin and flesh or the Spirit.

5. Romans 8:5, the mind "set" is a verb.

1. Romans 8:6-8, the mindset is a thing, a noun.

B. **Living a life in the Spirit begins with our mind/thoughts.**

1. The Law was not concerned with attitude but with action.
  - a. The Law condemned murder but could not deal with hate.

b. The Law condemned adultery but was powerless against lust.

c. The Apostle Paul said he did not know what coveting was until the Law told him, and then sin, the flesh, caught hold of that and made him covet.

2. But Jesus showed the difference between a life under the Law and a Life in the Spirit in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew.

a. Jesus said to hate a person was to commit murder.

b. Jesus said to lust at a person was to have already committed adultery.

c. For as impossible as the standards seemed under the Jewish Law, Jesus raised the standards under the New Covenant in the Spirit.

d. The Law deals with our actions; the Spirit deals with our inner life.

3. Because where the mind goes, the body is sure to follow.

a. Whatever has my attention has my affection.

b. Whoever controls my mind controls me.

C. The Good News is that you can choose what controls your mind.

1. That's where the verb part comes in.

2. The wording in verse 5 stresses action.

a. We set our mind on the flesh or on the Spirit.

b. We apply effort and action.

c. We direct and control our attention.

e. We choose who we give our attention and our affection to.

D. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians about the power believers should exercise:

1. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (CSB)

<sup>3</sup>For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup>since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments <sup>5</sup>and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.

2. Mindset is the result of setting the attention and focus of our mind.

a. I know this is hard.

b. If you struggle with ADD or ADHD, controlling your focus feels like an impossible task.

c. Because of the influence of TikTok, Facebook reels, and YouTube Shorts, most of us millennials and younger have accidentally trained our physical brains to crave dopamine.

1. That's why when I'm concentrating on writing a sermon, I find myself pulling up Facebook when I get stuck.

2. That's why when we get the least bit bored, we start flipping through endless loops of content.

3. That's why we are more comfortable "multi-tasking" than focusing on any one thing.

4. But multi-tasking is not a productivity hack, it is detrimental to productivity.

3. **Controlling our mind isn't easy, but it's necessary.**

a. And the good news is that God has given us His Spirit to help.

b. Later in Romans 12:2, we read:

<sup>2</sup>Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

c. **Philippians 4:7** (CSB)

<sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

4. The Law made us powerless to control our minds and our behavior.

a. But a person who sets their mind on the Spirit will find help.

b. Setting our mind on the things of God is something believers are empowered to do.

c. One of the first actions a believer should take is to focus our attention, our affections, and our direction on Jesus.

## 2. The result of setting the mind is our mindset

### **Romans 8:6–8** (CSB)

<sup>6</sup>Now the mindset of the flesh is death, but the mindset of the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>The mindset of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Hang with me for a minute and remember my notes are online if you want to go back and read what I said.

A. The Greek shifts from a verb to a noun.

1. Verse 5 is the action: we "set" our mind.

2. Verse 6-8 is the result.

a. By setting our mind on the flesh and sinful desires, we die.

b. When we set our mind on the Spirit, we receive life and peace.

B. How we live is a direct result of where we have focused our attention.

1. The Apostle is telling us that our mindset determines where we walk and how we live.
2. If our mind is set on following the desires and leadership of our flesh, it will lead to death.
3. If our mind is set on the Spirit, we have life.

C. What does this even look like?

1. In Galatians 5, Paul explains the differences between a life focused on the flesh compared to a life focused on the Spirit.
2. The Book of Galatians is kind of like a condensed version of Romans and deals with many of the same themes.
3. In Galatians, Paul makes the distinction between the mindset of law and the mindset of the Spirit very clear.

**D. Galatians 5:18–25 (CSB)**

<sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

<sup>19</sup> Now the works (**the actions and results**) of the flesh are obvious (**We know the answer, he says**: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1. A mind set on the law of sin and death will produce these works.
2. If this kind of fruit is what your life is producing, then the Apostle Paul says you will not inherit the kingdom of God.
3. That means you are not saved.
  - a. If you are living a life that is producing moral impurity, or factions, or envy, or drunkenness, or anything similar, your mind is not set on the Spirit but on your flesh.

b. Paul is clear: A mind set on law produces these things and these things are evidence of death, not life.

E. The rest of that passage is:

<sup>22</sup> **But** the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. <sup>24</sup> Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

1. A person who has their mind set on the Spirit will produce ever-increasing amounts of love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control.

2. This is a process of growing and maturing and becoming more and more like Jesus.

3. We all have room for growth when it comes to the fruit of the Spirit.

4. But if your life is producing the works of the flesh, then you don't have your mind set on straight.

5. If you are producing and developing the fruit of the Spirit, even though you will never be perfect in this, you are setting your mind on the Spirit.

F. In Romans 8, "Paul reminds his readers that the life-giving power of God's Spirit is finally effective only in those who continue to let the Spirit change their lives."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 485.

### 3. Whatever has my attention has my affection.

#### A. Whoever controls my mind controls me.

1. The world knows this.
2. My Apple watch reminds me to practice mindfulness.
3. YouTube channels promote to me a lifestyle of peace through mindfulness and positive thinking without the need for a Savior.<sup>3</sup>
4. Many Christians have used language and techniques that have their roots outside of Scripture, phrases like manifesting and self-affirmation.
5. Christians must resist any teaching that tells us the answer to our problem is within us instead of in Christ Jesus.

