



TIME OF GRACE®

A Fresh Start: For Your Emotions

Study Notes

Summary

Few things shape us like what we think about our thoughts. Our thoughts might be true or false, healthy or destructive, demonic or Holy Spiritual, which means we need to think carefully about our thoughts! The apostle Paul made the same point to his friends in Corinth, urging them to take their thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ. By that same practice, we put our frantic minds at ease and fix our thoughts on Jesus.

- **Colossians 3:1,2:** ¹Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.
- What You Do: Keep thinking like _____.
- Who You Are:
 1. You _____ / _____
_____ with Jesus.
 - **Colossians 3:1,3:** ¹Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above. . . . ³For you died . . .
 2. You are _____ with Jesus.
 - **Colossians 3:3:** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.
 3. You will _____ with Jesus.
 - **Colossians 3:4:** When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Points to Ponder

1. Agree/Disagree: The more we think about ourselves, the more uncertain our peace will be.

2. Agree/Disagree: The more we think about God, the more certain our peace will be.

3. Read Colossians 3:5-17. How does Paul continue to connect what Christians do and who Christians are? Which words/phrases connect most powerfully with your week?

4. How do you practically think about God during the week? What keeps your eyes/thoughts on “things above” instead of “earthly things”?

Homework for Next Week

Read Proverbs 22:6.

*“Cast all your anxiety on [God] because he cares for you.”
—The apostle Peter*

Time of Grace Ministry
Fresh Start: For Your Emotions
Colossians 3:1-4
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Pastor Mike Novotny

"They look so happy online," the doctor of psychology said; "making goofy faces on Snapchat and smiling in their pictures on Instagram. But dig deeper and the reality is not so comforting. The next generation is on the verge of the most severe mental health crisis for young people in decades."

You might know the apostle Paul, the guy who wrote like half of the New Testament; the guy who was imprisoned and tortured and whipped and had burdens he carried and churches he led. And yet, Paul was the same guy who said crazy things like don't be anxious about anything and you can find a peace that's so big and so good and so widespread that it's like beyond understanding. Your neighbors and coworkers and classmates will be like, "I don't know why you're not flipping out." Paul said that kind of peace is possible. He didn't just tell people to rejoice and be happy at certain times in life when they were good; he commanded them to rejoice always. And because I'm sure that seems so unrealistic, he repeated the words. He said, "I say it again, rejoice."

So, what did Paul believe that he could have mental health like that? Peace beyond understanding, not anxious about anything, rejoicing in everything. Well, that's what he wants to share with us today. If battling mental health is a burden that you carry or you know and love someone who does, I want you to listen very, very carefully to Paul's words today because he's going to tell us two massively important things. First of all, Paul's going to tell us something that we can do and then Paul is going to deeply remind us of who we are as followers of Jesus. And he puts the two together and you have the best Christian recipe to improving your mental health. So, if you brought a Bible with you or just want to follow along on the screen, here's what Paul said in a letter he wrote to the Colossians from jail to some of his friends in the ancient Greek city of Colossi. Chapter three begins like this: "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."

So, Paul is urging you to think differently. You know, not just have an occasional thought or lightbulb moment; he says like "set," put the setting of your heart and the setting of your mind not on the things of earth but on the things of heaven. Which sounds like nice spiritual advice, doesn't it? You know, don't be so earthly, be more spiritual, think about God, but you know, I kind of want to ask Paul, "Well like, wait - what exactly do you mean? Don't think about the things of earth? Like I shouldn't think about this church or any of you on earth? You shouldn't think about your jobs or your mortgage payments or your kids or your workouts or whatever? Is that what you mean, Paul?" And he'd answer "No." I mean, Paul cared about people, Paul cared about ministry, Paul cared about money and he cared about the jobs that we do. I think Paul's

way of saying it is, "No, no, no. I just want you to think about the things of earth in a heavenly way."

If you're taking notes in your program, it's our first fill in the blank. I think Paul's big point, what we should do, is that we should keep thinking like Jesus. Like we should think about things the way that Jesus thinks about things. We should adopt like this godly mindset; this mindfulness where we try to call to mind the mind of God. To put in simple terms, when you wake up every morning, Paul wants you to look for your God glasses and whenever you look at family members or friends or kids or your boss or your bills, whenever you look in the mirror, don't just see things from an earthly perspective; see things from God's perspective, from Jesus' perspective.

