

Renewed Minds

All Things New #2 | Romans 12:1-8

January 9, 2022

Scripture Reading

Romans 12 ¹Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. ²Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. ³For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. ⁴Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, ⁵in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. ⁶According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; ⁷if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; ⁸if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

Pre-Sermon Remarks

- So much of the “normal” that we have known is changed
- Rather than “get back to normal,” we need to “get to renewal”
- Three levels: personal/family, church community, in our region
- Sermon series on renewal, month of prayer, church renewal project
 - Conversations with leadership of our network
 - Soon to come medium-group gathering of leaders—CG and otherwise

Lectio/Prayer

- **Revelation 21** ⁵Then the one seated on the throne said, *Look, I am making everything new.*

Introduction

- Charismatic church upbringing | 10th grade English teacher | *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis
 - First time understanding that following Jesus involves the life of the mind
- No better place to engage with this than the book of Romans
- Last week, what the gospel is (Rom 1-11) and what the gospel does (Rom 12-16)
 - This verse is a pivot point...

Because of Mercy

Romans 12 ¹Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God...

- God's imperatives/commands are *always* grounded in his love, grace, and mercy
- Failure/sin, God's plan of salvation through Jesus, resurrection new life
- After the good news of the gospel, we are instructed how to live
 - Today's reading: 1) bodies, 2) relationships, 3) **mind** (today)

Renewed Minds

Romans 12 ¹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God...² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Big idea: The gospel renews our minds so that we can know God's will

- 1) The mind, 2) the *renewed* mind, 3) knowing God's will

I. The Mind | What is it?

- Late 80's hit alternative song by the Pixies, *Where is my Mind?*
- Major topic of philosophy: what are we? What is the mind?

The Biblical Mind

- No OT Hebrew word | Body, spirit, heart, soul
 - English Bibles use the word "mind," but it's either heart or soul
 - All thinking comes from the heart
 - There is a word for thought/plan/scheme (your thoughts are not my thoughts)
- Plato changed things | Soul (psyche)
 - Plato despised the body | Greek "soul" is different from Heb "nephesh"
 - Reason (nous), Appetite/irrational (epithumia), Passion/decisive (thumos)
- Paul uses Greek terms | Mind (nous)
 - Most all other NT authors are writing in a very Jewish context
 - 19 of 22 uses of "nous" come from Paul's letters
 - Think about his mission to the Greco-Roman world

Philip H. Towner Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, the mind/reason is alternatively the thought system and the faculty of conscious reflection and perception. It is with the mind that decisions are made, whether moral or amoral in nature. It is with the mind that one chooses to accept God and obey his commandments, or to reject him and rebel against him.

II. The Renewed Mind

² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

The Renewed Mind

- The corrupt mind | Romans 1
 - Paul uses all three of Plato's words in Romans 1 & 2
 - Our passions ran amok, our minds have been darkened, God is going to "act"
 - **BOTH** our passions and our minds are affected by sin
- A new kind of mind | Kainos
 - Neos (49) | New in time: youth, youthful passion, baby chicks
 - Kainos (52) | New in kind: new city, new son, new name, newness of life
 - Overlap and distinction | new wineskins

- Be transformed | Passive imperative
 - Mysterious paradox - God has to work, but we have a part to play
 - Like Philippians 2 “work out your salvation...for it is God who works”
 - Analogy: “get a massage”

III. Knowing God’s Will

²Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

- Correct a misperception: this is not about becoming an egghead
- Yes, we do need to study and improve our thinking. But being smart is not the main point
- The point is to know the will of God
- But *first*, you have to recognize the pressure to conform that we live in
 - Every age, every society comes with its own unique pressure to conform
 - Wright “don’t let yourselves be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age”
 - Greek word related to synergy/synagogue - gathering together
- Recognize our own susceptibility | Mind/reason has also been affected by the fall
- Re-learn how to think **from God** | like rehab after an accident

N.T. Wright People sometimes suggest that living a Christian life means a kind of immaturity, since you are guided not by thinking things through for yourself but by rules and regulations derived from elsewhere. That isn’t Paul’s vision of Christian living. Of course there are plenty of firm boundaries. He will have more to say about them presently. But at the centre of genuine Christianity is a mind awake, alert, not content to take a few guidelines off the peg but determined to understand why human life is meant to be lived in one way rather than another. In fact, it is the way of life of ‘the present age’ which often involves the real human immaturity, as people simply look at the surrounding culture, with all its shallow and silly patterns of behaviour, and copy it unthinkingly.

The Renewed Mind

- Receive God’s gift of a new mind | Repentance, faith, salvation
- Recognize the world’s pressure | you are constantly being catechized
 - Extreme social contagions: Tik Tok tourette’s syndrome
 - Subtle: peer pressure (yes, for adults too)
- Read and reflect constantly
 - First - the Bible. Go directly to God in this way.
 - Second - prayer, meditation, quiet time.
 - Third - other resources, books, podcasts, sermons, etc.
- Reform and reevaluate often
 - Things in society that are out of line with the will of God
 - But there are also things in the American church that are out of line