

How Do I Overcome Not Thinking Correctly?

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Jeff: As Paul is telling the Colossians to put a bunch of things to death in v. 5, he says this - and he says this in light of the assumption that they have been raised with Christ in v. 1. "Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. In these, you too once walked when you were living in them, but now you must put them all away." Okay, he said v. 5, "Put these things to death..." V. 8: "Put them all away... anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator." Do not lie to one another. Why? Because you have put off the old man and have put on the new man.

If you recall Craig's sermons on that, that's why we do this because we are not who we were before. We are not people of deceit anymore. One of the characteristics of the wicked is that they are known to be liars. You go back to the end of your Bibles in Revelation, that's one of the characteristics of people who are said to not have entry into the New Jerusalem - it's that they are liars. We are to be people of truth. When Paul says, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ," 1 Corinthians 11:7, Paul is trying to imitate the Lord by being a man of truth and we should be men and women of truth as well. Grudem says we should love truth and we should hate falsehood. The Psalmist tells us in Psalm 97 that you who love the Lord, you're supposed to do something. You're supposed to hate evil and lying is evil because God is a God of truth and we are supposed to reflect that of our Creator which He has created us to be in His image. He has created us to be people of truth. Now, I know that because of the fall, people then become liars, but as the redeemed, we have the capacity to be people of truth and we have the capacity and the ability by His Spirit to obey what He tells us with no excuses.

Alright, questions or comments on that? Mary.

Mary: I was wondering, how can we put to death all this because many times I feel bad feelings. And this makes me wonder many times if I'm really a child of God. Because many times I fall in this negative, sinful - some of these sinful emotions.

Jeff: Well, one of the things Paul tells us to do is have the mind of Christ. Now, how do we have the mind of Christ? How do we change how we think? I am going to answer the question in a minute, but I want to ask if any of you have input for Mary on that question before I give you my answer.

(from the room) The question is how to have the mind of Christ?

Jeff: Well, Mary's question is how do I - and I'm going to try to sum up your question, Mary, in a sentence. How do I deal with not thinking rightly about the right things? Okay? And let's be honest, our thoughts ultimately lead to our actions, so how do we deal with how we think? How do we deal with what's going on in our head? How do we think better?

(from the room) Preaching to ourselves.

Jeff: Well, preaching what?

(from the room) Preaching truth. Yeah, saying what contradicts what we think, which is Scripture, so if we're angry, we could recognize that, and then we tell ourselves what Scripture says about anger. We tell ourselves what Christ did, how He responded to the same temptations that we face. Even if we don't immediately feel the change, but we tell our minds: this is what Scripture says even if I don't feel it right now.

Jeff: Evan, did you have yourself ready?

Evan: Yeah, I was just going to say that we don't try and not think about something. Like if I was to tell you don't think about apple pie, it's pretty impossible to not think about it, but we fill our minds with truth - just what was already said. We fill it with truth so that it's no longer able, it's full of truth, like we're thinking so much about Christ and the love of Christ that we're able then to in word and deed do all things in the name of Christ. So yeah, that's just something that's been extremely helpful for me. Just the more I'm consumed with Christ and thoughts are in my mind, the less I'm going to think about other things.

(from the room) Yeah, I really like to think of in John when Jesus says, "Abide in Me," and when Christ says to abide, and "If you love Me, keep My commandments." And we can only keep the commandments of Jesus by abiding in His love and just remaining in Christ and in His love and meditating on Him.

Jeff: Okay, Alex.

Alex: Yes, I was actually going to say Philippians 4:8. I think Paul gives us there something to think about when it comes down to thinking - what we should be thinking about as Christians. You want me to read it?

Jeff: Well, I've got it here, but as I'm reading it, I want you to then respond, okay, this is what we are supposed to do. How do we train ourselves to do it? Alex's verse says: "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." How do we train ourselves to do that, Alex?

Alex: Okay, so practically speaking, I would agree with what Evan and Bailey said and Jacinda as well. I think that begins with waking up in the morning and spending time in God's Word. That way we can actually have things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable on our minds. So that's how we start our day, and as we go throughout the day we're meditating on His Word, which are the things that we were reading. We're applying it to our routine - our daily routine. (incomplete thought)

Jeff: Okay, Daniel.

Daniel: A verse that came to my mind was Romans 6:11 where it says, "So you also must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." And so Mary was asking how to deal, I guess, with sinful emotions. And it's realizing who you are in Christ. Though we feel these remnants of sin in ourselves, it's not like we go day in, day out, and try to get victory over it. We already have victory. We're already dead to sin. It doesn't have any power over us. So, I find that as a helpful thought just pondering that I already have the victory. It's not like I have to earn it or get it. Christ Jesus crucified sin on the cross and I don't bear sin any more. I don't bear the power of sin over my life anymore.

