

**RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND - Knowing How the Life of God Gets Inside - Part seven - Teaching #2160**

Sunday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 6:30 p.m.

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**IDEAS, IMAGES, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT - SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND THE RENEWING OF THE MIND (continued)**

**Romans 8:5-6 - “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. [6] To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”**

**Psalm 16:8 - “I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.”**

Last week we began our detailed study of exactly how our lives are shaped by the God-given facility of the mind. We studied the role of two shapers of human life - *ideas* and *images*. Ideas form the background world-view of our lifestyle. They reveal what is *actually* important to us, rather than what we merely *say* is important to us.

Then we studied the powerful role of *images* in our mind. Images, unlike ideas, are the unprocessed hooks into our immediate *desires*. Then we began studying some of the practical steps Christians can take to be *spirit shaped* in their thinking.

So we studied two points last week. First, the process of thinking involves **ideas** and **images**. And second, the Devil uses these two things as the very essence of spiritual warfare against our souls. We have one more very important one today.

3) **SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION INVOLVES IDENTIFYING SINFUL IDEA SYSTEMS AND REPLACING THEM WITH THE MIND OF CHRIST**

This is a **huge** transformation. It involves **replacing** the dominant mindset of this present, pervasive, persuasive culture with the mindset of the Kingdom of God. There is no part of life that can be left **unexamined** or **untouched**. The whole idea system that is oriented for life **away** from God must be replaced with an idea system that orients everything **toward** God.

How are we going to do this? We all know that very few people can effectively **will** their lives to be totally different than they were before. We all know that the control of our **desires** and **reflexes** that steer our bodies and their habits frequently lie stubbornly resistant to our resolutions and will power. We can only sustain changed behavior for short periods of time with great concentration and effort.

And here's the point I'm trying to make. I don't believe God even ***intends*** growth in Christlikeness to take place by sheer grinding out of will-power. There is a proper ***order*** to developing spiritual mindedness. You can't start from the ***outside*** and work your way ***in***. You must start on the ***inside*** - very ***thoughtfully, prayerfully,*** and ***intentionally*** - and work your way ***out***. You must start with the ***renewing of the mind***.

Here I come back to our opening texts:

First, **Romans 8:5-6** - **“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. [6] To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”**

To try to implement ***reform*** without a ***“spiritual mind”*** will end in death. There is simply no ***life*** or ***power*** in that kind of approach. There is no future in it. Your ***mind*** is the key because, as we saw last week, this is where the Holy Spirit begins His transforming work. You can only change your ***feelings and desires*** and the ***sinful habits of the body*** by reaching them ***internally and indirectly*** through a renewed mind. Your mind ***programs*** your desires, and your mind ***programs*** your body.

So what can we do? First, we can do **nothing** in our own strength. But, by God's grace, all of us can, to a degree, choose where we will **set our attention**. We can all, to a degree, and by God's grace, **choose** where we will focus our thoughts.

This is not **legalism**. We have a huge portion of the church that has been told this by many emergent writers and thinkers, and it's a massive and destructive lie. Choosing the disciplines that **focus the mind** isn't legalism. It's **building the forms for spiritual change**. It is cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the transformation of everything else about us.

This is the process David described in our second text - **Psalm 16:8** - **"I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken."**

Please notice. This verse isn't describing something **the LORD** did. It's describing something **David** did. I can't say it more simply than that. Spiritual transformation **begins** with setting the Lord continually **before** your mind. You can't do everything. But you can do **that**. David makes it clear that **he** was the one who set the LORD before himself. No one did this **for** David. He built the forms. God poured in the power for transformation.

Let me expand this with some practical steps to begin this process in your own life. You **can** do these things on a daily basis:

- a) ***Seek God and pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal to your heart areas where you have become secularized in your thinking.*** I know we all live in a secular world. You can't avoid that, nor should you. This world must be reached by Christians who touch all levels of our culture with Christ's life and light.

I'm talking now about areas where you have gradually ***adopted*** a secular mind-set while still holding to your Christian creed.

Think especially about the world's attitude toward ***fun, pleasure, success, and social acceptance and popularity.***

This will reveal where you actually ***have*** the ***mind*** of a Christian, and where you are just ***talking*** like one or ***acting*** like one.

If that seems too complicated, try this instead. To see where your life has become secularized ***look for the ideas that seem most natural for you to live with. Look for the actions and attitudes that feel pleasant to you - that are the most natural to you with no justification or explanation at all.***

That will reveal the idea system that truly governs your life.

Look how David made this a matter of constant prayer: **Psalm 19:13** - “**Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.**”

David gave particular attention to “***presumptuous sins.***” That’s a very important term. These are not just ***failings***. They are sins that so rule unchallenged in our thoughts and desires that we no longer feel the need to ***repent*** of them. We’ve become ***comfortable*** with them. They are the tell-tale signs of the mastery of a secular mind.

