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Sermon Notes

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Transforming the Mind by the Word of God

Romans 12:1-2

I. Changing Your Mind

In the 17th century, leaders of the Inquisition in Spain sought to produce conversion from heresies through physical torture. Their techniques produced many confessions, and conversions from one pattern of thought to another and many church leaders considered it a success

In 1778, a strange visitor arrived in Paris from Austria; he was a medical doctor named Franz Anton Mesmer, and he proposed a strange cure for mental illnesses... he would wave his hands over patients or touch them or even touch objects they had touched, and the patients would go into fits and trances. Afterward, they often felt better. The doctor called his force “animal magnetism”, thinking it to be an invisible fluid that flowed from him to other persons. Thus a new term was coined: the people were said to be “Mesmerized.”

During the Korean war, American soldiers who were taken prisoner were subjected to what came to be known as “brain washing” techniques. These were developed by Russian communists in the 1930’s, and they were more refined than the techniques of the Inquisition; the prisoners were kept in isolation in conditions of constant physical discomfort... when reduced to a totally anxious state, he was brought forth for relentless humiliating interrogations; the victim is usually so shaken by the captivity that he is highly susceptible to new ideas, which his interrogators plant and nurture with sudden, friendly reassurances

Every year, for the Super Bowl receives the highest television ratings of the year; as a result of the huge audience of over a hundred million American viewers, corporations like Gillette, Coca-Cola, Ford, Rolex, and American Airlines will spend incredible amounts of money on thirty-second televised advertisements... the entire point is to affect your mind so you buy their product

This morning, I’m going to speak to you about the transformation of the mind, but not in any of these ways. The complex web of your mind is the canvas on which God wants to paint the

masterpiece of His glory; it is the score sheet on which He wants to compose His most magnificent symphony; it is therefore also the battlefield in which Satan wants to fight to the death... the place of Satan's constant warfare against your soul.

The human mind, therefore, can either be the greatest theater of God's glory, or the most repulsive example of the effects of sin.

Your mind is to be the greatest theater of God's glory, and God will have it renewed by His written Word for His glory. My purpose this morning is to tell you why the mind must be renewed, and how it can be renewed.

II. A Brief History of the Mind

A. The Human Brain: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Psalm 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made

- 100 billion neurons; (Amazon rain forest stretches 2.7 million sq. miles and it has 100 billion trees)
- Each neuron has as many connections as these are leaves on an average tree
- If you simply counted the neural connections in the cerebral cortex, the outer layer of the brain, at the rate of one per second it would take 32 million years
- Center of memory, mood, instinct, will, emotion, decision, all bodily function
- Seat of individuality and personal history... you train your brain with every experience you go through in life
- Power of interpretation centered in the brain: sight, sound, touch, smell, taste
 1. Created in the image of God
 2. Created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever
 3. Created to "Know the glory of God"

The human mind is the greatest, most complex physical thing God ever created

B. The Fallen Mind

1. Described most clearly in Romans 1: willful twisting of the truth of God

Romans 1:21-23 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

2. Characterizes life apart from God: darkness in the mind leads to darkness in life

Ephesians 4:17-19 *So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

3. Natural mind hostile to God and ignorant of things of God

Romans 8:7 *“the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.”*

1 Corinthians 2:14 *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

C. The Regenerated Mind

1. A “New creation”

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

2. New minds to see the glory of Christ

2 Corinthians 4:6 *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

3. Literally the mind of Christ given to us!

1 Corinthians 2:16 *“We have the mind of Christ.”*

4. BUT we are still commanded to USE the mind of Christ

Philippians 2:5-7 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing

D. The Renewed Mind

Romans 12:2 “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

1. Constant commitment
2. Also struggle with a “divided” mind... partly obedient, partly sinful; Romans 7

Romans 7: 25 So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin

3. Start of transformation of entire person... all sanctification starts in the mind
4. The essence of Christian growth is a commitment to godly MIND CONTROL

Romans 8:5 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.

