



Lessons By: Rev. Dr. Johnny R. Freeman

**8 Week Bible Study Series**

**Wednesdays | 6:50pm**

**United Institutional Baptist Church**

**802 E. Market Street, Greensboro, N.C. 27401**

## Session 2

# Deliverance from Negative Thoughts!

Text: Acts 9:1-9

### -Introduction-

In the book of Proverbs, we are reminded that 'as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.' (Proverbs 23:7) This verse is talking about a person's mindset. When you develop a certain way of seeing life, or you develop certain attitudes, or perceptions about people your views, perceptions and attitudes determine your mindset. Your mind is set on a particular way of thinking so your thoughts ultimately determine the person you become. So that a person who sees women as objects to possess instead of human beings worthy of respect then women become trophies or badges of conquest. When a person grows up being told that you're nothing, and you'll never be nothing then the more you hear something the easier it is to internalize what you hear so that what you hear shapes who you become.

Tonight's lesson is about reshaping negative mindsets or negative self-perceptions. The point is until you change negative mindsets you will never change a person's self-perceptions or attitudes about themselves.

## **QUESTION: So how do you change a negative mindset?**

### **-Context-**

Let's start by talking about the Apostle Paul who is credited with being the author of the book of Philippians. In order to get a sense of the where, what and when that helped form the book of Philippians it is important to remember where the letter was written from or what factors inspired the writing of the book of Philippians. The Epistle of Philippians is considered to be a part of what some scholars refer to as the 'prison epistles,' which suggests that, the Epistle to the Philippians was written by Paul while he was in prison. Paul spoke openly and candidly about his 'bonds in Christ.' (Philippians 1:7, 12-16)

Another factor that may be the inspiration for the letter to the Philippian church was the level of the church's loving concern for Paul's wellbeing. As a show of support for Paul's pastoral leadership and ministry the Philippian church was one of the first to respond to Paul's appeal for a special offering for the Jerusalem church. The Philippian congregation had also proved generous and willing co-laborers in giving and supporting the furtherance of the gospel ministry. (Philippians 1:7, 4:10, 14-18) Therefore, Paul wrote this letter to thank the Philippian church for their longstanding prayers and support for his mission and ministry. Mission is what our purpose for existence is and ministry is how we are organized to carry out our mission.

A final consideration for the letter to the Philippian church is Christ like instruction. Paul had received a report of some dissension in the church and wanted to write to encourage a timely and quick resolution to the problem so that such disagreement among the members would not negatively affect the church's unity in Christ. (Philippians 4:2-3)

The point Paul wanted to drive home in this letter is a call for a change of mind. Again, the bible teaches 'as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.' (Proverbs 23:7) Therefore, in order to change what we think the start point is to address what are our attitudes and mindset.

We must remember that the Apostle Paul didn't always have the right attitude about the Christian church that he now had as he wrote the letter to the Philippian church. Paul, who was once known as Saul of Tarsus, was once a devout Jew and a persecutor of the church. (Acts 8:1, 3, 9:1-5) Like many of his fellow Jewish brethren Saul saw the church as a nuisance and a threat to the Jewish religious establishment and their way of life. Saul made his mission in life to eliminate the church from existence. However, Paul's life was changed immediately upon his encounter with Jesus and subsequent conversion experience. (Acts 9: 17-18) Paul experienced a radical transformation that occurred in his life as a direct result of the salvational work of the Holy Spirit in his life.

The only way to change mindsets is through the power of the Holy Spirit's work in us. We cannot change on our own. In order to change our way of thinking God has to do a work in us.

## EXPLAINING THE CONCEPT OF DELIVERANCE...

The word '**deliver**,' in a biblical sense, it means to '**rescue**' or '**set free**' from something and to something altogether different than before. Paul was delivered from a sin and rebellion from the way of the Lord. God had sent Jesus to deliver us from sin and rebellion from God but Paul had rejected the gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Paul's persecution of the church was the visible manifestation of that sin and rebellion from God. Paul's negative attitude toward the church was another outward sign of his rebellion from God. That's why Paul had a negative attitude toward the church. Paul needed to be Delivered from Negative Thinking! Paul couldn't break sin's grasp on his life by himself, God had to do it! When the power of the Holy Spirit stopped Paul and knocked him down from his beast, on the road to Damascus the work wasn't finished. God had to work on Paul's mind so God addressed Paul's negative thinking about the church when He said, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me." Paul thought what he was doing was right but his negative thinking about the church was all wrong. God had to get

Paul's thinking straight. God showed Paul the error in his thinking. (Acts 9: 4-6)

There are several necessary steps in order to be delivered from negative thinking.

- 1) **RECOGNIZE THAT YOU'RE WRONG** - it's impossible to change negative thinking as long as you think the way you think is right and acceptable. As long as you refuse to acknowledge that your thinking is wrong and unacceptable in the eyes of God you're not going to change and you shut the door to deliverance. It's not that God isn't able to deliver you sometimes deliverance is connected to your willingness to acknowledge the error of your ways.
- 2) **BE WILLING TO CHANGE** - When Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, after being confronted about the spiritual and moral sin he was committing against God and His people, by persecuting the church God gave Paul the freedom to choose whether or not he was willing and ready to change. Paul showed his willingness to change when he asked 'what wilt Thou have me to do?' (Acts 9:6)
- 3) **BE OBEDIENT TO GOD'S DIRECTION** - After asking what he needed to do, in order to change his ways, the Lord gave Paul a directive. Paul was told to "arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." So,

Paul obeyed the Lord's instructions by 'getting up from the ground and giving instructions to his servants to take him into the city of Damascus where he waited further direction from the Lord.

**4) CONTINUE IN FAITH ALLOWING THE HOLY SPIRIT TO DO HIS TRANSFORMING WORK IN YOU** - Transformation is not a once in a lifetime experience, change is a process. There has to be some breaking down and reshaping the way we think and live our lives. Saul didn't become the Apostle Paul overnight. The work of transformation was a process in Paul's life. First Paul was delivered from sin and separation from God. The next step in Paul's transformation, from being Saul the persecutor of the church, to becoming Paul the Apostle, Jesus Christ was a partnership between Paul and his continuing to allow the Holy Spirit to do His transforming work in Paul's life. After meeting Ananias, and receiving his sight again, Paul submitted to being under spiritual teaching and discipleship training by remaining with Ananias, to continue learning about and growing in the Lord.