

Renewing Our Minds

"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the RENEWING OF YOUR MIND"
—Romans 12:2.

My brethren and sisters, we **MUST** renew our minds! We must be renewed from naturally minded men and women to godly minded men and women by the renewing of our minds—it is essential to our salvation. Look at 2 more scriptures to this effect:

"Put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and **BE RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND**, that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22).

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10).

We often feel the need of what David pleaded for—a "clean heart" and a "right spirit." To realize this we need only to stop frequently and take note of our natural thoughts—childish, foolish, carnal, evil. Consider what Jesus says comes out of the heart of the natural man—

"Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

And the apostle Paul says (and we name part of his list—the part of which we are most likely to be guilty):

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest . . . hatred, wrath, debates, back-bitings, whisperings, strife, envying, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you again, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things **SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**"

Let us think seriously upon what the apostle says—

"They that do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom."

Do not think that we are different by nature from all other men. To be different, we must **CHANGE**—

". . . because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God. For if we live after the flesh we shall die. But if we through the Spirit do mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body, we shall live!"

The change can come only by scripturally renewing—transforming—our minds. And let us not wait for a more opportune time. Do not expect it will be easier later on, for the longer we delay the more ingrained will our natural thoughts be, and the harder it will be to change. Therefore the Scriptures say—

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

—not 20 years from now, not next month—but *today*. It is a daily task. As the apostle says, "though our outward man perish," let the "inward man be renewed day by day. Begin at the beginning of every day, renewing our minds in the morning with good thoughts, by prayer and reading.

The matter of prayer is a very important part of our lives. Earnest, thoughtful, humble prayer at least twice a day (Daniel took advantage of the opportunity to pray 3 times a day) will do much to

renew our minds, to *cleanse* our minds, to put them back on the right track, to "renew a right spirit within us."

Have we given enough thought to the value of prayer? Do we take full advantage of this great help and blessing and privilege? Jesus so highly valued prayer that he taught that—

"... men ought ALWAYS to pray, and not to faint."

Through prayer God permits us to approach unto Him. How many of the world's "great" men would permit of such a thing? Yet our Heavenly Father—incomparably higher than they—has graciously promised that His ears are always open to the prayers of His children! The prayers we speak of are not the public ones, but those of the individual who pours out the heart to God:

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet. And when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret."

Such prayers God will hear. Such prayers will cleanse the heart, renew the mind, and destroy the bitter roots that tend to grow. Hear David's prayer in Psa. 51—

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

"Cast me not away from Thy presence. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

—the prayer of a godly man who knew his failings, his shortcomings, his great need of help from God.

We cannot overestimate the value of prayer—for helping to keep a right spirit within us—for renewing hope. We find cleansing from sin greatly renews our hope—more so than at first we realize. All the faithful sought God through prayer: it "availeth much" (James 5:16).

How much good reading are we doing?—reading that will "stir up our pure minds." (The other kind stirs up our *impure* minds).

The kind that will do us good are the articles that renew our minds in the way of the Truth—the kind that elevate our thoughts or search our hearts, and stir up by way of remembrance. We are exhorted to "gird up the loins of our mind." What is the thought? When men girded up their loins they caught up the loose garments and bound them tightly about their bodies, so they could run untrammelled. Thus the apostle speaks of the mind—do not let it tangle loose to dwell on the things of the flesh, but strengthen it, guide it, *gird it up*, so that it does not hinder our race for life. Good reading on the things of the Truth will help very much. And let us not think we do not need it!

"Lean not on thine own understanding. Be not wise in thine own eyes. Get wisdom. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. In all thy ways acknowledge Him."

Note how these Sunday mornings renew our minds. That is the purpose of the meeting, of the exhortation, and especially of the breaking of bread—to renew, to refresh, to begin another week in the right spirit, to keep a "right spirit" within us.

Our minds tend always to dull, our memories to fade, our appreciation to lessen, our zeal to cool. Therefore the need of a *renewer* —of keeping in memory all that has been accomplished for us—of heat, warmth, zeal for God and His work.

All these things—prayer, reading, the meetings—tend to renew a right spirit within us, and if they have the right effect—should develop the "new man" and lead to a cheerful, godly, peaceful frame of mind.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."

Consider Christ's example. Let us give careful thought to Peter's word on this point. Christ did not rely on his own judgment, nor permit his natural reactions to govern him—

"When he was reviled, he reviled not again: when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

If *he* did, how much more need *we*! Careful consideration of Christ's actions and attitude can greatly help us.