E. The Glorified Mind

1. Perfect in knowledge of God (John 17:3)

John 17:3 “Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

2. Full knowledge (1 Cor. 13:12)

1 Corinthians 13:9-12 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹² Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

The mind is a glorious gift of God, the essence of our having been created in the image of God... sin has twisted our minds, darkened them so we cannot love God and actually hate Him and all His ways; Christ came to save us from this darkness... through Him, God re-

creates our minds, makes them a new creation... although a battle presently rages in our minds between our new nature and our old, fleshly nature, in the end, we will have the perfect mind of Christ and will know him fully, just as He has known us fully!

III. The Supreme Act of Worship: Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer 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.

A. True Worship: The Essence of True Christianity

What the Father seeks

John 4:23-24 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

B. Context: Eleven Chapters of Glorious Doctrine

1. Alluded to in vs. 1: "In view of God's mercies"

a. astonishing list of God's incredible mercies:

love of God instead of wrath; indwelling Holy Spirit; faith; grace; peace with God; comfort; power; hope; patience; kindness; glory; honor; righteousness; forgiveness of all sins; justification; reconciliation with God; security; eternal life; freedom; resurrection of the body; adoption as children of God; intercession of Christ and the Spirit

b. mercies = we deserve NONE of them

c. so astonishing that Paul is carried away in praise

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

2. Paul's remarkable ability: soaring in praise, lands with his feet firmly on the ground

3. Paul's usual manner: doctrine first, then behavior

4. This honors God's creation of the mind!!! The mind leads the whole person

God reasons with us, working through the tangled web of our minds to bring about understanding and true, spiritual worship

Isaiah 1:18 "Come, now, let us reason together," says the Lord.

C. A Four-fold Sacrifice: Soul Body Mind Will

1. Soul

- a. only a regenerate person can offer this sacrifice to God
- b. natural mind cannot understand the things of God
- c. Paul "exhorts" believers... they've already given their soul
- d. motivation: gratitude... "In view of God's mercies, offer your bodies..."

2. Body

- a. God has the soul, now He demands the body as well
- b. body = collection of nerves, muscles, biological systems that lives and moves and has its being in the physical world God created
- c. Greeks = dualistic; spirit pure, body evil; denigrated body; said it was animal-like, could not be controlled
- d. God loves the body... He made it, and intends it to be used for His service
 - If you are to speak God's words, you will use your physical mouth to do so
 - If you are to walk God's paths, it will be your feet that will carry you there
 - If you are to serve God's people, it will be hands just like these that will do it
 - If you are to see God's glory in creation and in His word, it will be your eyes that will do it
 - And if you are to contemplate the mysteries and the glories of God, it will be this gray matter that does it

God wants your body

e. YET body IS where sin resides

i) Paul saw the members (parts) of the body as the seat of residual sin habits

Romans 7:21-23 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

ii) constant warfare with his new nature in Christ

Romans 7:25 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

The answer is: Christ can rescue us... but He does so by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the Spirit does it by the renewing of the mind

But only with great difficulty!!

1 Corinthians 9:27 I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

e. “present” = temple term for sacrifice... to bring in as an actual sacrifice

f. “living sacrifice” = as opposed to a dead, once for all sacrifice

- Perpetual... constant; more than just daily, but moment by moment

g. “holy” and “pleasing” to God

God only wants sacrifices that are without blemish or spot... personal holiness

h. “sacrifice” = it is going to COST YOU something... it is not easy or painless

i. this is TRUE, SPIRITUAL worship... not some goose-bump experience

3. Mind

a. only mentioned now, but the whole thing begins in the mind

John 13:17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

b. “reasonable” AND “spiritual” act of worship

- c. Regeneration makes the mind new... renewing the mind keeps it new
- d. mind is also the battlefield: here the new nature and old nature find their mix
- e. BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS AGE

Literally: J.B. Philips "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold."