I was trying to visualize this in my journal the other day and I ended up drawing a picture that I'd like to show to you; it's very impressive and I would like you to see it. Alright, maybe I won't quit my preaching job but here's the big idea. You know, Jesus has these thoughts about things, these godly thoughts, where he's thrilled by the power and the presence and the promises of God and when Paul says set your mind on things above, on heavenly things, he's saying, just attach your thought bubble to whatever Jesus is thinking. Whatever Jesus thinks about that thing you're anxious about or worried about or staying up at night tossing and turning about, whatever's like robbing you of peace or joy or happiness, he says, just push pause and think what would Jesus think?

Maybe that's a simple question: WWJT? No, it's not a Justin Timberlake reference - what - WWJT - what would Jesus think? Whenever you feel afraid, I want you to ask yourself that question but what would Jesus think? Whenever you feel like your hands start to shake and you're nervous and you're playing over the worst case scenarios and the thoughts are spiraling to dark places, ask what would Jesus think?

So, what would he think about your fears? Let's practice to see if we can practice what Paul is preaching. Let's think about your job for a second, for those of you who work. What would Jesus think about your job? I was talking with a young woman from our church family this week who was, you know, worried, "Am I in the right spot where God wants me to be? You know, I feel like I'm just going to work and I'm coming home. Is there something bigger that I can do to spread the message and let people know about Jesus? Should I switch careers?" And you know, you might be worried about the same thing: Is this the job where God wants you? I would say good question but here's the real question - WWJT? What would Jesus think about your job?

You know what Jesus thought about jobs? That you can have almost all of them and glorify God through them. He didn't say you needed to quit and become a missionary or a pastor or a door to door evangelist. He didn't insist that as you're flipping burgers you hand out like a little church card and invite someone to hear about Jesus. He said, actually, whenever you do good work to glorify God, that's the right job. You might be changing diapers at home and you think, man, I miss my career where I make a real difference and Jesus would say, whoa, whoa, whoa, that's not what I think about that! I think when you selflessly love a child, when you get up at 2:17 a.m. to calm them down after a nightmare, when you go grab a cup of cold water, Jesus himself said, God's watching and God's applauding and you will certainly not lose your reward. You don't need a different job; you just need a different thought. And instead of tossing and turning and

worrying, you can embrace God, you can love people, and you can serve him well wherever you are. WWJT.

Or think about your pain right now. Some of you might be battling physical pain. You have back pain, you have migraines, you have cramps, maybe you battle clinical depression, maybe you've been through chemo or cancer or a surgery, maybe there's some serious mental health struggles that you're bearing. Or maybe your pain is relational; maybe your marriage is stuck right now and you're just wondering why I said "I do." Maybe you're with someone who's not loving or respecting you well. Maybe you're separated right now and you just can't sleep because the pressure of what you expected and not what you found has been so, so different and intense.

But I would ask WWJT? What would Jesus think? Does Jesus think your pain or suffering is because you're a really bad person that God needs to punish? No. Does Jesus think your pain is pointless, just something to get through, so life can get better? No. He's refining you; he's teaching you incredible spiritual things that you would never learn if it was always 75 and sunny. He's stripping you of your grip on the things of earth so that you don't forget about the God of heaven. He has tremendous purposes for pain. He's refining, making your faith stronger, bringing you to new places, in contact with new people that you never would have met if everything would have been great. The person you met in your divorce care group, the new church you found after the separation, the doctors and people you can relate to because you've been through cancer and you have been through suffering. What would Jesus think about pain? He would think it is far from pointless. And you see, every time we ask that question - WWJT, what would Jesus think - we take our eyes off the things of fear and worry and we fix our eyes on the things that give strength and give hope.

