

The renewing of our mind

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Notes prepared in fellowship with Victor Hall for the communion ministry

Introduction

The scriptures record that in the week before His crucifixion Jesus was asked by a scribe to identify the foremost commandment. Jesus answered him saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. This is the first and great commandment. Mat 22:37-38

We can only love Yahweh Elohim with all our *heart*, all our *soul* and all our *mind* because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5.5. This begins with new birth, baptism into Christ's death, burial and resurrection and baptism in the Holy Spirit and continues each week as we joyfully receive the 'word of faith' proclaimed by Christ's messengers at the communion. As we journey each day in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our heart granting us everything we need to walk in obedience. 2Pe 1:3. We also understand that when the Holy Spirit pours the love of God *into* our heart, He is writing the New Covenant *on* our heart and *putting* God's Law, the Law of love, in our mind.

Heb 8:10 FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS IN THEIR MIND AND WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

In this paper we will focus on understanding what it means for God to put His law in our mind.

The carnal mind

Firstly, we note that the mind is a faculty of man's identity. This means that the mind serves to resource the motive of the heart. As a result of the fall however, the carnal heart of man is a void. Motivated by lust, the fallen heart tries to satisfy its desires as a means of filling the emptiness. The carnal heart is unable to comprehend that living in obedience to the will of God is the pathway that leads to sanctification and eternal life. The Apostle Paul wrote; "EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."

The scriptures also explain that the God of this world has blinded the carnal mind. 2 Cor 4.4. As such, the fallen mind is without understanding but retains a capacity for reasoning. Using this ability, it strives to resource the lusts of the heart to enable it to fill the void. When failure and sin result, the fallen mind continues to serve the carnal heart by excusing and justifying the person's sinful actions to placate the conscience. Rom 2.15. Instead of questioning this chronic experience of futility, the carnal mind is driven on by the heart to try to find new ways to satisfy the emptiness. This situation can have a terrible impact on the mind. The Department of Health, for example, has determined *that almost half of all Australians aged 16 to 85 years will experience mental illness at some point in their life.*

In the book of Ephesians, Paul warned that believers can live under the same delusion.

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, *in the futility of their mind*, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, *because of the blindness of their heart*". Eph 4:17-18

We might well ask the question, “How could a son of God find themselves living in the futility of their mind, alienated from the life of God and blind in their heart?”

This problem was evident in the Church in Corinth. The congregation was being drawn away from Paul’s fatherhood and the gospel of sonship by false teachers who were promoting doctrines that appealed to the flesh. The Apostle wrote, “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, *whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe*, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them”. 2Co 4:3-4. The simple point is that believers are blinded and deceived when they do not receive and obey the word of faith proclaimed by Christ’s messengers. This is what the Apostle Paul referred to as being ‘corrupted from the simplicity of Christ’. He wrote, “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, *so your minds may be corrupted* from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well receive it!” 2Cor 11.3-4

Of course, we are not being tempted by false ministers to forsake the gospel of sonship. Rather, as the Spirit calls us to leave behind unhelpful doctrines and practices of the past, we must ensure that we have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. Two weeks ago, for example, the urgent entreaty of the Holy Spirit called us all personally to “*put off the weight and burden of church history and let it go. All the good, all the bad of your church history, your denomination, your experience, can be rolled out of the way. The Lord is sanctifying for Himself a people, born of the Spirit, who do not reference to where they came from and are not needing to control where they are going. The Lord is freeing His people to be obedient people, led by the Holy Spirit*”.

A new heart and renewed mind

We have noted that we receive a new heart through new birth, baptism into Christ and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord declared; “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” Eze 36:26.

Christ fills the void as the substance of the new heart. When the Father sends the Spirit of the Son into the heart of a believer, Christ becomes their life and they belong to Him. The Spirit of the Son cries out within them, ‘Abba! Father!’ Gal 4.6. Christ is speaking *in them* to the Father. He is also speaking *to them* and illuminating them regarding their sonship. Our new creation heart will no longer be driven by lust to fill an identity void. Rather, the heart’s desire will be to join the fellowship of His obedience so that we also can bring forth the fruit of righteousness.