The world has a mold... it wasn't you to conform, to think like it does on every topic: on politics (it's called being 'politically correct'); on clothing (it's called 'being trendy' or 'in style'); on success (it's called 'money, power, prestige, awards')... world is VERY INFLUENTIAL on the mind... it has a mold and it WANTS YOU TO CONFORM TO IT

i) age = fallen Satanic world system

Trench: "The floating mass of thought, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations at any time current in the world."

John Bunyan in *Pilgrim's Progress* called it "Vanity Fair":

Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the town there is a fair kept, called Vanity Fair. It is kept all the year long. ... at this fair are all such merchandise sold as houses, lands, trades, places, honors, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures; and delights of all sorts, as harlots, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and what not. And moreover, at this fair there is at all times to be seen jugglings, cheats, games, plays, fools, apes, knaves, and rogues, and that of every kind. Here are to be seen, too, and that for nothing, thefts, murders, adulteries, false-swearers, and that of a blood-red color. Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town, where this lusty fair is kept; and he that will go to the city, and yet not go through this town, "must needs go out of the world."

Modern translation:

Then I saw in my dream, that when they got out of the wilderness, they suddenly saw a city before them, and the name of that city was "Addictive Worthlessness", and in that city there was a huge Mall called "Addictive Worthlessness Mall." It's open 24-7, and there you can buy anything the heart could desire... vacation homes, real estate, trophies and awards, human applause, corporate ladder climbing techniques, corner offices, political appointments, travel packages to resort areas, lusts, pleasures and delights of all kinds such as swimsuit editions, pornographic DVDs, computer games, worldly magazines, and all the

raw materials for earthly happiness that money can buy: gold, silver, pearls, Oriental silk, fine Corinthian leather, top-end electronic devices such as flat screen plasma TVs and satellite dishes. Here you can see, and for free, too, thefts, murder, adulteries, blasphemers and all kinds of sins packaged as entertainment. As I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this filthy city, where this lusty Mall is owned and operated, and he that would go to the Celestial City and yet not go through the Mall can only avoid dealing with it by death.

Vanity Fair is the sum total of all that Satan wants to offer you in this world... and to those with a good brain and diligent work habits, there will be opportunities for you to buy more at Vanity Fair than do others who pass through this world

ii) “Be not conformed” = lit. STOP MASQUERADING... “act of assuming an outward expression that does not come from within”

Greek implies you are already masquerading like the world’s system now... STOP DOING IT!! It is also passive... “STOP ALLOWING YOURSELF TO BE CONFORMED.”

Satan is manipulating the media to saturate your minds with the ways He wants you to think... about life and death, about pleasure, about gender, about sexuality, about entertainment, about careers... he wants you to conform... God commands you to be **transformed**

f. “BUT BE TRANSFORMED...”

God also has a mold and He wants you to be conformed to that mold... it is none other than Jesus Christ

The entire saving work of God is to take sinners like us and transform us to be just like Christ

i) lit. metamorphosis

Matthew 17:1-2 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

ii) outward visible part matching what you truly are within

iii) this is sanctification... gradually changed more and more to be like Jesus

iv) also passive... something does this to us from the outside... THE HOLY SPIRIT

2 Corinthians 3:18 *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

As you gaze into the face of Christ, you will more and more be transformed from within into Christlikeness... just as Moses' face was shining after he spent forty days on Mount Sinai with God

And what is the ultimate result of being transformed by the renewing of our minds?

4. Will

“Then you will be able to test and approve God’s will; his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

- a. testing God’s will
- b. approving God’s will

Ultimately, I have given up my will and made it wholly yours, O Lord... what you want for me is what I want for me... I will do what you make it plain to my mind that I should do

So many people ask questions concerning God’s will for them!! You will never be able to discern God’s will for your life until you present your soul to Christ for salvation, daily present your body to Christ for holiness and service, and are being constantly transformed by the renewing of your mind

IV. The Renewing of the Mind: How Does it Happen?

Vs. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

NOTE: Both of these processes are passive... the world conforms us or God transforms us

In both cases, something is BEING DONE TO US...