And I wonder if that isn't what Paul's getting at? Like if you just sit down and think about this thing you're afraid of that makes you anxious and nervous and you're trying to wrestle with that, I think his advice would be why not just focus on something else? Why not think the thoughts of Jesus? Why not focus on the power of God? Why not fix your eyes and your thoughts on his presence and his love for you and his incredible mercy? And you might find the more you start thinking about this, you don't have to have some big plan to overcome this. Your thoughts can only focus on one thing at one time and maybe God will exchange your faith with fear. Where there once was incredible fear, now there's incredible faith; that's the big, beautiful part.

Let's look where Paul goes in Colossians three. He said, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above for you died." Now that is as powerful as it is kind of confusing so let me have you write down Paul's point and we'll talk about what it means. Paul is saying here that you died and that you were raised with Jesus. It's not just that you should think like Jesus; Paul's saying you died and you were raised with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the deepest part of today's message so if I lost your focus or if you're texting a friend right now, alright, I need you back for just one second.

According to Paul, if you're a follower of Jesus, if you're a Christian, there are actually three versions of you. Did you know that? There's the old you that you used to be, there's the now you that you currently are, and there is the coming you that you're about to be and here's what that means. The old you used to be is like the B.C. you; the before Christ version of you. You might

have been a religious person or maybe not. You might have been a really good moral person or maybe not. But really what defined that old version of you is that Jesus wasn't like the sun at the center of your universe. You might have respected him but you didn't worship him. You might have tipped your cap to his teaching but it wasn't like what you ordered your life around. You might have made some mistakes and felt bad and had some regrets but there wasn't like this deep feeling of sorrow and repentance that you had rebelled against the God of the universe. And most importantly, that you did not believe in grace; that getting into heaven wasn't a ladder you climb or like a present that you earned. It was just a complete gift that he gave when he died on the cross and was raised from the dead. There's that old like disconnected from Jesus version of you and here's what Paul says: You died. Like that version of you that didn't care about sin and wasn't thrilled by the love and grace of God, that you died. When you were baptized, when you came to faith in Jesus Christ, that old version of you, Paul says, died and a whole new you was raised.

And that's the now you. And the now you is not perfect; the now you might still battle those old same temptations. The now you might struggle with sin and doubt God but the now you really cares about it; it cares about Jesus' teaching. And most importantly, the now you clings to Jesus as your hope, your forgiveness, and your Savior. It wasn't just that 2,000 years ago Jesus died and was raised. Paul is saying in this verse that when you came to believe in him, somehow you joined him. And that version of you died and a new version of you was raised to life. As I was sketching pictures in my journal, here's how I drew it. It looked familiar that Jesus had a cross and a resurrection from the dead, but Paul's saying everyone who follows Jesus has their own version. Like I'm not the me I want to be just yet, I'm still struggling with sin, but I'm not the man that I am. Paul would say by the grace of God, I am what I am and his grace was not without effect. It changes what I think, it changes what I see in the mirror.

I love how Martin Luther put this 500 years ago. He said that - if you would somehow get to Martin Luther's heart and you knock on the door, Jesus would open the door and he'd say, "Hi" and you'd say, "Hi, Jesus. Um, I'd like to talk to Martin Luther." And Jesus would say, "Oh, I'm sorry, he died." It was Luther's weird way of saying in my heart, is not this old version of me. My very heart, my soul, my identity is that Christ lives within me.

More recently here at our church, a couple years ago my friend Tony became a Christian. And soon afterwards, he got this sweet tattoo right on his ribs. He got Galatians 2:20; it must have hurt badly but it's beautiful. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me." And that's Paul's message: I was crucified on that cross with Jesus. The old me, the me that God was mad at, embarrassed by, disappointed in, that me is dead and I have been raised to life with Jesus Christ. He's the king of my heart, he's the Lord of my soul.

