

SETTING YOUR MIND

(Romans 8:5-8)

INTRODUCTION:

Some time back a Gallup poll found that 76 percent of those sampled drew a blank when asked what is the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights all about! Is your mind blank right now? What is the First Amendment rights all about? It is the one that guarantees freedoms of religion, speech, assembly; press and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

You could say that Romans 8 gives us the Christian's First Amendment Bill of Rights. It speaks about our freedom from the law of sin and death. How many Christians really know about this right? Romans 8 also speaks about the Christian's responsibility in exercising this right. It states in verse 4: **“who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”** God freed us from the bondage to sin and the flesh in order that we might walk according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. I want to preach this morning on what is involved in walking according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh.

In Romans 8:5 and 6 Paul describes those who walk according to the Spirit as those who "set their minds on the things of the Spirit, not on things of the flesh." If you walk according to the Spirit you are to set your mind on the things of the Spirit.

The phrase "setting your mind" reminds me of what one of the preachers said at our weekly coffee. He said some people's minds are like concrete: all mixed up and permanently set! Do you know of anyone like that? I believe that I do.

Well, this is not quite what I am referring to in "setting your mind." We don't want anyone's mind to be thoroughly mixed up and permanently set, do we?

We do want each of us to know how to "set your minds on the things of the Spirit." This seems to be critical to our spiritual growth and freedom. The opposite of it according to this passage is set your mind on the things of the flesh.

The classic scripture on how the mind influences who we are is Proverbs 23:7:

Proverbs 23:7 "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he..."

Our minds play an important role in shaping who we are. We are what we think about to a large degree. What we think about has a great influence on how we make decisions and how we act. What we think about influences how we feel about our well-being For example:

Studies show that sugar pills, or placebos, can alleviate many symptoms if a sick person believes he is getting treatment. Current research reveals that 1 in 3 people find such medication to be helpful--even when they are told they are getting a placebo.

Our minds play an important part in shaping who we are or at least of who we think we are.

So "setting your mind" is a critical part of learning to walk according to the Spirit and to not walk according to the flesh. Let's go more deeply into this subject by asking three basic questions.

WHAT ARE YOU TO SET YOUR MIND ON?

The first question is, "What are you to set your mind on?" Verse 5 gives us the answer:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

There are two things on which we can set our minds on according to this verse -- the things of the flesh and the things of the Spirit.

Let me give you a brief definition of FLESH as an acrostic. Facing Life Exclusively by Self-taught Habits. Those who live in the flesh think about the things of the flesh, which is to think in the mode of thinking which was developed by non-Biblical and non-Christian thinking.

Another way of looking at the things of the flesh is to think about things that would produce the works of the flesh in our lives. Galatians 5 gives us a list of the works of the flesh:

(Gal 5:19-21 NKJV) Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, {20} idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, {21} envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like;

If something we think about tends to produce these types of works in our life, then you are setting your mind on the things of the flesh rather than the things of the Spirit.

Now what are the things of the Spirit? The things of the Spirit are the things of Christ. Listen to Colossians 3:1-2

If the you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set you mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

The things of the Spirit are the “things above” where Christ is. They are the spiritual truths that are ours by being in Christ Jesus. They are the things we have been learning in Romans.

To use our Galatians passage we can learn that the works of the Spirit or they are called the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:

(Gal 5:22-24 NKJV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. {24} And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If something we think about tends to produce these types of works in our life, then you are setting your mind on the things of the Spirit. Think about things that produce love in your life, joy in your life, peace in your life, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. These are the things of the Spirit we are to set our minds on.

HOW DO YOU SET YOUR MIND ON THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT?

The next question is, "How do you set your mind on the things the Spirit?" This is a how to question. "How to" questions are important questions in our day. We all want to know "how to" improve ourselves, etc. How do you set your mind on the things of the Spirit?

It starts by an act of the will. You choose to set your mind on the things of the Spirit. You throw your will switch as Bill Gillham puts it. Bill Gillham's illustration of the person being chased by a bear and finding a secure cabin to escape in gets the point across about the "how to's."

One time a person went hiking in the Northwest woods. His friend had only a week before been in the same woods and had been brutally killed

and eaten by a grizzly bear, just the week before. But he was determined to go.