Our minds are also renewed in the likeness of the mind of Christ. Paul wrote, “Let this *mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”. Philippians 2.5-8 .

The renewed mind of a son of God, now governed by the motivation of a new heart, is not focussed on perceived successes and failures or rights and wrongs. Rather, its mindset is to see *every thought brought captive to the obedience of Christ*. 2Cor 10.5. With this perspective, our renewed mind can appraise the world and reason properly in every circumstance of life. Paul wrote that “he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged by no one”. The mind of the spiritual man is not anxious in relation to judgment

because he understands “that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”. Rom 8:28.

By way of example, we have come to understand that even a bad day can be a good day for a son of God. We may have behaved poorly or failed spectacularly in a particular initiative we believed was of the Lord. As sons of God, we understand that our sonship is not determined by our successful performance. Rather, our confidence is that as we abide in Him, He, as our great high priest, is priesting His life to us. When we miss the mark, we can turn to Him and cry out for mercy, knowing the Lord will use the very failure we have experienced to help complete in us the good work that He has begun. Phil 1:6.

Continuing to learn from Christ

The Lord also said to His disciples “Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and *learn from Me*, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Mat 11:28-29.

We register that this is a command not an invitation. To learn from Christ is to continue to be conformed to His ‘gentle and lowly heart’. This happens as we receive with meekness the word proclaimed at the communion service every week. Jas 1:21. In the faith of the word we receive, we are able to eat His flesh and drink His blood and so remain yoked to Christ in the fellowship of God.

Because we are sons of God, Jesus also asks the Father to send us another helper. He is the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that He would “*teach you* all things, and bring to *your remembrance* all things that I said to you.” The expression ‘bring to your remembrance’ literally means to ‘put in your mind’. In this we recall that Paul wrote that “the mind set on the flesh is death, while the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace”. Rom 8:6. ‘Setting our mind on the Spirit’ means understanding that the Holy Spirit is the expression of our name and identity. He joins us to the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings by leading and guiding us through every moment of our day. As we walk in fellowship with Him, praying in the Spirit and listening to His voice, He orientates our renewed mind to the works of our sonship. Jud 20-21. Through the Holy Spirit’s guidance, we *know* what we should be doing each day and we *know* what we shouldn’t be doing.

Healing our minds

We also recall that Jesus told His disciples not to have an *anxious mind*. Lk 12:29. Similarly, the Apostle Paul wrote that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a *sound mind*”. 2Ti 1:7. There can be a number of reasons why believers struggle in their minds. In the first instance, we understand that any attempt to achieve sonship through the efforts of the flesh will inevitably result in failure and disappointment. Paul outlined this problem in Romans 7 noting that even though his will and his mind were set on good, he always failed to achieve what was expected of him according to the Law. Rom 7:14-15.

Paul explained that his problem was ‘another law’ within his spirit that was warring with the law of his mind. Paul did not mean that the motive of the other law and the motive of his mind were opposed. Rather, he was explaining that the impact of the other law upon his will, which was part of his mind, was that it motivated him to achieve life through the faculties of his flesh. Rom 8:6-7.

To put it simply, the deception of sin motivates us to believe that we can, by our own initiative, fulfil the law of God using the energy of our idealism. This darkened enthusiasm drives our activities. When we experience failure and people don’t receive our self-defined initiatives, we become hurt and offended. Our mind, which should be settled and secure, grows increasingly anxious. These thoughts are simply the

emotions of sin that are commonly accompanied by sleeplessness, fretfulness and feelings of a lack of acceptance.

Paul's also experienced this predicament. The more he desired to have life through the motivation of the other law, and took initiatives to obtain life this way, the more he failed and came under the condemnation of the very law he had set his mind on keeping. Paul said that this caused his mind considerable distress, 'O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?' Rom 7:24.

