

IX. Renewing Your Mind.

12 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. *– Romans 12:2*

In Matthew 22:37, Jesus instructs His disciples that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and mind. As one who is in Christ, you are called to love God with the totality of your being. Of particular interest is that Jesus tells His disciples to love God with their whole mind because the original command given in Deuteronomy 6:5 mentions strength or might. To give your mind over to something is to purpose in your heart to do something. In this sense, the mind and strength are connected. However, Jesus may also have been confronting the desire in the Greco-Roman world to gain wisdom. In other words, the mind is not to be focused on worldly thought and wisdom. Instead, believers are called to pursue God with their minds and value godly wisdom.

From all that we have looked at in this study, we understand that men do not naturally think God's thoughts (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14). There needs to be a change in our minds in order for us to see clearly and think biblically. Jesus is the one who illumines us by shining the truth of God in our hearts and minds. Through the perfect Word of God and through the work of the gospel, God removes our inability to discern spiritual truth. By the work of His Spirit, our minds can be transformed and renewed so that we are no longer bound to the thinking and ways of this world.

Though we have been freed from the bondage of the noetic effects of sin, still the world has great influence on the mind of the believer. Every day, forces are at work to draw our minds away from biblical truth. The truth of God is under constant attack and a battle rages for the minds of men. Think about all the junk that is siphoned into our minds through contemporary media. As Christians, we are called to set aside worldly thinking and to pursue godly wisdom. Ultimately, this is only possible through the continued work of God in our hearts, but it is the responsibility of every believer to think biblically.

Change takes place in the mind as we turn away from the lies of the world and continually immerse ourselves in the truth of God. Rather than listening to our own hearts or the counsel of the world, it is vital that we preach the truth of God to ourselves. When we are faced with a major decision or are seeking to formulate a firm conviction, it is important to identify unbiblical thinking or reasoning and expose it. It is then necessary to consider how the Bible addresses the issues involved and to keep that revelation in your heart. As you are reminded of God's truth and meditate on it, the Spirit will work in your life gradually to make His thoughts your thoughts. Since God is who He is (i.e., all-knowing, good, and gracious), it is always best to pursue His thoughts and to be conformed to His will.

1. Read Numbers 23:19. How is the mind of God different than the minds of men? Conversely, how do men think as opposed to God?

2. In Romans 12:2, Paul talks about being "transformed by the renewal of your mind."

a. How would you restate this verse in your own words?

b. What do you think it means to be conformed to this world?

c. Who is the agent behind this transformation and renewal (Titus 3:5)?

d. What is the relationship of this transformation to the gospel?

e. According to Colossians 3:10, is this renewal complete or ongoing (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16)?

3. Considering Ephesians 4:20-24, what does it mean to put off the old self and put on the new? How does the gospel achieve this in a person's life (Col. 3:1-2)?

4. It is important to understand who ultimately works change in the heart of the believer. What do the following passages say about God's work to change the minds of men?

a. Jeremiah 31:33.

b. Job 38:36.

c. 1 Chronicles 29:17-18.

d. Luke 24:45.

5. How does the Bible compare the thinking of the world and the thinking of the redeemed? What do the following passages say about this difference and how the believer is to think?

a. Romans 8:5-6.

b. Proverbs 12:5.

6. God rebuked Israel for not thinking His thoughts (Isa. 55:6-9).

a. How does God desire His people to think (Deut. 5:29)?

b. What did David desire of his son Solomon (1 Chron. 28:9)?

c. What was to be the focus of the minds of God's people (Isa. 26:3-4)?

7. Read Lamentations 3:1-23. How did Jeremiah redirect his thoughts in a time of deep despair?

8. The instruction given in 1 Peter 1:13 is translated literally, "Gird up the loins of your mind." What does this mean? How can the believer gird up the loins of his mind? How is this contrasted to the way we thought before Christ came into our lives (v. 14)?

**"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"**

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,

Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;

Streams of mercy, never ceasing,

Call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,

Sung by flaming tongues above;

Praise His name – I'm fixed upon it –

Name of God's redeeming love.

Hitherto Thy love has blest me;

Thou hast bro't me to this place;

And I know Thy hand will lead me

Safely home by Thy good grace.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,

Wandering from the fold of God;

He, to rescue me from danger,

Bought me with His precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor

Daily I'm constrained to be!

Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,

Bind my wandering heart to Thee:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,

Prone to leave the God I love;

Here's my heart, O take and seal it;

Seal it for Thy courts above.

Thoughts for Application:

1. How would you explain to a child that it is better to think according to God's Word than to think merely for ourselves?

2. Give at least five clear examples of how you might put off worldly thinking and put on godly thinking.

3. In light of this study, how might you pray when faced with a difficult decision or when seeking to formulate an important decision or conviction?

4. Jeremiah redirected his thoughts to God's faithfulness in Lamentations 3:22-26. In what ways does this serve as an example for you to direct your thoughts to God?

5. Taking the illustration to "gird up the loins of your mind," how will you prepare your mind to fight against the "passions of your former ignorance" (1 Pet. 1:13-14)?