So, what does that have to do with mental health? I mean, I hope you find that as really interesting news, but what does that have to do with anxiety or depression? And here's the really, really interesting part. So, when Dr. Twenge - remember that researcher from San Diego State - when she was studying eighth graders, she could kind of chart out the correlation between eighth graders who are happy and eighth graders who are depressed. Do you know the top two things that were connected to eighth graders being depressed? Social media use and time spent

on the internet. Do you know the top two factors that led to eighth graders being happy? Exercising and going to church. Interesting, huh? Why do you think that is? Why would spending all day on social media tend to make you less happy and coming to a church service tend to make you more happy? This is just my theory but here's what I think. I think what happens when we're on social media, which is not inherently sinful - just so we're clear about that - I think what happens when we're on social media is that we tend to think a lot about ourselves. We express ourselves in our posts, we have pictures of ourselves, selfies that we Snapchat, that we Instagram, that we find the right filter. Or we scroll by everyone else's posts and we just instinctively compare ourselves to their selves. We think about our clothes, our vacations, our families, our kids, our jobs, our everything. We just like stand in front of this mirror, hours and hours and hours and hours and hours on end, and do you know what happens when you look into a mirror? You see faults and flaws and eventually, it robs you of happiness and joy.

But what happens when you come to church? At least, church as Jesus intended it to be? Well, please take this the right way - I don't mean to offend any of you - but when you come to church, it's not about you. You'd say, "Pastor, I didn't really like that last song that we sang." I'd say, "Hey, thanks for your opinion but we weren't singing it for you." We don't set up mirrors in the front of our churches so you can look at yourselves and see how wonderful you're praying and singing. No, what do we do? We put up the words of Jesus, we put up symbols of Jesus, we have beautiful pictures of Jesus, and what happens when you look at Jesus? You hear really good news. Stand in front of a mirror and you'll definitely see a sinner. But stand in front of a cross and you will see a Savior. Spend all day thinking about yourselves and you'll always have this sneaking suspicion that you might not be enough. Stand in front of the cross of Jesus and you will hear him declaring that because of his blood, you are enough. Think about yourself and you'll always wonder if your secrets are so big that they'll separate you from God. But stand face to face with Jesus and he will say, "I know. I know all of it and I still love you and I still accept you and I still forgive you. The you that I was mad at? That died. The you that I would condemn? That I wouldn't let into heaven? He's dead. The heart that I would be disappointed in? That's gone." If anyone is in Christ, the apostle Paul said, they are a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come. What's an answer to our anxiety is simply to remember who we are: Those who have died and have been raised to life with Jesus Christ.

But that's not all. I told you Paul had a lot of good news; that was just the first part of it - let me show you the second part of it. Paul says in the next verse, "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." If you're filling in the blanks, let's do this for the next time you are safe with Jesus. It's not just that you died with Jesus and you were raised with Jesus, you are safe with Jesus.

Let me picture it like this. Imagine this little paper business card is you and you, because you're human, you know, you can be kind of like mentally bendable and emotionally crease-able and spiritually crushable. It doesn't take too much strength to damage you emotionally. But Paul is saying that your life is actually not going through life all by itself. He says in this incredible verse, your life is hidden with Christ in God. So maybe you can picture like my phone; my phone has like this fancy little case that you can put cards inside. So, he's saying your life is hidden with Christ. So, like your spiritual life, it's hard to bend it or hurt it; it's with Jesus.

Except, he says it's not just with Jesus; it's hidden with Christ in God. So, what if we put you and Jesus in God's pocket? That would mean that wherever God is, you and Jesus are. Wherever God happens to go, that you and Jesus go right along with him. It means that if something wants to get to that card, who do they have to go through? God and Jesus. If someone wanted to mess with your salvation, would want to crush you spiritually and make God not forgive you or stop loving you, what would they have to do first? They'd have to mess with the almighty God and his incredible son, Jesus Christ.

And so, for right now, Jesus is in a place where God does not condemn him, it means that you are not condemned, either. It means that if Jesus is standing in a place where he's accepted by God the Father, where God is not embarrassed of him or ashamed of him, what does it mean about you? You're in the exact same place. So, if you stand in front of that mirror and you wonder if you're enough, if God could still accept you, still love you, still embrace you, I want you to remember that your life is hidden with Christ in God. You're safe.

