

Joke: There were two rich old men who live next to each other. . .

On the border of their land was a pool that joined the two luxurious estates. In this pool each man has a pet dolphin. Every day, the two old men stood at the edge of the pool, and would argue about who's dolphin is the smartest. This had gone on for years.

Then one day the first neighbor says "Let's settle this once and for all!"

The two men begin to devise a test to determine which dolphin is the smartest. They spared no expense. There was obstacle courses, memory tests, and decoding puzzles, hoops to jump through; the whole nine yards.

As the day of the test came closer, the first neighbor starts to get nervous. He thinks to himself "what if my dolphin loses . . I would never hear the end of it." So he decides to drug his neighbor's dolphin.

The day of the test arrives and the first neighbor wins with flying colors. He gloats his victory for months. . .but after a while he begins to feel guilty. . .

So he tells his neighbor "Hey, I have to come clean. I cheated in the dolphin test. I drugged your dolphin. We don't really know who's dolphin is the smartest."

His neighbor looks at him downcast and a little disappointed in his neighbors actions and says, "You know, that really defeated the porpoise."

Today, I have a message that I think applies to each of us. But before I get to the topic let me start by building a foundation from God's Word in Colossians chapter 3.

Colossians 3:1-3, the apostle Paul said this. . .

Colossians 3:1-3 (NIV) - 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. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Set your what? Minds.

Set your minds on what? Things above, not on earthly things.

In other words set your mind on things that last, on things that are eternal, on things that matter to God, instead of on things that are temporary, on things that will fade away, and wear out.

Unfortunately the things we tend to think on the most are: our situations, fears, problems, or circumstances.

But Paul says, set your mind on things above, not on earthly things, for you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

And what I want to share today is something I believe if you will apply it to your life will help you release some of your fears, tensions, and the anxiety as you learn to lean on God and His word.

And my prayer is that this message will help you grow in your faith and build more intimacy with God.

Here's what I want to talk about today. I call this message, "What's your headline?"

And as I talk about headlines let me give you a bit of shocking information. I know this will probably be a surprise some of you but are you ready for the information? . . .Not all headlines are accurate. Nor is everything you see on Facebook factually.

Take for example this one from the Vancouver Sun April of 1912.

Show article about Titanic

Titanic sinks: no lives lost.

How many know that wasn't exactly accurate as a matter of fact over 1500 people died.

Or what about this one from the Chicago Tribune November 3, 1948.

Show article about Dewey defeating Truman

Truman actually won. . .Now to be fair when this headline was printed there was a printers strike and they had to go to the press hours earlier than normal and everyone just assumed that Dewey would win in a landslide.

And this one is actually a little humorous. . .

Show no more babies after 2015 article

This one is one of several from 1910 that were reported on from the studies of Professor Walter F. Wilcox from Cornell University. He predicted that American woman would stop having babies by

2015 and that by 2020 the country would be forced to import infants from France.

There are some other headlines that have been printed that are just downright funny here's a few for you. . .

- Police begin campaign to run down jaywalkers
- Something went wrong in jet crash expert says
- Teachers strike idle kids
- Miners refuse to work after death
- If strike isn't settled quickly, it may last awhile
- Red tape holds up new bridges
- New study of obesity looks for larger test group

And then who can forget all the headlines a few years back that was filled with all the fearful headlines. Corona and then people stated making fun of the beer by the same name. So they changed it to Covid-19.

It was no longer funny because now we had this pandemic and many people became fearful, loved ones died, jobs were lost, businesses closed, schools closed, churches closed. Shortage of toilet paper and there are so many headlines that felt so negative during that time.

But, again let me let you in on a little secret not all headlines are true. Have you figured that out yet?

Today what I would like is to teach you, with the help of God, is to write your own headlines.

Why is this so important? If you're taking notes, you may want to write this down, it's important because you can't always change your circumstances, but you can change your perspective.

The reality is there's a lot of stuff going on in world, and probably in your life that you would frankly rather not have going on.

And the truth is you can't change everything about what's going on in the world, but here's the good news. . .with God's help, you can change your perspective.

And what I would like to do is share a couple examples of this from Scripture, and in reading these you can almost visualize some of the headlines that could have been written.

First one, Moses sent some men out to survey the land of Canaan. Now if you remember the story God had told them He had already given them the land all they had to do is go in and possess it.

Listen church sometimes God wants us to trust Him enough to walk into His promises. Let me say that again, sometimes God wants us to trust Him enough to walk into His promises.

And God promised this land to them.

But Moses wanted them to find out what's the soil like? What are the conditions like? What are the people there like? Are they few of them or many?

And the Scripture tells us that Moses sent out 12 spies to spy out the land and when they came back they brought with them two completely different sets of headlines.

The exact same situation, and yet two entirely different perspectives.

One group consisted of Joshua and Caleb, they went out with a very positive perspective, they remembered God had told them it

was their land they just had to go and possess it and when they came back they said, "Our headline is this, God is with us, and the land of milk and honey is rich with blessings for all."

They saw what the other ten saw, what did they see. . .?