Jeff: Right, and Mary, we've got several comments there in the chat if you can see them. Cheyenne went to 2 Corinthians 10. Taking every thought captive. How do we think? Well, I'm going to maintain that we need to train our minds that you're just like an athlete. I used this last night. We were talking with some people on Zoom last night. How do we respond to life at the end of the day? We need to train our minds. And we've got it here.

Pauline says Romans 12:2. I think Romans 12:2 is one of our essential verses here. Because this has to do with our mind. We've got to have the mind of Christ. It's a command. We're supposed to have that mind. Well, Paul says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." How do we renew our mind? Well, it's how we think. It's how we train our mind. Paul in Colossians tells us - how do we think? Where do we direct our thoughts? We direct thoughts to the things that are above. "Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." I get that we still have to deal with things that are on earth. But we can deal with these things that are here on earth because we have our mind first and foremost set on the things that are above.

And I don't know if anyone else ever heard this, but I knew a guy up north, and I get what he was saying, and there's this saying out there that somebody is so earthly-minded, he's no heavenly good. I mean, I got it wrong. He's so heavenly-minded, he's no earthly good. I get it at one level, but let's think about this. Where was Jesus primarily focused in what He thought about? He was exceedingly heavenly-minded. He was about doing His Father's business. He was about obeying and doing the will of the Father. He was then much earthly good in a way because He was so heavenly-minded. And if our focus is first and foremost upward, toward Heaven, then we can respond well. Then, we can respond with a renewed mind.

Okay, but what means do we use? Well, we've got this book that we can read. Okay? Or you can listen to on your phone or watch it. God has told us how to train our mind. So like that athlete, okay? Mike trains himself to respond a certain way when the offense does a certain thing. And he trains himself to respond like that so he doesn't have to step back, think about it for twenty minutes and respond. He trains his mind as a defensive player in football to respond immediately to a situation. And we need to do that as Christians as well. We train our minds to respond immediately to life as it happens because we can't keep life from happening. We can't keep temptation from coming.

Temptation - one thing to always remember about temptation: temptation is not merely an opportunity to sin. Temptation is an opportunity to obey God and not sin. No, there's always a way out from sin. We train our mind. 1 Corinthians 10:13 - there's no temptation. When it talks about no temptation, there's always a way out of temptation. There's always a way to say no to temptation. And the challenge is for us to have trained our minds, to train our minds: what are we thinking about? What are we thinking about? Where are our minds focused? If our minds are focused where they should be like Christ's mind was, we can respond like Christ to life. We can respond like Christ did to temptation. We can say no to temptation. But it's a matter of training, training, training, training. And the training never ends. Okay? There are three of us here on this call who are in our sixties. We can't stop training our minds just because we're old. Because we still have to deal with life here.

So, that's where I would go. It's the training of our mind. It's the training of our mind to think well, to think biblically. MacArthur's got a book entitled "Think Biblically." How we think is going to dictate how we act at the end of the day. If we are thinking about Christ, you're going to find it awfully hard - and when I say "you," I'm not pointing any fingers. We - if we're thinking about Christ and looking toward Christ, we're going to have an awfully hard time then sinning while we're looking at Him. Now, I know that we've got Peter's example. Because you've got that example when Peter denies Him the third time, Christ is looking right at Him. And Peter saw Him, so Peter's looking. I get that. But if our minds are focused where they should be, we can respond well. We can respond like the linebacker who responds when the offense does a certain thing. And we can respond immediately because we have trained our minds.

If you have children, you want to train your children to respond immediately to a command. Okay? If Cheyenne tells her daughter, "Go put that cup on the counter," Cheyenne wants her daughter to go put that cup on the counter now. She doesn't want her daughter to think about it. She doesn't want her daughter to go wander away for five minutes. She wants her daughter to go put that cup on the counter now. And that's the way we have to try and train our minds as Christians is to respond right now to life and respond well and be thinking well. I know that there's very much an anti-intellectual movement within Western Christianity, that it's not about thinking; it's not about intelligence. Well, I understand, but we're supposed to love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, strength, and...? Mind. We're supposed to think. We're supposed to have a mind like Christ. Not just a brain, okay? The brain is what we use - our mind stems from the

fact that we have a brain, that we have a heart, biblically. But it's all about training. It's about thinking well.

I say, think about Jesus and how He thought. I know that seems redundant. But let's just think about it. Jesus always thought rightly. He never thought wrongly. He never responded wrongly in the heat of the moment. He's out in the wilderness. Satan quotes Scripture to get Him to do something. How does Jesus respond? Jesus' mind was informed by Scripture and He responds rightly right now, right away. He didn't have to think about it. He didn't have to pray about it for three hours. He responds rightly right away. And that goes to us training our minds to think like Him as well.