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THE RENEWING OF THE MIND

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"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" Rom.12:2.

The battle is in the mind

The main battlefield that we all face is in our minds. It is in our mind that we struggle with thoughts, and can dwell on negative things such as what we perceive others have done that may have hurt us, or caused offense; caused us to feel rejected, even to think negative things about ourselves. Our mind can be a 'mine-field' of confused thoughts that take us down a pathway that often results in a lot of negative feelings and emotions, and can result in negative behaviours.

However **Ephesians 4:23** tells us we are to *"be renewed in the spirit of your mind."* There can be a renewing of the mind, which we all need. There is a spiritual renewal that needs to take place. It is not something that just happens. There are things that we need to do, in co-operating with the Holy Spirit, so that we begin to function more and more out of the renewed mind.

Present your bodies

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies" Rom.12:1a. We are to do something: we are to present, make an offering, of our bodies. This is something personal; something that each individual can do.

The word 'body' here is speaking of the body as a whole; 'the instrument of life' is what Strong's Concordance calls it. This verse is speaking of the complete man, that is, physical body, soul and spirit.

A living sacrifice

"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" Rom.12:1b. The presenting of our bodies is to be as a living sacrifice. This seems to be a contradiction. 'Sacrifice' indicates the death of something, and we are to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. Maybe there is something in me that has to die!

This sacrifice is to be **holy**, and this is **acceptable to God**. The word *holy* means: sacred, pure, blameless, consecrated, separated, Godlikeness, God's innermost nature, set apart for God, reserved for God and His service. A holy God calls for a holy people [from Word Wealth at Acts 7:33 SFLB]. God wants His nature to manifest in us more and more. For that to happen we need to be willing to put to death the things in us that stop us from being pure, blameless and Godlike in our innermost nature.

Our reasonable service

"which is your reasonable service" Rom.12:1c. The Scripture says that this sacrifice is our 'reasonable' or 'rational' service. The word *'reasonable'* is the word 'logikos' and comes from 'logos'. It refers to our reasoning faculty. As our mind is renewed by the word of God, we begin to meditate in a rational way on the mercies of God. The mercies of God, come from the very heart of God. God is merciful. It is part of His inner most nature (**Ex.34:6**).

The sacrifice is to be intelligent; something we make a decision to do, in contrast to a sacrifice offered by ritual and compulsion. The act of believers presenting their bodies as a

living sacrifice is to be in accordance with the spiritual intelligence of those who are new creatures in Christ and are mindful of the mercies of God.

Another word for 'service' is the word 'worship'. So the offering of our bodies as a living sacrifice becomes an act of our worship to God.

Romans 12:2a

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" Rom.12:2a.

We need to look at these two words:

- conformed
- transformed

Do not be conformed

The word *conformed* is Greek SC #4964 and it refers to conforming oneself to the outer fashion or outward appearance, accommodating oneself to a model or pattern. The word lays stress on the **outward change**.

But be transformed

The word *transformed* is Greek SC #3339 '*metamorphoo*' meaning to transform, but translated: change, transfigure and transform. It has the understanding of something undergoing a complete change, which under the power of God, will find expression in character and conduct. '*Morphe*' lays stress on the **inward change**.

This word for *transformed* is used in **Matthew** and **Mark**, referring to Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration; and in **2 Cor.3:18** where it speaks of us ***"with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord"***. The transformation can only take place by the Spirit of the Lord at work in us.

The renewing of the mind

We are transformed by the ***"renewing of your mind"*** (**Rom.12:2a**). For the inward change to happen our minds need to be renewed. **Titus 3:4** speaks of the kindness and love of God our Saviour appearing and then says in **verse 5** ***"not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit ..."***.

The word *renewing* is Greek SC #342 and it suggests a renovation, restoration, transformation and a change of heart and life. In **Romans 12:2** it indicates a complete change for the better, an adjustment of one's moral and spiritual vision. In this verse in **Titus 3:5**, it stresses the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming the life, [from Word Wealth on page 1721 SFLB].

We need the Holy Spirit working in our lives to bring about the transformation and renewal of our mind. **1 Peter 1:13** says we are to ***"gird up the loins of your mind."*** The word 'mind' in this verse refers to the gift of apprehension; the faculty of thought. When this faculty is renewed by the Holy Spirit the whole mind-set changes from the fearful negativism of the carnal mind to the positive thinking of the quickened spiritual mind [see Word Wealth at Mark 12:30].

The outworking of being transformed by the renewing of our mind is that our thinking is changed, which then is reflected in changes in our actions and behaviour.