But that's not all. Paul has one more thing to tell us today. You died, you were raised, you're safe with Jesus, but there's one more amazing part - it's my favorite part of today's text. Paul says in verse four, "When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." Oh, I love this part so much! Remember I told you there were three versions of you? Alright, the old you died, the new you is raised to life, and this is the last version of you - that one day you will appear with Jesus in glory. Write that down for our last fill in the blank - that one day you will appear with Jesus. Do you know what that means? Jesus said that one day he is coming back. He's coming back to make all things new and to make everything right. One day very soon, he didn't tell us exactly when, he will appear in the clouds with all of the angels in incredible glory. He will not be like some miss-able little baby in a manger. Jesus will appear and he will be so bright and so breathtaking and so beautiful that once you see him with your eyes, you will be insanely satisfied and happy for all eternity. And Paul says in this verse, guess who's going to show up with him? Guess who's going to be glorious at his side? You! I tried to draw a picture of this, too; this is what I came up with. You know, one day Jesus is going to come down from heaven and he'll be glorious and you also will be glorious. And just in case you didn't get what those are, those are clouds and also clouds over there.

Do you know what the Bible says about what's going to happen to you on the Judgment Day? It's not just that you're going to like sneak into the backdoor of heaven because Jesus died for you. No, you will be glorified. Like everything that's broken or dysfunctional or messed up about your body, your thoughts, your words, your emotions, your heart, your soul, all of that will be done, dead and gone, and you will be stinking glorious. Can you even imagine? On that day, you will not be sick or diseased or decaying. On that day, there will be no fear or worry or anxiety. There will be no bipolar, no ADHD, no STD's, no ups and downs. On that day, there will be no messes and there will be no medication. On that day, you'll never fight with yourself, with your thoughts, or with those you love. On that day, we won't plan funerals, we won't reach for pills. Instead, everything will be glorious - can you imagine what you will be like on that day? When you appear to worship a glorious Jesus and you look in the mirror and you are glorious just like him? I cannot wait for that day! We will never hurt again, we'll never grieve again, we'll never cry again because he will make all things new. I've got to tell you, I cannot wait to meet you. I can't wait to meet my wife. I love that woman but think about this - I've only

known an unglorious version of her. I've only seen her beauty with eyes that have been corrupted by the fall into sin. I've only heard her say that she loves me with ears that don't hear as God intended, from lips that aren't perfect. How much will I love her when I see the glorious version of her? I can't wait to meet my kids! Man, I would die for those two little girls; they mean the world to me. But I've never seen them in glory. How will I feel when I do? How will we parents - like, what will happen to our hearts when we see our glorious children with all senses that have been glorified? I can't wait to meet myself. There're so many things wrong and broken but in glory, I'm going to be hilarious in heaven, right? When he comes back, I'm going to breakdance with the angels; it's going to be incredible. Can you imagine your body, your personality, you when you've been glorified? I can't wait to meet you!

I love our church, I love the people of our church, I love our church family, but I've never met the you that God intended you to be. I've met the now you but soon, and very soon, future you is coming. And it will be so glorious, we won't need anything. We will just worship God and say you are so worthy that you did this for us.

And you put it all together and you have God's answer for your fears and your worries. Put my pictures all together and you end up with this - if you start to think like Jesus does, the shameful, broken, embarrassing you is dead, that a new you is alive that's connected to Jesus, that's safe because of his blood and his presence. And that one day, after the suffering of this life is over, you will appear in glory. I'll tell you, the picture might be pretty bad, but the promises are really, really good. And it won't fix everything in a moment, but I guarantee you it will help. So, brothers and sisters, like the apostle Paul said it this way, whatever's true, whatever's noble, whatever's right, whatever's pure, whatever's lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy, think about such things and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds through faith in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray. Dear God, we thank you so much for promising us something so much better than what this world has to offer. God, we find it really hard to change our habits, which is why we're so grateful for your unconditional love. Thank you, God, for your promises and thank you, Jesus, for your forgiveness. We can't wait to see what you have intended for this creation, for us, when we see you face to face in glory. God, I pray for everyone right now who's struggling with real, crippling anxiety and deep depression. You're a God of compassion and confidence and you care about those who are brokenhearted. You have promised to be with them always and we pray, God, just moment by moment, you would lift that shadow of darkness and provide people who remind us all that Jesus is the light of the world. Let that light shine brightly in our hearts that we wouldn't believe a single lie the devil pedals at us. Instead, we would believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, the life, and the source of unspeakable joy. It's in his name that we ask all these things with confidence because we know who we are. We're those who've died and have been raised with Jesus. It's in his name that we pray, Amen.