After getting close to the place where his friend was killed, he began to have an uneasy feeling. The hair on the back of his neck began to raise up. He knew something was out there.

Then all of a sudden he spotted this dark brown bear about 100 yards from him. The bear raised up on her back legs, sniffing the air. The man prayed that the bear would not see or smell him. He began easy backwards. Then the bear looked straight at him and he knew that she knew he was there. The bear jumped down on all four legs and began charging towards him.

He began to run. As he ran he began to visual himself becoming just a greasy spot on the ground after the bear got through eating him. His hearts was pounding, his breath was getting short, he was turning white. He could hear the bear gaining ground on him. He knew that any moment he would feel the blow of the bear's great paw slice him into.

Suddenly he saw a cabin covered over by vines. As he ran towards the cabin, he could see that there was only one small window on the cabin and the door was open. The door was made of heavy wood that no bear could break down. How fortunate he was. Just as he closed the door behind him and throw the iron security bar across the door, the bear slammed into it. It held and the bear was stunned. But the bear was mad. It recovered and started lunging against the door. It couldn't budge it. It went to the window and could only get one paw in, but not very far. The man was SAFE!

But look at the man. You see him, plastered on the back wall in fear. His eyes are wild with fear. He is still breathing hard and his heart is racing. He could still have a heart attack, if he doesn't set his mind on his true situation. His true situation is that he is safe and there is no way that the bear can get him. He must tell himself this and he must choose to believe it. If we refuses to believe it, he is still in danger of a heart attack. After he understands that he is safe and then choose to believe it, he still must do something to calm down. He must start acting like he is safe, but relaxing, sitting down, maybe even going to sleep. If he does not act like his is safe, he still be have a heart attack.

Do you see some of the basic things involved with the "how to's" of setting your mind on the things of the Spirit or on things above? First we must know what our spiritual situation is and who we are in Christ. This is why the apostle Paul particularly spends much of this writing in his epistle emphasizing our position and identity in Christ.

After knowing and understanding who you are in Christ, you must choose to believe it. Then you must begin to act like who you are in God's eyes

This is setting your mind on the things of the Spirit or the things above, rather than the things of the flesh.

WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF SETTING YOUR MIND ON THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT

Our third question is, "What are some benefits of setting your mind on the things of the Spirit?"

There are three benefits mentioned in the Romans 8 passage. One benefit is life. Verse 6 says:

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Setting your mind on things above is the way to experience life. Life in this sense is Jesus Christ. Jesus said about Himself, "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life." Jesus is our Life. He also said that He is the Vine and we are the branches. The only way a branch can live is to receive the life of the vine. This is the only way we can live spiritual is to receive the Life of Christ on a moment by moment basis.

When we set our minds on the things of the Spirit, we experience life, the Life of Christ.

The second benefit is also in verse 6. It is the way of peace.

Peace is such a precious possession.

Peter Sellers, the noted British actor who died in 1980, was troubled throughout much of his adult life. Although he had gained wealth and fame, he was restless and dissatisfied. In his later years he revealed a loss of personal identity by resorting to using the voice and accent of a fictitious character he had played. Then too, his multiple marriages were symptomatic of the fact that his mind was, as one of his wives put it, "in a constant state of turmoil about his purpose on this planet."

The peace that Jesus gives is not according to the world. His peace passes all understanding. His peace is our strength.

Isa 26:3 "Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon Thee, for he trusted in Thee."

When we set our minds on things above we will experience God's peace of mind.

The third benefit in this passage is that setting our minds on the things of the Spirit is the way to please God. Verse 7 & 8:

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

It is pleasing to God for you to set your mind on the things of the Spirit or on things above. This is the way in which God leads and guides us for only then are we subject to God. Having our minds on the things of the flesh, puts us in contention with God and makes us independent of Him, not open to His leading and teaching us. This is not pleasing to God.

CONCLUSION:

Life _ Peace _ Pleasing to God. Are these things you want?

What do you have your mind set on today? This is question each of us needs to ask ourselves often. The trick of Satan is to get our minds set on the things of the flesh, rather than the things of the Spirit.

To experience Christ as our Life, to have His peace and to walk pleasing to God we need to learn to set our minds, not like concrete, all mixed-up and permanently set, but set our minds by choosing to believe God and acting on that belief.