

# DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

APRIL 2026 | 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

*For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

## CAPTIVE THOUGHTS

Freedom is a precious word for all humans, but especially for Americans whose ancestors fought bravely to establish a nation where human liberty must be protected at all costs. Yet there is confusion about what it really means to be free. As it relates to our relationship with God, we have erroneously concluded that we are the last word on our own freedom. Thinking that we are free, we resist any attempts to make us submit to anyone or anything. But the Bible corrects that thinking by revealing that we are, by nature, enslaved to powers beyond us.

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once*

*walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

Ephesians 2:1-3, ESV

Though we may be free politically, economically, and legally, we are slaves to sin. Therefore no amount of political liberation will truly make us free. Human freedom does not include our agency in deciding which parts of God's order we

choose to recognize. It does not mean that the salvation presented in the Scriptures is a cafeteria-line offering where we pick and choose what suits our tastes. No. We are slaves to sin until we are captured by the sovereign love of God the Father who sent His Son to redeem us from powers beyond our control. Christian people are captured people! The irony is that such a capture is what truly sets us free. We are created to be submitted to God. It is in that relationship that we are fulfilled and satisfied. Unsubmitted people are lost in their search for meaning and purpose. Demanding autonomy is the path of slavery. We are free to be humans the way God intended only when we are reconciled to God and worship Him alone as supreme.

So the question is: *"How do we live as captured people?"* Obviously, we can't consistently submit in behavior unless our thoughts are first captive to the truth:

*For though we walk in the flesh we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...*

2 Corinthians 10:3-5, ESV

But what does that look like? How do we take thoughts captive to obey Christ? Are we to limit our thinking to verses of Scripture? Are we to only think of spiritual realities? Can we think beyond moral expectations? How are we to learn and grow? At the least, taking thoughts captive means that we align our view of reality with the metanarrative of Scripture that interprets all things in light of the full revelation of Jesus the Christ and Lord. Jesus Himself said that all Scripture is about Him (see *Luke 24:44*). He is the living Word of God. The Scriptures contain all that we need to guide our thoughts to truth (see *2 Timothy 3:16*). And the glorious realization is that the mind submitted to Jesus as the final word is the liberated mind. We can actually think with God. No mind has the capacity to think like the mind which is submitted to Him.

This metanarrative of Scripture exposes history as the revelation that Jesus is the completion of the Israel story. It begins in the Garden of Eden with the promise of the woman's seed crushing the head of Satan and concludes with Jesus on a cross defeating all the rival authorities in existence. The lasting eternal result is the Messianic community called the church demonstrating on earth the dynamics of the new creation while we wait for the final consummation of all things in Christ Jesus.

There are four characteristics of captive-thinking people. First, we are **constrained by love**. We have moved from operating in fear and duty alone to living out of a heart transformed by being loved unconditionally by God:

*For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

2 Corinthians 5:14-15, ESV

The love of God in us moves our focus from ourselves to others. We live for the glory of another and are thus freed from self-obsession. We live first for the pleasure of Jesus our Lord and then we live for the benefit of others as His representative. Such living releases the joy that is in His heart.

Second, we are **conscious of righteousness**. We have believed the word of Jesus who makes it clear that He has granted to us His righteousness and we now have the access to God the Father that He has. The apostle Paul testified that he was rejoicing in his alien righteousness:

*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth*

*of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith...*

Philippians 3:8-9, ESV

We have all been subject to the demands of the ever present law, whether from the created order or from Scripture, requiring our performance for acceptance with God. Jesus as our representative performed all things perfectly and gave us His score. Even when we feel unrighteous, we can rejoice that His standing is secure and we stand in Him.

Third, we are **captivated by Christ personally**. We aren't just living by His instructions and limited by His rules, we are fascinated with Him. We delight to see how majestic and how compassionate He is. Like addicted treasure hunters we search the pages of Scripture to get glances of His character and insights into His nature. We read the horrors of His crucifixion, but with glee we rejoice in the resurrection:

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*

*For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones of dominions or rulers or authorities—all things are created through him and for him. And he is before all things and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*

Colossians 1:15-18, ESV

He is worthy of our search. He satisfies the hungry heart. He reveals His greatness in our weakness. He is more exciting than the wildest imagination. When we think of beauty, He eclipses every scene. When we think of knowledge, He alone is the full and final word.

We are **compelled by hope**. The story of Jesus and His finished work of redemption causes our hearts to inflate with anticipation. He will not leave His project until every particle that was redeemed by His blood is reclaimed and restored to perfect harmony. We can leave all vengeance to Him because His death assured that one day all wrongs will be made right, all tears will be gathered, and all pain will become unreal:

*And not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan*

*inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved.*

Romans 8:23-24, ESV

The salvation proclaimed in the Bible is one of true liberation. We are being renewed to a humanity that can worship continually and work fruitfully. We no longer have the drive to break away and find freedom. We've found it under the shadow of His hand. We can think and live as captured people serving the King.

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