Called to holy conduct

Then Peter goes on to say, *"As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'"* 1Pet.1:14-15. We are not to conform to the behaviours of the world, but we are to allow God's nature to manifest in us more and more as we are transformed by the renewing of our mind. As our mind is renewed, we recognise more clearly the things that are part of the carnal nature, and we can make Godly choices to put on the new nature.

Paul in the book of **Ephesians** calls it the 'old man': *"That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness"* Eph.4:22-24. This is something that we have to choose to do. It requires active participation on our part.

The characteristics of the 'new man' are set out in **Colossians 3:12-16**. Col. 3:10 says that we have *"put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."* For the renewing of the mind to take place we need to *"let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord "* (v.16).

We need to fill our mind with the word of God! Read the word. Listen to worship music etc.

There is a warfare in the mind

In **2 Corinthians 10:3-6** the apostle Paul refers to warfare that goes on in the mind. He tells us not to war according to the flesh, then goes on to say: *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ* (v.4-5).

The mind can be full of:

- strongholds - mindsets, contrivances of the mind
- arguments - arrogant, rebellious ideas and attitudes
- high things - speaks of prideful thinking

All these things want to exalt themselves above the knowledge of God. We need to become obedient to the word of God, so that we begin to believe what our knowledge of God tells us, rather than the thoughts that crowd into our mind.

These are all things that are to be pulled down, cast down and brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The word *obedience* is all to do with how we hear. We are to be obedient to what the word of God tells us. Then Paul goes on to say that you will be *"ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled"* (v.6).

For the renewing of the mind to take place we need to have knowledge of what the word of God actually says. Then we will have an answer to the arguments and high things that want to exalt themselves in us.

We are to bring every device of the mind into captivity to the obedience of Christ. This is something we choose to do. We have to take control of our own thoughts; take those thoughts captive, and bring our thoughts back into obedience to Christ.

The renewing takes place in our 'innermost being'

In **Revelation 2:23b** Jesus says *"I am He who searches the minds and hearts"*

The word for *mind* in this verse is the Greek word '*nephros*', translated 'reins' in the KJV. It means: a kidney, that is the inmost mind; literally a kidney and is used metaphorically of the inmost thoughts, feelings, purposes and will of the soul.

It is in this deep innermost part that we are to be renewed. This is why Paul says "*gird your waist with truth*" (Eph.6:14a) and Peter tells us to "*gird up the loins of your mind*". We need the truth of the word to penetrate deep down inside of us, so that we become fully established in the truth.

Having a renewed mind enables us to know the will of God

The final part of **Romans 12:2** says, "*That you may prove* [test, approve, also translated as discern] *what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*". Paul wants us to have a renewed mind, so we will know what the will of God is for us. He says that God's will for us is good, acceptable and perfect.

The word which is translated '*good*' describes that which, being good in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect. We can know that doing the will of God will be beneficial to us.

The word '*acceptable*' means 'fully agreeable', and can also be translated as 'well pleasing'. God's will for us, will be fully agreeable to us when we are walking in the renewed mind. We will have no problem accepting His will for us, as we will no longer be arguing in our minds about whether we will, or will not, obey what God is telling us to do.

'*Perfect*' is the Greek word '*teleios*', and means 'complete'. God's will for us is already finished, complete, perfect, and He wants us to discern His will, so that we can agree with it and walk in it. But we can only do this if we have been "*transformed by the renewing of [our] mind*".

HOW TO WALK IN THE RENEWED MIND

Repent

Firstly we need to come to repentance, because repentance is all about having a change of mind. Repent is the Greek word '*metanoeo*', and means making a decision that results in a change of mind, which in turn leads to a change of purpose and action.

There are three steps:

1. receiving new knowledge
2. regret for our previous behaviour/way of thinking
3. a change of thinking and behaviour

Receive the word of God

We have already seen that for the renewing of the mind to take place we need to "*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*" (Col.3:16). Therefore we need to spend time reading the word, and let the word of God wash over us (Eph.5:26).

Keep your focus on Jesus

God promises peace to those who have a mind that is fully focused on Him. "*You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You*" Isa.26:3. The key here is to have a mind that is fixed on Jesus, fully trusting Him for everything.

Don't be anxious, but pray

Philippians 4:6-7 gives us some more keys as to how to walk in the renewed mind "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let*

your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

1. Don't worry or be anxious about anything
2. Pray about the things that concern you
3. Talk to God about your needs
4. Be thankful
5. Receive His peace

Meditate on godly things

Philippians 4:8 *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.* Meditate, think on, fill your mind with these things!