

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Renewing the Mind

In New Testament writings sinners are often referred to as men with reprobate minds (Romans 1:28), corrupt minds (1 Timothy 6:5), defiled minds (Titus 1:15), and as men that "walk in the vanity of their mind" (Ephesians 4:17). In Colossians 1:21, Paul reminds some that they were in times past, "alienated and enemies in your mind." Such minds reflect wrong attitudes. They show dispositions of hostility and antagonism toward God and the things of God. Making the transition from sinner to saint involves changing such minds and altering such attitudes.

The process by which this radical and essential change is effected is called "renewing" (Gr. anakainosis). Romans 12:2 shows it to be the basis for transforming the life: "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." So then, meaningful change — change of character, involves more than external reforms and outward acts; it means changing the mind (heart) from whence are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 15:19, 20). It means "the adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God" (Vine). Essentially, to have this renewed mind is to have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5). It is to have and be influenced by the Divine viewpoint instead of the human viewpoint; by the spiritual instead of the carnal. Nothing is more essential to or characteristic of the "new man" (Colossians 3:10) and his "newness of life" (Romans 6:4) than this renewed mind. And of no less importance is the means of its renewal. How does God seek to change the minds of sinful men?

Contrary to many popular concepts, only the gospel of Christ can change and renew the minds of men as God intended. Nothing but God's truth can make believers out of unbelievers. Belief (a function of the mind) comes from hearing Divine testimony (Romans 10:17). This is according to prophecy concerning the new covenant wherein the Lord says "I will put my laws into their mind and on their heart also will I write them" (Hebrews 8:10). The faith by which men are motivated to "transformed" living is derived from the word of God (John 20:30, 31). It is no coincidence that in every case of conversion recorded in

the New Testament, what was done was based on something that was learned and believed.

For example, the obedience of the Pentecostians was in response to what they had heard (Acts 2:37); their baptism was in consequence of "receiving his word" (v.41) and their subsequent activities were directed by the "apostles' teaching" (v. 42). In receiving the knowledge of the truth (Hebrews 10:26) these crucifiers of Jesus became informed and enlightened in their understanding; thus, believed and obeyed and received the remission of their sins. This corresponds exactly to the description of the saved as given by Peter in which he refers to them as those who "have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord..." (2 Peter 2:20).

Yes, their conversion was an "experience" - but it was an experience with God's truth. And that's the only kind that can renew the mind - and the life. All men need such experiences - for eternity's sake.

- Dan S. Shipley (1929-2011)

Build Up or Tear Down?

"Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people." (1 Thess. 5:11-15)

This passage from 1 Thessalonians gives us the answer to the question of building up or tearing down. Paul tells these brethren in Thessalonica to encourage one another in the faith. Yes, those who are unruly are to be admonished. But notice that verse 15 tells us how to do that: never giving back evil for evil and always doing what is best for everyone.

Why does Paul need to tell them this? Doesn't it seem obvious that they need to be supportive of their brothers and sisters in Christ? Well, the Holy Spirit felt it necessary that these words be spoken to them and subsequently to us. Too often we find ourselves criticizing, besmirching, and possibly even gossiping about our brethren. Why? Maybe it is because tearing down is easy. Have you ever done a home renovation project? Tearing out the old part takes about half a day. Building the new part takes much longer. It takes planning, hard work, diligence, and a commitment to finish the work at hand.

Building up our brethren takes commitment. We are here to help each other get to heaven. That means steadying others when they stumble, picking them up when they've fallen, and restoring them to the faith if they've slipped over the edge (Gal. 6:1ff). This is the hard work. This is the work of dedicated, loving individuals who put others' needs ahead of their own.

Tearing down is easy. It takes no so such commitment. It is accomplished by simply serving self at the expense of others. Paul describes these perfectly in 2 Tim. 3:1-5, "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these."

Our lives can be difficult at times. We are faced with many challenges in this life. When we face those challenges, to whom can we turn? First and foremost is our Lord. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). Our second line of defense is our Christian family, for the reasons mentioned previously. It is sad when we can't count on our brethren to build us up. It's even sadder when they seek to tear us down.

Perhaps being reminded of how we were made to be brothers and sisters will help: "Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died" (Rom. 14:5b).

- Kevin Hall

Civilian Pursuits

Christians are citizens of God's kingdom first and foremost! We are servants of the Most High God, citizens awaiting with eagerness the day that our Lord brings us home (Philippians 3:20). Let us never forget that.

Recall the words of our brother Peter, "conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;" (1 Peter 1:17). He reminded that we were redeemed "from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers" (verse 18). We are "aliens and strangers" (1 Peter 2:11); we are as the faithful of old, "strangers and exiles on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13), seeking a country of our own, "a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (verse 16), the city prepared by God.

With these thoughts firmly in mind, let us carefully consider this next point. While we are alien pilgrims here, passing time in our lives, we live, work, play and participate in things of our society, such as weddings, funerals, and many other wholesome activities. Sometimes we may aspire to and reach a position of importance in the local community. Remember that greater involvement puts us under more frequent inspection by the "Gentiles," so at all times we must "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles" (1 Peter 2:12). Now: no matter what role we occupy in this world, we must not become overly attached to it! Christian, recall this admonition: "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier." (2 Timothy 2:4). This is part of suffering "hardship ... as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." (verse 3). Again, from the ESV, "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him." There are things that good soldiers of Christ just cannot allow to divert attention from service to the King, the One who enlisted us. So, relationships, agencies, engagements, and pursuits, though many of these are wholesome, should not be allowed to ENTANGLE (as in a net) us. Soldiers on active duty are not allowed to "moonlight" by engaging in a sideline business. The Christian must focus and stay focused on his duty to his Master. How many "civilian pursuits" have carried Christians into spiritual oblivion and away from their Lord?

Even if a Christian rose to a position of great power or fame in society, and worked very hard to advance good and righteous principles, it is not the role of the Christian to fix all of the evils in the world. The entire world will never forsake all evil. Satan and those who belong to him will see to that. The role of the Christian is to use his voice and behavior to call those who will listen out of the world, forsaking it, and into Christ, where the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. Christians are seed-sowers; God gives the increase to the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:5-7). God will judge the world (1 Corinthians 5:13).

The role of the Christian is to follow the Lord's instructions: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life," (Philippians 2:14-16a; cf. Matthew 5:14-16). Do our "civilian pursuits" entangle us in "grumbling or disputing"? We are not "lights in the world" when that is the case. Titus 2:7-8 says, "in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us." We live to please God, not men (Galatians 1:10). The good life now is telling others about Christ and showing them how He has transformed our lives.

Are you a soldier in service to the Lord?

- Gary Smalley

- * "Follow your knows: Know God, Know Jesus, Know the Bible!"
 - * "Every time the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future!"
 - * "Friends are like elevators. They can lift you up or they can let you down!"
 - * "Evil men will ultimately fail; Godly men will ultimately prevail!"
 - * "Don't let troubles get you down -- except on your knees!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)