#### B. In Christ Jesus, we do have power over our thoughts and minds.

1. With the Spirit's help, we can take captive every thought.
2. Because Jesus set us free from the law of sin and death, we can live a life of freedom, set apart for God's purpose.
3. When we actively set our mind on Jesus, we can experience life, joy, and peace.

#### C. A great test of where our mindset is what happens when we are alone with our thoughts.

The twentieth-century Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple once said: "Your religion is what you do with your solitude." In other words, wherever your mind goes most naturally and freely when there is nothing else to distract it—that is what you really live for. That is your religion. Your life is shaped by whatever preoccupies your mind. The overcoming of sin in our lives begins in our minds; and victory over sin is only ever the result of having minds set on the Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> An example: <https://drdavidhamilton.com/the-science-of-affirmations/>

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller, *Romans 8–16 for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God's Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2015), 16–17.

1. American Christians can't handle silence, solitude, or boredom.
2. When left to ourselves, we too often find the pull of our flesh to be stronger than our mindset.

#### 4. How do we crucify the flesh and put on the mind of Christ?

##### #1. Have the right filter. Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

##### A. Filters control what is allowed in and what stays out.

1. It isn't enough to have a filter.
2. We need to have a Jesus focused filter.

##### B. Paul says in Philippians to think about these things.

1. Our filter should ask:
2. Is this honorable and just?
3. Is this pure AND lovely?
4. Is this commendable and excellent?
5. Is this worthy of praise (not shameful)?
6. IF IT FITS, then I allow it through and think about it.

##### C. If it doesn't fit, then you take that thought captive.

1. "Lord, I know this thought does not honor you. Help me to push it aside."
2. "Lord, this thought is intrusive and I don't know where it came from. Would you deal with it and the root?"

##### D. Then, be bold and set your mind somewhere else.

## #2. Crucify the flesh by being bold. 1 Peter 1:13 (CSB)

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

A. Your mind has to be ready to take action.

1. Stay prepared.
2. Stay ready.
3. Peter says, stay sober-minded.

B. Sober-minded is:

1. Focused
2. Clear
3. Set

C. Sober-minded minds are set completely on the grace that Jesus brings us.

## #3. Crucify the flesh by making no excuses. Romans 13:14 (CSB)

<sup>14</sup>But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

A. Make no provision to gratify the flesh.

1. When sin is an option, it becomes a temptation we cannot resist.
2. When we are tempted, if we do not filter it and if we are not bold with it, then we start looking for provisions and excuses.

B. What is a provision or excuse?

1. It is a justification that provides enough separation for me to escape the pull of the Spirit.

2. An excuse is what I put between myself and the conviction of the Holy Spirit for me to feel temporarily good about what I'm doing.
3. Sometimes, we do this by avoiding sobriety.
  - a. Drunkenness and getting buzzed release our inhibitions, causing us to act like we normally wouldn't.
  - b. Many of us "numb" ourselves through excessive media consumption or even junk food.
  - c. When our mind is not focused or set, we let down our filters and do not think clearly.
4. Temptation rarely shows up when we are ready for it.
  - a. It waits until we are tired.
  - b. It waits until we are frustrated.
  - c. It waits until we are depleted.
  - d. It waits until we are hungry.
  - e. It waits until we are stressed.

## 5. How do we create filters that enable boldness that reject excuses?

A. We all know the importance of reading the Bible, praying, and worshipping.

1. These practices are foundational.
2. We never outgrow them.
3. If we are straying from Scripture, prayer, and worship, it is a sign that our mind is not as set upon the Spirit as it should be.
4. But what else can we do?

B. Fasting

1. One of the most powerful practices we all can start is fasting.

- a. If you are physically able, set aside a 24-hour period every week to fast.
- b. This is more than skipping a meal.
- c. This is the intentional denial of our human appetite.
- d. When we fast, we physically become more sensitive to the effects of insulin
- e. Spiritually we become more sensitive to the voice of the Spirit, to our true thoughts and emotions, and a more accurate understanding of where we are spiritually.

2. Denying self is one of the hardest practices to implement.

- a. When we fast and deny ourselves, we find the power our own desires have over us.
- b. Fasting is a great way to deny ourselves.
- c. And while we are hungry, while we become aware of our desire for junk food and snacking, we remind ourselves that we do not live by bread alone but by the very word of God.

B. **Abstinence** is like fasting.

1. I think there is a distinction between fasting food and abstaining from other things.

2. Scripture speaks of married couples abstaining for sex for short season so that the couple may pursue God.

a. Why?

b. Not because sex is bad but the temporary denial of what is good (sex or food) for that which is better (life in the Spirit) is good for us.

3. Abstaining could include many things.

a. Abstaining from sex is probably easier than giving up our phones.

b. What if we abstained from our favorite hobby for a week or month and dedicated that time to serving, worshipping, or drawing closer to Jesus?

C. **We crucify the flesh by setting our minds on God and denying ourselves.**

1. Let me share a story:

2. Last weekend in Kid's church, Delanie Rinne taught the kids about putting Jesus first.

a. But what does that look like when you are 8 or 10 or 12?

b. One parent told me they were driving when their boy in the backseat gave their Nintendo to his parents and asked them to take it.

c. The reason: So the young man could spend more time with Jesus.

3. Setting our minds on Christ is something we are all called to do.

a. Crucifying our flesh, making sure our desires do not own us, is something we are all tasked with.

b. And it doesn't get easier when we get older.

c. But God helps us, even in our weakness.

d. He is faithful and invites us and empowers us to set our minds on Him so that life may flow in us and through us.

Prayer