

Daily Devotional, May 20, 2020 Renewal by the Spirit

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

I'll never forget the old farmhouse I lived in while attending Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, IL. The house was about 8 miles off campus, near Little Grassy Lake, a favorite recreation area. The road I lived on was a somewhat hidden one that you reached off of the Giant City Blacktop. Once you turned onto it, you had to be prepared for the downhill slope that took a sharp righthand turn as you descended until it leveled out maybe 40 feet ahead. The most perilous thing about this stretch of the road was that it had developed deep ruts from weathering and constant use.

With the exception of when there was heavy rain or the rare snow we would get, I was convinced that once the wheels were in the ruts, the cars and trucks could find their way down that stretch without any assistance from the driver. You could pretty much take your hands off the wheel as if in auto-drive. The ruts kept the wheels in line until the road turned to a gravel bed at the bottom.

I feel that the sanctuaries in our mind are like deep ruts on a dirt road. You don't need to steer the wheels to stay in the grooves. Ruts in the mind force you into one unbending restricted direction, robbing you of a richer life outside of the narrow dirt road familiarity. These ruts in the mind are ways of thinking that we ingrained into our psyche from our earliest infancy and into our childhood. We are often not even cognizant of their existence, but they steer and ensnare us, depriving us daily of the inner peace that can bring us into an intimate relationship with God due to our fear of the unknown, unwilling to place our trust in the unfamiliar.

The first two verses from Romans 12 reveal to us a process for the renewing of our minds. First, we are to become living sacrifices, daily laying aside our own desires, without reserve, to follow God. This is something that involves mind, will and heart—putting all of our energies and resources at God's disposal and trusting God to guide us, which is the least we can do when we consider the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

Second, we are to be different to the world – not to conform to its ways of thinking and behaving. We are not to follow the behaviors and customs that can be selfish and corrupting. We must stand out as being different. Which leads us to the third point—it must be firmly planted in our minds—"be transformed by the renewing of your mind". The root of the word transformed is metamorphosis. The dictionary meaning of this is, 'A change of form by natural or supernatural means'. It is possible to ignore most worldly customs and still be selfish, proud, arrogant, covetous, or stubborn. It is only when the Holy Spirit renews, reeducates, and redirects our minds that we find our true transformation.

A caterpillar goes through a natural process and emerges from its hard cocoon as a butterfly, to live a new life. It has been changed in appearance and nature to fly free. In a similar manner, when the spiritual process of our minds being renewed takes place, we are changed. We begin to think and act differently. The old nature with its mortal, earthly values, beliefs, and practices is replaced by the new nature we have in Christ.

We are not able to transform ourselves, not is it a natural or an automatic process. Wrong patterns of thinking and behaving that have been deeply embedded in us over many years need to be recognized as the sin that it is, and it must be slain at the cross. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that transforms us, as we submit ourselves to God's Spirit. Through the work of the Spirit, we are valuable and capable of worthy service.

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. Romans 8:6 (NIV)

Prayer: Father, today I submit myself to You. I acknowledge that I can't change myself and that transformation is a work of Your Spirit. Please show me the portions in my life that need changing and give me the grace to humble myself before You, so that Your Spirit can change me from the inside out. I pray for the glory of Jesus' name. Amen.