Happily, we remember that Paul, in identifying this problem, also highlighted the answer. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit". Rom 8:1.

We know that the Holy Spirit frustrates our endeavours to draw life from the word of God through the exercise of the flesh. This is a great help to us. In these situations, anxiety and shame in relation to our unsuccessful attempts to 'try harder' or 'do better' are the obvious indicators that we are attempting to achieve the righteousness of God in our own strength. When we are walking this way, the Holy Spirit resists us and urges us to acknowledge our sin by turning to the Lord and crying out for *mercy*. We must be delivered from this mode of religious living.

In turn, we remember that it is by the mercy of God that we are enabled to present ourselves to join the fellowship of His offering. Rom 12.1. Christ delivers us from striving in the flesh to an entirely different mode of thinking. As we journey by faith with Him each day as a participation in His offering and sufferings, we learn the way of offering transfer as the source of our life. In this way we are 'transformed by the *renewing of our mind* and are now able to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God'. Rom 12.2.

Another reason believers are troubled in their mind is that their human spirit has been damaged as a result of sin. Of course, the Lord is regenerating our human spirit. This can happen as a miraculous provision at the communion or our healing can occur progressively through our on-going daily participation in His offering and sufferings. During the course of our live stream communion gatherings the Lord has spoken very specifically through words of knowledge to deliver many from issues of anxiety and fear. In this we recall the story of the demon possessed man who was immediately healed by Jesus and found 'in his right mind' fellowshiping with the Lord. Mk 5.15. It is helpful to also remember that the Lord's call to him was to testify about this miraculous work in his life. "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." Mk 5.19.

Similarly, a number have also spoken of an on-going ministry of deliverance to their mind and memory as they have continued to abide in the fellowship of the Lord's offering and sufferings. James explains this experience of healing in his epistle. 'My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you *may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*.' Jas 1:2-4. In either situation, we must not respond to the Lord's initiative towards us with hesitation and unbelief or in the very incapacity of our mind that He is coming to heal. James continues: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But *let him ask in faith, with no doubting*, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind". Jas 1:5-6. In this we register again that the capacity for our deliverance is in the faith that is coming in the word of the Lord, not in our capacity to believe it. The faith of Christ secures our minds from doubt. Hope is now the anchor of our soul because we know that our sonship is already secured in Him.

Finally, we also understand that there is no capacity for healing the mind through a casuistic counselling experience. Rather, when a person comes to talk with an elder, they are recognising that the elder is part of a presbytery fellowship. They are coming seeking fellowship *in response to a word that has brought them illumination and conviction by the Holy Spirit*. In the light of this word, elders connect hearers to the fellowship of the Father and His Son and the fellowship of Christ's offering. 1Jn 1:3. In the fellowship of His offering, sons of God are granted the capacity for repentance, receive the forgiveness of sins, and experience the atoning work of the blood.

Conclusion

A wise man once said "Don't tell me what you think, listen to God then tell me what He thinks". His statement reminds us that our mind needs firm reference points as a foundation from which it can reason. A person that is born of God is no longer driven by lust and provoked from the emptiness of a fallen heart to find identity expression and self-verification. Rather, we know that it is only possible to find satisfaction in the likeness of Christ. As David prayed, "As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness. Psa 17:15. We see Christ's face in righteousness each week in the word of present truth ministered to us at the communion gathering. As I receive and obey this word by the faith of the Son of God, I am being transformed into His likeness. 2Cor3.18 My renewed mind is no longer its own resource and reference point. Nor am I driving it to be the foundation of my identity by being strong minded and opinionated. We know that such an attitude only leads to eccentric behaviour regardless of how logically our perspectives are presented. As I accept that my mind is a servant that aids me on my pathway as a son of God, I can joyfully embrace the words of the prophet Isaiah who wrote, "You will keep him in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on You*, because he trusts in You". Isa 26:3.