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Renewing the Mind

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Certainly our mind controls our actions, for all that we do or say must first come from our mind. But the word "mind" can refer to more than just thought process. The apostle Paul uses the word "mind" on many occasions to refer to the attitude and disposition that an individual has towards life, and uses the word to indicate purpose, inclination and intent. He speaks of those at variance with God as having "reprobate minds" (Rom. 1:28), "corrupt minds" (1 Tim. 6:5), "defiled minds" (Titus 1:15), and says that such individuals "walk in the vanity of their mind" (Eph. 4:17).

For one to be converted to the Lord there must first be a radical change in mind or attitude toward God and His will. This change of mind will manifest itself in a change of behavior. But conversion is more than external reforms. It is a transformation of character, a change of heart or mind from which flow the issues of life. The wise man says: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). As people of God we are concerned exclusively with serving and pleasing Him so that we might be able to "dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

We therefore reflect the Divine viewpoint in life. We set our "minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth" (Col. 3:2). Being spiritually minded rather than carnally minded we have the mind of Christ who emptied self, took the form of a servant and "humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8).

But such transformation is not a one time occurrence. It is, rather, a continuing process that must be constantly renewed. And so Paul writes, "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). This renewing process is essential to the new man, the man of God who is striving to become more like his Lord. And so we "have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). May God help us to continue this renewing of our mind so that we may be truly transformed into His image.



An Old Story Too Often Repeated

by Gene Taylor

The story is an old one. I have heard it many times. Others who preach have also heard it often. Yet, whenever I am confronted with it, it is still disheartening. I wish I could harden myself to it—but I simply cannot.

It was related to me again recently and, I have to tell you, it put me in a funk. The story? The man on the phone was a Christian. It seems he had attended services and Bible classes as a youth. His parents had taught him the Truth and made sure he was present whenever the church assembled. As a youth his tender heart was touched by the gospel and he obeyed it. He was eager to serve the Lord and grow closer to him. But, sadly, soon that enthusiasm waned. As he grew older as a teen and then a young adult, the pleasures of this world enticed him and, as Demas, he forsook the Lord because he developed a love for this present world (2 Tim. 4:10).

While in apostasy, he married and started a family. A son came along. A son whom he loved and who was his pride and joy. A son upon whom he rained blessings and gifts. There was nothing he would not give or do for him. Nothing, that is, except what his parents had done for him— “bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

The voice on the phone was breaking with emotion. The man paused, collected himself, and then continued with his story.

After his son had finished college and went out on his own, he said his mother, the son’s grandmother, became ill and needed special care. She moved in with her son so he could attend to her needs. She, in spite of her infirmities, was determined to remain faithful to the Lord. She asked her son to take her to the services of the local church. He did. Worried about her well-being while there, he decided that instead of just taking her, he would go with her to make sure she would be all right. Surely, he thought, he could endure it for her sake.

He felt uncomfortable sitting there. Yes he had sat in pews many times but that had been long ago. He had not frequented a church building since before he was married. Yet, in a strange way, there was a familiarity and a feeling of belonging. At each service he grew more interested in what was going on, more comfortable with his surroundings but more uncomfortable with himself. He finally realized he needed to come back to the Lord. He, to the surprise and joy of his elderly mother, answered the invitation and, with tears, penitently told the preacher how sorry he was for his years of neglect. Prayer was offered and he was restored to his Lord and Savior.

How wonderful he felt. “How great to get my life back on track,” he thought. He sensed a peace that he had not experienced in years.

He now attended services with glee. He avariciously read his Bible daily. He started telling everyone about what he had done, how it had made him feel and how they could have that same joy and peace that he was experiencing. He told his son what had happened and invited him to come to services.

But the son would have nothing to do with it. He had his own life now. He had the responsibilities of job and family and he had neither time for nor interest in such things. His father was heartbroken. He repeatedly tried to get his son interested in his spirituality all to no avail. Finally his son let him know very plainly that he did not want to discuss the matter again.

So that is why his father called me. His son lives in our city and he thought maybe, just maybe, I might be able to do what he could not—get his son to listen to his need for the gospel and Christ.

I am always happy for opportunities to relate the gospel to people but sometimes I know, even before I talk to them, my efforts will be, if not futile, at least difficult. I had patiently listened to this man relate his story and pour out his heart to me. I took his son’s name and address and told him I would contact him and invite him to services. I took the man’s phone number so that I could call him back and tell him what had transpired with his son. But, sadly, I already knew what would happen.

The father was already so low I did not want to add to his sadness. Also, it seemed that I was, at least in his mind, his last hope and I did not want to dash what little hope he had. But I knew that the years when his son could have been easily touched by the gospel were past. They were the formative years when he was under his father’s control when his father neglected to teach him the ways of the Lord and set a proper example before him. Yes, the gospel still has its power to convert but not in a heart that is hardened to it or in a person who sees no need for it.

The father still loves his son very much. He continually prays that his son will see the need to obey Christ but every day he faces the reality that the chances of that happening grow slimmer. And, in anguish, he realizes he must share the blame because of his neglect. Yes, the Lord has forgiven his sins but he lives daily with the consequences of those sins. And he agonizes over the lost opportunities he had to teach his son as his godly parents had taught him.

Parents, remember that when you sin and when you neglect your service as Christians, you are impacting the lives of your children. Do not let your neglect contribute to your children being lost. Live up to your God-given duty and properly train your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Do not let this sad story be repeated in the story of your life.