

## Sermon Notes, May 21, 2017

### The Christian Lifestyle: The Renewal of Our Minds, Romans 12:1-2, Psalm 1:1-6

We're focusing on the Christian life and the Christian lifestyle. We're looking at how we grow as the Holy Spirit enables us to grow, and how we depend on the Holy Spirit.

We are invited and intended to live by grace. Transformation—becoming a new person, happens only through this, because what God does, He always does by grace. Remember what we are told in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are God's handiwork. We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works for which God prepared us in advance to do." You are not your own handiwork. It's God's project. It was His idea. If you are a Christian, the Bible says the Spirit of God lives in you, and if so, then the Spirit will be leading you toward the fruit of the Spirit. Thoughts will lead me toward love or peace or joy or truth, because the Spirit is the Spirit of truth, or toward courage.

So, last week we asked the question: How do we make our minds a place where the Holy Spirit is flowing freely? It is so good, and it can happen. We began with what Paul said, "Don't be conformed," don't let the world squeeze you into its mold, "...but be transformed by the renewing of your minds."

How crucial this is! Because the Bible says, this is the key to transformation. Now, we have patterns of our minds. Paul uses a striking phrase to parallel Rom. 12:2 in Ephesians 4:23. He says, "Be renewed in the *spirit* of your minds." This is addressing the problem with our minds. The problem is not merely that we are finite, and don't have all the information. (We have access to more information now than anyone in the history of the world!) The problem is that our minds are fallen. They have a spirit, a bent, a mindset that is hostile to the absolute supremacy of God. Our minds are by nature self-worshiping minds. That is the spirit of our minds.

Last week I gave you the 1<sup>st</sup> observation out of three that you and I can pursue and put into practice.

1. The first one was this: I will have to learn to monitor my mind.

In Romans 8 Paul tells us, "The mind controlled by the sinful nature is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace." This is exactly why Paul says, "take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ." With every thought, I can ask this question: Is it leading me toward life? Or is this thought leading me toward death?

2. I can learn to focus, to direct my mind.

I can begin to tell my mind where I want it to go. Paul puts it like this, "Set your mind on things above." That doesn't mean think about *clouds* or the *gold streets in heaven* or something. It's about God's presence and perspective and about His sufficiency right here, right now, in my life. Set your mind on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father where God is in charge and sufficient and available. It is amazing how often people think they are victims of whatever thoughts happen to be running through their heads as if they are just passive spectators watching thoughts going across the screen with no control over it at all. Now, there is a fundamental battle in the spiritual life. It is contested by the Evil One, and it has to do with the nature of the thoughts that are going on in your minds. You better believe it. He will try to get into your mind, and use your thoughts and emotions to try to take you and others down. He is always at work and never lets up. But we can direct our minds. When I wake up I can think, "Ah, I've got too much to do today. I don't know how I'm ever going to get through it. I have been unfairly burdened in life with all of these demands on me." It's going to weigh me down, and I just spiral downwards. Or, same person, same agenda, I can wake up and I can think this thought, "This is the day the Lord has made we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Paul says, now begin to learn to set your mind on things above. The Holy Spirit is at work all the time, and I can tune into the Holy Spirit any moment.

3. I can learn to feed my mind. I can learn to be intentional about what I put into my mind.

The mind is like a sponge. You put a sponge into pure, crystal fountain water, and the sponge will be full of pure, crystal fountain water. You put a sponge into a puddle of muddy water, what will the sponge be full of? Muddy water. Our minds are like that. This has always been understood by wise people spiritually. In Psalm 1, the psalmist says, "Blessed are those who meditate on his law day and night. They are like a tree planted by streams of water. It yields its fruit in season. Its leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers." It's how we get into the flow of the Spirit again.

Again, let me give you an example of what that can look like. Paul says, "Whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent, if anything is praiseworthy, think about such things." When you do that, you are obeying the Scripture, and you have thought something that is leading you toward peace and adoration and worship and joy.

It's about making my mind the kind of place where the Spirit can flow. And just maybe it leads me to think about the heart of the One that the Bible is all about. This One who came and gave of Himself, healing and loving, and sacrificing Himself to save a whole world full of people and what a good thing salvation is.

We're going to tune in. As you leave here you can do this all week long. You can do this all day long. It's always available.