Remember, however pleasant and natural and likeable these things appear to you ***right now***, Paul says they end in ***death***. That means ***emptiness*** quite soon, and ***judgment and spiritual death*** ultimately.

- b) ***Relationally separate yourself from those who would influence your mind with no reference to the Spirit of God and eternity.***

**Psalm 1:1** - “**Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers....**”

Please understand what this Psalm *is* teaching and what it is *not* teaching. You cannot and should not remove yourself from all contact with this fallen world. You should read the newspapers. You should know what's going on around you. You should have influence on those who are lost and without Christ.

That's not what David is talking about. He's talking about your *inner circle*. He's talking about the people you are *with* in a more *intimate social sense*. He's talking about who you allow to *speak into your life* on that level.

And here's David's bottom line. If those people - and they may be very *nice* people - don't live by a solidly Christian world-view, you won't either. If you allow that kind of influence into your life you will soon be taken by it to places you would never have thought possible.

The *counsel of the ungodly (ideas and images)*, tailored as it is to cater to your desires of the flesh, will soon cause you to find it "*necessary*" to do what is *empty* and *wrong* in order to be *happy*. Destruction will become *compelling* to your mind. You can't avoid this moral outcome.

Then, as if this weren't enough, David takes it one step further. You will find yourself sitting with the rest of the "**mockers**" of truth. You will begin to set yourself up as an authority **against** the counsel of God. You set your life on a course that takes it **out of reach** for redemption.

The **proof** of that will be obvious to everyone but you. The very people who have the most to offer you in terms of wisdom and life and help will be the very people you will turn on like enemies.

So hear this truth now and turn back the forces of spiritual and eternal death in your life. If you want to grow in spiritual mindedness, separate yourself **relationally** from the influence of a secular mind that resists the voice and work of the Holy Spirit.

c) ***Meditate daily on the Word of God***

The common assumption is that this should be placed first on the list, so I really need to show you why I mention this third. The key to explaining that is found when we look again at Psalm one again carefully:

**Psalm 1:1-2 - “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;[2] but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”**

Notice the order in these verses. Meditation on the Word ***follows*** (probably ***accompanies***) relational separation from the influence of the ungodly. This relates directly to an important question: Everybody has the same Bible. ***Why doesn't everyone get the same out of it? Why do some people love going to church, while others hate it, fo find it a colossal bore?***

There is a great insight in verse two - “....**but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.**” Notice, he mediates on the Word day and night, not because he wants to delight **God**, but because it is a delight to **himself**.

The law of God pleases him because of the previous steps he has already taken to ***separate himself from the counsel of the ungodly***. He has already demonstrated that he has ***chosen a course for his life***. He's not a person divided between two minds. He has oriented his entire being in the direction of God's Word.

In other words, he is, in the words of Jesus, ***“pure in heart.”*** That's why he's happy in the Word. So get this principle. You have to ***separate yourself from the world-view of the ungodly in order to be happy in your relationship with God, His people in the church, and His Word.***

When your heart is ***dedicated*** to God in this genuine sense of separating yourself from the mind-set of the world the result is God's Word is no longer perceived as a threat. It's heard with ***grace*** rather than ***condemnation***.

It's like a map moving life in the direction of incredible treasure. And he roots himself in the Word ***long*** enough, and ***consistently*** enough that he has learned the ***“feel”*** of it. He's growing comfortable with it. He has stayed with it long enough to ***replace*** an old idea set with a new one that has now become the ***home page*** - the ***operating system*** - of his mind.

The text says he **“meditates” on the Word**. He literally **“turns it over and over in his mind”** day and night. He **“speaks to himself” along the pathway of the Word**. That’s what the verb **“meditate”** means.

This is the fuel for all other transformation. It all starts with the renewing of the mind. In the next few weeks we’ll discuss the transformation of the **feelings**, the **will** and the **body**. But none of these will be effective until the **direction of the mind** is set in order.

Remember, the mind set on the flesh can only end up in death, no matter how diligently we try to turn our lives around. When Paul uses that Phrase, **“the mind set on the flesh,”** he means a world-view **not taken captive - not reigned in** - by the revelation of God’s Word. Many Christians still await that moment of a decisive **head on collision** with the world-view of the Spirit of God.

Until then, their Christianity is only an outward act - a performance - or a raw duty. Remember, only the **mind** set of the Spirit is truly **“life and peace” (Romans 8:6b)**. The mind set on the flesh can only end up in death, no matter how diligently we try to turn our lives around. But the mind set on the Spirit is truly **“life and peace” (Romans 8:6b)**.