

Set Your Mind

July 12, 2026

Scripture: Romans 8:1-11

¹ So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ God has done what was impossible for the Law, since it was weak because of selfishness. God condemned sin in the body by sending his own Son to deal with sin in the same body as humans, who are controlled by sin. ⁴ He did this so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us. Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness. ⁵ People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit. ⁶ The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death, but the attitude that comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace. ⁷ So the attitude that comes from selfishness is hostile to God. It doesn't submit to God's Law, because it can't. ⁸ People who are self-centered aren't able to please God. ⁹ But you aren't self-centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God's Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, they don't belong to him. ¹⁰ If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God's righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin. ¹¹ If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through his Spirit that lives in you.



As we continue in Romans this week, we turn to the first 12 verses of Romans 8 today. In these verses, Paul begins his argument about why we should choose to live in the Spirit. As with all of Paul's writings and teachings, today we begin to develop our understanding of how we are able to begin living into the new life found in and through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

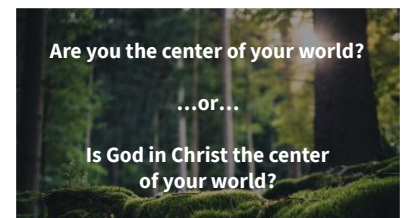
Paul invites you and me to “set your mind” on Jesus. While part of this invitation is individual, there is also a corporate or communal aspect to Paul’s invitation in today’s passage. One could successfully argue that Paul did not primarily set out to build a church or to start churches in a variety of places. Instead, Paul sought to make disciples of Jesus Christ – one person at a time. This was Paul’s primary mission: to make disciples. As Paul went about making disciples of Jesus Christ, churches formed organically, naturally. I think there are two reasons for this. First, Paul very much believed that our faith must be lived out – amongst the least of these, amongst the lost, and amongst one another. And second, we are wired for community. Human beings are social animals. Being a part of a faith community meets this basic need that we all have for connection and belonging.

Paul’s invitation to “set your mind” on Christ is “what” that he is writing about in today’s text. Paul does not stop here, though. He also shows us “how” to live with our minds set on Christ. Like last week’s Romans 7 passage, Paul presents a duality in this week’s passage. In the first 12 verses of Romans 8, Paul compares “life in the flesh” to “life in the Spirit.” Paul connects living in the flesh to living in sin and living in the Spirit to living a righteous, Christ-like life. As we prepare to unpack Paul’s invitation to live a life in the Spirit, let us begin with a word of prayer this morning.

O God of love and grace, we are ready to receive this day. Pour out your word in us; nourish it in the sun of your grace and the rain of your love. May it bear fruit by the power of your Spirit as we ourselves seek to live by the Spirit’s guidance and presence. And now, O God, I ask that you would bless the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts. You are our rock and our redeemer, our Christ and our king. Amen.

As Paul contrasts these two ways of living in this world - “life in the flesh” versus “life in the Spirit” – he is not talking about only the religious side of living. He is also talking about the practical, everyday ways that we live out our faith each day in this world. All of what we do and say and think should pass through the filter of the Holy Spirit – from the simple ways we treat one another to the more complex ways in which we decide how to allocate our time and other resources for the building of the kingdom of God in our time and place.

This idea aligns with the incarnational nature of Christ. God came in the flesh, in a human body, to reveal to us what God’s love looked like when lived out day after day. Jesus taught about and revealed God’s love in many ways: bringing people into community, healing brokenness and disease, caring for the least of these, extending grace and mercy to restore people to right relationship with God and with one another. So, when Paul invites us to set our minds on Jesus, he is inviting us to set our minds on the teachings of Jesus and on the example set by Jesus. He is inviting us to daily wrestle with this question: Are you the center of your world or is God in Christ the center of your world? Paul invites us to ask ourselves this question again and again and again. When we do so, we are setting and resetting and resetting our minds on Christ, allowing Jesus to be the filter through which we approach and live in the world.

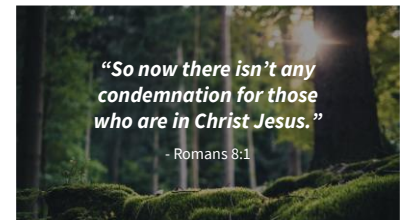


Many years ago, these were popular items. People wore these on their wrists to have a tangible reminder of that filter. These little silicone bands kept one’s mind set on Christ. It was a visible and ever-present reminder to choose the way of Christ. Was it fool-proof? Of course not.



But this is the frame of mind that Paul encourages us to have all of the time. To make the choice to live by the Spirit of Christ, we are opening our hearts to seek God's will in all things, to consider the good of the other or of the community instead of thinking first of ourselves.

At the end of chapter 7, Paul transitions from seeing himself as a *"miserable human being"* to a person that has been delivered from the law of sin by Jesus Christ. He then opens chapter 8 with this declaration: *"So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* The law of sin that brought death and guilt and shame, it no longer has the power to condemn us. This is the "what" – we are freed from the condemnation that sin often brings. In the next two verses Paul unpacks "how" we are set free.