Same situation, but the other spies that went out who saw the exact same thing. According to Scripture, when they came back, they said this. . .

Numbers 13:31-32 (NIV) - But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size.

And so maybe their headline would have been something like this. . .The land eats people, devours the living. Avoid at all costs."

Same exact situation, two entirely different reports.

And here's the truth church you can't always change your circumstances, but you can change your perspective.

There's another example, the Apostle Paul and if you know his story, he was transformed by the mercy and grace of Jesus, and he went from a Christian hater, to a Christ proclaimer.

And he just knew if he could ever get to Rome to preach the gospel, it would be the most strategic city, and if he could transform those leaders, the gospel could spread all over the world.

So he's begging God, I want to go to Rome to preach. He so wanted to go and he went, but instead of going to Rome to preach what happened is the Roman government arrested him, beat him, took him forcefully to Rome, locked him up, chained him to a guard, as the leaders we're deciding whether or not to behead him.

It went from him wanting to go to Rome and preach. To him being taken there, being wrongly imprisoned, beaten, and now is potentially waiting his own execution.

Can you imagine if there were media back then, what the possibility of the different headlines would be?

One may have been, "Apostle Paul awaits likely execution. Christianity is doomed."

Surely there would have been an opinion column, where someone would write in their opinion and maybe say, "Seven reasons why Christianity will die by the end of the 1st century."

Maybe someone else would do a podcast, and announce the episode of today's podcast is, "The rise and fall of the Apostle Paul."

But here's the good news, if you're a follower of Jesus, your life is not defined by somebody else's headline.

That's good preaching pastor. Let me share that again, your life is not defined by somebody else's headline.

You may not be able to change what you're facing, but you can change how you look at what you're facing.

Your life, your ministry, your family, your marriage, your children, your health is not determined by somebody else's headlines.

We need to get a revelation of this, we don't set our mind on earthly things, but we set our mind on things above.

The Scripture tells us not to. . .let's read it a second Romans 12

Romans 12:2 (NLT) - Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

In other words it's a shift in your mindset.

It's not thinking on what's impure, but thinking on what is pure. It's not looking for what's wrong, but it's looking for what's right. It's not being upset about what you don't have, but it's being thankful for what you do have.

Because the truth is you may not be able to change what's happening to you, but you can change your perspective on it.

It's understanding that we serve a God who is so powerful that he can work in all things, everything, not just the good things, but the bad things as well, to bring about something good, according to his purposes, you can let God determine the meaning of whatever you're facing in the moment.

And that's exactly what the Apostle Paul did. He didn't buy into the negative headlines.

He's facing one of the most horrible situations you can imagine. He is locked up, chained to a Roman guard, waiting on the government to decide, do we cut his head off?

And with the help of the Holy Spirit, he changed the headlines.

This is what he said, Philippians 1:12-14, here's my headlines, he said. . .

Philippians 1:12-14 (NLT) - And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear.

Paul couldn't change the circumstances but instead of thinking why m and playing the victim he says, I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what's happened to me, you may think it's bad, it may look bad, I may look like I'm in trouble, but what's happened to me, has actually served to advance the gospel.

In other words, I'm locked up to this guy, and I'm preaching to him every single day. And my faith is building the faith of others.

I may not be able to change my circumstances, but I can let God work out for good in the situation I find myself.

And as a result, he says, it's become clear through the whole palace guard, and to everyone else, I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident of the Lord, and their confidence, they've done more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

Paul doesn't buy into the negative headlines. He writes his own headlines.

And if Paul was writing the headline, it might read, "Roman plan backfires, Apostle Paul preaches to a captive audience."

Paul didn't buy into the negative headlines, but in a very real sense, he wrote his own.

And you can do the same, no matter what you're facing, no matter what fear or anxiety you feel is going to overcome you.

You can write, "I might be worried, but God isn't."

You can't control your circumstances, but you can change your perspective.

Let me illustrate with a story I read about a man who felt like he was at the end of his rope.

The story goes like this. . . A guy picked up his phone, texted his pastor and said, I'm about to give up. Could you meet with me, because I need some help.

They got together and the guy sat down with his pastor, and the man said, "My marriage is falling apart, and I don't know what to do about it. As for my my finances they are a wreck. And I don't know if we're going to be able to keep our home. We might lose it.

And with all that I'm going through, I'm starting to doubt God. I'm losing my faith, I don't even know how to talk to God. I haven't seen or sensed God in a long time.

I'm in big trouble. My marriage is in trouble. My finances are in trouble, and I'm losing my faith.

After the man finished the pastor looked at his good friend, and he said, So, let me see if I understand this, because it sounds like you're going through a lot.

And the pastor said, So, your wife divorced you, and she's not speaking to you?

The guy said, No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, we're still married, but we're really struggling.

The pastor said, Oh, okay, and he wrote that down.

And then he said, So, if I'm hearing you right, you've lost your job, and you're completely unable to work?

The guy said, No, no, no, I'm still employed. I'm able to work, but things are just really, really tight right now.

