

Renewing the Mind

Romans is, in my view, the most powerful book of the New Testament. I have taught the book and written on it many times over the years. Teachers and preachers have a tendency however to dwell on the early chapters on the lostness of the world, the power and deity of God, the doctrine of justification, and many can spend weeks on chapters 6 through 8 alone on our union with Christ in his death and resurrection. Of course chapters 9 through 11 give us great insight to God's faithful love and mercy toward the people of Israel, their blindness and need for repentance.

Then we come to chapters 12 and 13 where Paul seems to be saying, "In light of all of what I have said, we must become dedicated to the advancement of God's Kingdom as he shapes and molds his beloved church, the body of Christ, into vessels of service to be children of light, placed in communities and neighborhoods to bring that light into a world of darkness."

Chapters 12 and 13 are a full blown commentary on the power God gives us in the renewing of our minds as the Spirit himself lives in and through us to impact the world in which we have each been planted. If you have ever wondered what God's will is for you — Paul tells us clearly that to know God's will comes through the process of changing the way we think.

Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God — I plead with you, give your bodies to God as a living and holy sacrifice which is your spiritual service of worship. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know God's will for you. Romans 12:1-2

Let me inject here from the writing of Ray Stedman, from his two volume series on Romans. "*There is no way you can keep from being conformed to the world unless you are being transformed by the renewing of your mind. Something has to happen to your thinking. You need a mind that will see through all of the silly schemes of the world...seeing life as Christ does. It is seeing what is really there and not what seems to be there.*"

Over the remainder of Chapters 12 and 13, the Apostle Paul goes on to tell us that God is working in us, transforming the way we think. The Apostle gives us a list of over 30 ways that God wants to change the way that we think as we learn to do things God's ways. There have been a ton of books written on "knowing the will of God." However, Paul tells us in his letter to the church in Rome that if we will let God renew the way we think, we will come to realize that only Christ working through us is capable of teaching us how to live out God's will in our personal life. As we learn to "think" in God's ways, and learn to let him live out his ways through us — we are IN God's will.

As we learn to let God mold our way of thinking to conform to his ways, the fruit of the Spirit is the result of changing the way we think. Paul continues....

Through the grace given to me, I give each of you the following counsel: ¹

- **Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in evaluating yourself.**
- **We have gifts that differ — use yours properly**

**If prophecy, speak out
If service, serve others well
If teaching, be encouraging
If giving, give generously
If leadership, take responsibility
If kindness, show it gladly**

- **Don't pretend to love others, really love them**
- **Detest what is evil**
- **Honor each other**
- **Never be lazy, always work hard**
- * **Have patience when troubled**
- * **Keep on praying**
- **Be eager to help people in need**
- **Practice hospitality**
- **Bless those who persecute you**
- **Rejoice with those who rejoice**
- **Weep with those who weep**
- **Don't be proud — enjoy ordinary people**
- **Don't think you know it all**
- **Never repay evil for evil to anyone**
- **If possible, be at peace with all people**
- **Never take revenge — leave righteous anger to God**
- * **If your enemies are hungry or thirsty, give them food and drink**
- **Conquer evil by doing good**
- **Submit to governing authorities and pay your taxes**
- **Give respect and honor to those with authority**
- **Owe nothing to anyone**
- **Do not commit adultery, murder, steal, or even covet what others have**
- **Love your neighbor as yourself**

You know it is late and time is running out. The night is almost gone and the day of salvation will soon be here. We belong to the day. Don't participate in the darkness of this world, but clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh and indulging in your selfish desires. Romans 13:11-14
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The J.B. Phillips translation of that last verse is enlightening, **Let us be Christ's men [and women] from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have it's fling.**

Renewing our mind is not an event, but a process that is God's will. Our soul can't produce what only God can produce. Renewing the mind means cleaning up our old ways of thinking and learning to nurture our spirit life.

The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit are each a part of the very Life of God that we have been given, indwelling our spirit, and sharing in his divine being. The power of the triune God himself is at work to live in the ways noted by Paul as we submit ourselves 24/7 to his willingness to live through us and manifest his ways to the world around us. That is God's will for us. It begins with the renewing of our mind. It becomes active as the Holy Spirit within has his way with us.

....yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Romans 6:13

....the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

No matter where we are in the process, we must keep our eyes on the goal — letting the mind of the living Christ within us become the normal, active, expression of His life within!

¹ The list is taken primarily from the NASB and NLT versions of our Bible.