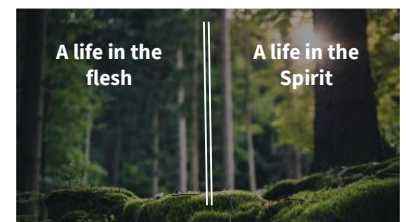


Because Christ came and dealt with sin, making himself the *"righteous requirement,"* paying the atoning price for our sin with his righteous life, we are set free from sin's condemnation. Through Christ's sacrifice, God condemned the power of sin over all who call on Jesus as Lord and Savior, as deliverer and rescuer. Removing the condemning power of sin, God in Christ heals our brokenness, restoring our relationships with God and with others. Through grace, delivered and rescued, we are freed to live by the law of the Spirit. But we must be careful here. Christ's sacrifice did not buy us admission to some social club or to a service organization. No, his sacrifice opened the door to a new way of living in the world, to a new way of being in the world. While the door is opened, we must choose to step through it and to live as people guided by the Spirit of Christ. In the last part of verse 4, Paul assumes this will be our choice. Because of all that Christ has done for us, of course he assumes that this will be our choice!

With this assumption in mind, he writes, *“Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness.”* In the next verses Paul defines selfishness as the thinking that leads to death, as the way of living that is self-centered. It is the opposite of a life lived in the Spirit. The life in the Spirit brings peace and leads us to do and say things that are pleasing to God, not to self.



Living and being in the world as Christ was in the world, Paul argues in verse 8 that we are no longer *“self-centered.”* At our best, this is true. But at other times, that selfish DNA rises up, drawing us away from a life in the Spirit and into the life in the flesh. This is the “war” that we talked about last Sunday – the war in our hearts and minds. It is the pull of the world that constantly battles with the will and way of God. Paul recognizes this battle as he adds *“if in fact God’s Spirit lives in you”* at the end of verse 9. In this battle, God’s Spirit will live in us if we choose to set our minds on Christ again and again, over and over. Like the door that Christ’s sacrifice opened, this too is a choice that we must decide to step into. The choice is between living a life in the flesh, choosing to be self-centered, or choosing to live in the Spirit, choosing to be Christ-centered and other-centered.



My friends, we do have the power to choose not to live in the flesh, to not be self-centered. This is the “what.” The “how” comes next. We have the means at our disposal to be Christ-centered, to be other-centered. The means is the presence of the Holy Spirit. We also have the knowledge and the opportunity to live in a life based in the Spirit. Through the study of and meditation on scripture, we can gain knowledge of how to live in the Spirit.

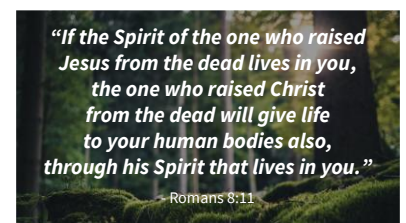
And through the example of Christ, we see many different opportunities to live not for self but for God and for one another. The word running through this verse and through “how” we live in the Spirit is the word “we.” While it is an individual decision to live a life in the Spirit or to live a life in the flesh, the living out of our choice is done together, for better or worse.

When we choose to live a life in the Spirit, we are choosing to be one in the Spirit, one in Christ Jesus. We come to faith and grow into our faith together. We live as one in the Spirit, one body made up of many disciples, each a vital part of a living organism seeking to reveal Christ to the world. This choice is a step away from an individualistic lifestyle and into a communal or connected life.

This idea is what Paul is leaning into in verses 9-11. Being God-centered and other-centered is about living together as one body of Christ, as a body led and sustained by the Spirit. So, in this larger sense of being one in Christ, Paul is paralleling living a life in the flesh versus a life in the Spirit with living an individualistic life versus living a connected life.



Turning to verse 11, we read the eventual outcome of living a connected, Spirit-led life. Here we read these words of Paul: *“If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through his Spirit that lives in you.”* If the Spirit of Christ lives in us, then we will one day be raised to new life. One with Christ, Christ’s resurrection will one day be ours too. While this is great news for us one day, there is also good news here for the day-to-day of life. Because Christ in Spirit lives in us every day, we are raised up daily out of the death that sin so often brings our way.



Raised up daily, we are set free from the sinful nature that is controlled by the flesh. Set free from our sinful nature, we are able to set our minds on Christ. Doing so each day, we are empowered to live a righteous, holy life – a life that is pleasing to God and that blesses all that we meet. A righteous, holy life naturally draws us into connection and into community, living in right and just relationships with God and with one another.



Paul invites us into a life led, guided, and empowered by the Spirit of Christ living in us. Step one to living this life is to set your mind on Christ. Once we take this step, we live as people who seek to live by Christ's will in all things. Living for Christ and for others, we seek to follow Christ's example, healing others, caring for others, bringing people together. May it be so for you and for me as we seek to set our minds on Christ. Alleluia and amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Study

- 1) *Grow*. Freedom from sin comes first through confession and repentance, then by allowing the Spirit to guide you to lead a new, more Christ-like life. When have you seen this work done in your life recently? Where might the Spirit work next?
- 2) *Pray*. What does it mean to allow Christ to fully live within you? How can we practice this on a day-to-day basis? Pray for the will and commitment to live this way.
- 3) *Study*. Read Galatians 5:16-25. Which of these selfish desires resonate with you? Which “fruit of the Spirit” would help you in the battle with these selfish desires?