And the pastor said, Oh, okay, and he wrote that down as well.

And then he said, And so you've lost all your faith in God? You don't believe there is a God, there's no sense of God. You don't think God is real?

The guy said, No, no, no, I still believe in God, I just haven't sensed him in a long time.

And the pastor looked on and smiled, and he said, because we're good friends, I hope you see what I'm doing. I don't want to belittle the challenges that you're facing, because you have some real challenges.

But from where I'm sitting, I see some real opportunities. I see a marriage that still has potential. I see a man who still has a job. And I see a Christian who still has a God.

And so you can buy into the devil's headlines, which is there's no hope for you, and you'll never get through this, and you'll never heal, and you'll never have a good relationship, and you'll always be alone, and you'll always struggle financially, and you'll never be close to God.

Or, you can change your perspective and say, My God is always with me. My God is always for me. Even though I don't like what I see, I know my God is working in me.

See church here's the thing since you've been raised with Christ, what you do is you set your mind on things above, not things below.

Here's what the Scriptures tell us. . .

Philippians 4:8 (NLT) - And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

And what we're going to do is we're going to let God help write our headlines.

And church if I'm being honest I've had to learn how to do this myself as well. And I still don't always get it right. Because I've had some ups and some downs in my life. I've had seasons of my life I would have rather not had to go through. But when I look back I thank God I did because they helped me realize just how good and faithful He is.

I just had to learn in some of those moments how to let God renew my mind. Because I couldn't change the circumstances but I had the opportunity to look at them differently.

What's your headline?

I don't know who this is for, but let me say this, because you're in Christ, we don't set our mind on earthly things. We set our minds on things above. We look for the good, we look for God.

Stop thinking about what you don't have but look instead for what God has given. Don't complain about what's bad or wrong in the world, look for the work of God in this world, and partner with Him in it.

Look for opportunities to love people, look for opportunities to share the grace of Jesus.

And we change our. . .perspective.

You can't always change your circumstances. You can't always change the diagnosis. You can't always fix a relationship on your own. You can't always get a child to come back to Jesus. You can't always heal from a hurt or a betrayal in three seconds.

But what I promise you, is that God can turn graves into gardens.

So here's what needs to happen, today, tomorrow, this week, open up a news app. Church if I'm being honest you need to stay informed.

So, turn on whatever your favorite biased news source is. You can watch the video of the latest conspiracy theory if you want to, that one your best friend that's informed sent you.

And you may not be able to change what's going on out there, but God can change what's going on in here.

And instead of being postured from a place of fear and anxiety, you can step in with faith, knowing that you're a light in this world, that you've been called by God to make a difference. And you can start to call things that are not, as though they were.

You can have faith to write your own headlines.

And I don't know what your headline would be, but honestly, I hope there's some of you like three years from now, you're writing your own headlines.

You're letting God renew your mind. You're not just defining a situation, but you're letting God help bring meaning on the situation.

Let me share a few headlines with you, just to give you an idea of how you might see whatever you're facing with the help of God.

These probably won't be yours exactly, but maybe you can with the help God use it, because you can't always change your circumstances, but you can change your perspective.

Maybe somebody will have this headline, "Teen asks for help to escape addiction."

That very thing that's held you hostage for so long, that thing that makes you feel shame, and regret the thing you're afraid to tell anyone, the thing that you try to get over, but it comes back, again and again.

But you finally ask for help, you confess to God and the headline says, "The healing process begins."

There might be someone here, your headline is, "Hurting woman cries out to God."

You've been betrayed, you've been let down, and your heart aches, but instead of staying inward, you look upward, and your headline says, "Finally finds freedom in forgiveness" because he who the Son sets free is what? Free indeed.

What challenge are you facing? What pain are you enduring? What question can you not seem to find an answer for? Where's the hurt that no one knows about? Where's the wound that's been there for years?

I promise you, you can't always change that, but you can change what God does in that, and through that. It can be part of your testimony as God walks with you through it.

You can write your own headlines.

The devil doesn't define what happens in your life, the media, God bless the media, because we know they all write the truth, but they don't define your life.

What happens in government doesn't define your life. What happens in your job doesn't define your life. Whatever somebody did to you doesn't define your life. Where you are today does not determine where you can be tomorrow.

You can't always change your circumstances, but you can change your perspective.

And so, it was the apostle Paul who said this, and I love this, you can see him acknowledging what's real, but he brings his own headlines. He brings God's perspective in the middle of the trials.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (NIV) - We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

We're hard pressed on every side, it's so hard you wouldn't believe, they're coming at us, and they're coming for us. But though we're hard pressed, my headline says, we're not crushed.

We may be perplexed, but my headline is we are not in despair.

We are persecuted, but we're not abandoned.

And then Paul continues in verse 16. . .

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV) -Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

So what are you facing?

Set your mind on things above. Fix your eyes on what is unseen.

Fix your eyes on Jesus, because He is there even in your fiercest storm.

And no matter what you're facing, with the power of God, with the love of God, and the presence of God, even though, you may not be able to change your circumstances, you can change your perspective.