What is OUR mind when we are reviled? We know what the natural, ungodly mind is at such times—retaliation, anger, bitterness. This is the natural mind, the carnal mind—

". . . not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

What is our mind? Have we renewed it, or does it just follow the fleshly pattern that leads to death? Are we making a *real effort* to renew it? Jesus "reviled not again." What peace of mind when one can reach his example! What bitterness avoided! How quickly the unpleasant incident would pass if we could follow him in this!

Instead of being upset, disturbed in mind, we would be at peace within ourselves. "When he suffered, he threatened not." The further we allow the flesh to carry us away from his examples, the more we will add to our sufferings.

A little reviewing of our lives, a little contemplation of our own past (and usually we need not go far back—just review each day as it ends) and we must conclude that great blessings accompany those who follow Christ's example. We gain or lose according to the effort we make to be like him.

Let us ask ourselves this question:—What did I gain from my last show of anger? Or those bitter words I used? Or that cutting remark I made? Was it a good thing? Did I feel better because I gave vent to my natural feelings?

Not if I am a godly individual I didn't. I soon regretted it—would have recalled the words. I myself am upset, and probably have badly upset others—all because I failed to follow Christ's example. And that is where the renewal of the mind comes in. The bringing of—

". . . every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ."

Let us *strive* for that self-control he manifested—

"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again."

Another thought:—We are told that—

". . . if when we do well and suffer for it, we take it patiently, that is acceptable (pleasing) to God."

Let us consider what Peter is saying. Who but one who has a renewed mind, a mind guided by the Word of God, who is endeavouring to reach that peace of mind and control of the body that Jesus manifested—would realize the need, and the *blessing*, that comes from patiently accepting evil in return for good?

The natural mind becomes indignant, angry, when evil is returned for good. Peter is speaking particularly about our daily employment. If we render good service, work faithfully and conscientiously, and it is not appreciated—or worse still, we are rebuked, or pushed, or frowned upon unjustly—and we take it patiently, we do well. We can apply the lesson to many things in life. The renewed mind will accept many evils patiently.

"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

The apostle Paul lists the names of many faithful men and women. Men and women who had stood up under trial. Men like Joseph who returned much good for evil, who suffered much at the hands of even his own brethren, yet kept a right mind toward them—the *renewed* mind. A mind that could see much good come out of the evil: a mind that committed his way unto God Who would judge righteously and yet would show much mercy.

We need mercy; our brethren need mercy. Therefore the need, the desire, the *wisdom*, of leaving it to God to judge the matter. Joseph did—and what great blessing resulted! Even the salvation of all the family at a time of dire famine. Surely he—by his faithfulness, kindness, forgiveness—heaped "coals of fire" on the head of his brethren, doing them much good, melting them down into a state of godly sorrow and repentance.

The apostle continues down the list. He speaks of men and women who wrought righteousness, suffered cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonment, out of weakness were made strong, of whom the world was not worthy—and sums it all up:

beset "Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud (multitude) of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight (hindrance) and the sin (the natural mind) which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus—the author and finisher of our faith—who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame."

It is not easy; it does not come naturally. It is a lifelong struggle. And because of this the apostle exhorts us to *continually* consider Jesus. Consider these other faithful men and women who endured in their day, who continued patiently to endure to the end. Consider them—"lest ye be weary and faint in your minds."

"Have ye forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not (do not treat lightly or resent) the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him."

It is a needful part of our development as sons. It helps to bring about that self-examination, and the refining of character; that humbling of our spirit, renewing our minds.

"For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. And if we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as sons."

It is not pleasant at the time; it is not something the natural mind is pleased with—and we tend to murmur as Israel murmured, to rebel, to question our lot as if God were unmindful of us. These are all thoughts from the natural, unrenewed mind.

Nevertheless, says the apostle, if we are rightly exercised by the trials—if our mind is renewed by a contemplation of the purpose in all life's experiences—then—

"... afterwards it yieldeth the peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

To accomplish the good intended it must bring about that renewing of the mind, developing patience, faith toward God, trust in His providential care, and an increase in our estimation of the value of His promise of life free from all such trials.

Otherwise, if we let the natural mind prevail we are apt to—like Esau—count the promises of little value and give vent to our feelings and, as it were, sell our precious birthright for nothing.

My brethren and sisters, let us make every effort to renew our minds! It will make godly men and women of us. Here is a partial description of the godly man or woman, taken from bro. Roberts' epitome of the Commandments of Christ—

"Holy in all manner of conversation, gentle, meek, kindhearted, compassionate, merciful, forgiving, sober, grave, sincere, temperate, hearty in everything, watchful, brave, joyful, courteous, manly, sympathetic with others—both in their sorrows and in their joys, clothed with humility, patient toward all, following after those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report."
—A. S.