The question is: to what are you presenting yourself to be influenced? What are you subjecting your mind to?

A. Fundamental concept: transformation of life begins with the renewing of the mind

Two great issues:

1. What goes into the mind
2. What the mind dwells on, what it chews on, what it meditates upon

Scripture calls on us to allow the WORD OF GOD to be the input and the meditation

Psalm 119:15-16 I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. ¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

B. Simple Secret: daily saturation in the Word of God as illuminated by the Holy Spirit

Illustrations:

Mission work in Tokushima... Indigo dying process... same color as our blue denim... the process occurs by dipping the cloth repeatedly into vats of the blue dye; the more frequently it is dipped and the longer it is immersed, the deeper the color

So it is also with immersion in the word of God OR in the world's mold

The more time you spend watching TV, surfing the net, reading worldly magazines, listening to worldly talk shows, watching worldly movies, the more profound will be the world's effect on your mind

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

C. Simple guidelines

1. Daily commitment to Scripture intake: Knowledge in breadth

Illus. Charles Spurgeon "Our very blood should be 'bibline.'" Spurgeon also said, "A Bible which is falling apart usually belongs to someone who is not."

Go through Bible once per year... 1145 pages/365 days = about 3 pages per day

George Mueller read through the Bible two hundred times! David Livingstone read it four times in succession while he was detained in a jungle town in Africa.

Billy Graham, on his medical missionary father in law, Nelson Bell: "He made it a point to rise every morning at 4:30 and spend two to three hours in Bible reading. He didn't use that

time to read commentaries or write; he didn't do his correspondence or any of his other work. He just read the Scriptures every morning and he was a walking Bible encyclopedia. People wondered at the holiness and greatness of his life."

This thorough reading across the Bible gives powerful knowledge in breadth... the whole scope of God's good, pleasing and perfect will will become clearer and clearer to you

Begin every day by praying and reading Scripture: start with the Bible intake time

Psalm 119:18 "Open my eyes, that I may see wonderful things in your law."

As you see amazing and new things, you'll get excited to read more Bible

2. Daily commitment to Scripture meditation: Knowledge in depth

Psalm 1:1-3 "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, whose leaf never withers. Whatever he does prospers."

- a. meditation is the careful chewing over each delicious phrase of Scripture
- b. its too easy for reading to be unreflective
- c. USE PEN AND PAPER... a notebook; write down key observations, questions, mysteries, points of application
- d. pray over texts of Scripture... let the author of the Bible open your eyes to its deepest meanings

3. Daily commitment to Scripture memorization: Knowledge made available

"On his law he meditates day and night..."

Impossible without memorization!!!

Memorization enables Scripture to be running through your mind constantly, like the rock in the river

V. Summary and Conclusion

The central message of the Bible is this: Repent and believe in Christ for the salvation of your soul

Christ came, died on the cross to pay our penalty

We receive that free gift by the twin graces of REPENTANCE and FAITH... repentance means a determination to think differently about everything in life... for the Christian, the life of repentance NEVER ENDS... it continues to touch every area of life

The world makes a claim on every area of your thought life and every topic in this world

God makes a claim on every area of your thought life and every topic in this world

The question is, whose view are you going to take?

On money:

the world says that money is the root of all happiness, and that the basic purpose of money is to make you happy in this life

God says that the love of money is the a root of all kinds of evil, but that money can be used for His glory and for the advancement of His Kingdom, for the relief of the poor and for storing up eternal riches in heaven if we give it away by faith here on earth

On sex:

The world says "If it feels good, do it!" That sex is fine between casual consenting people, and that there are no lasting consequences to being promiscuous

God says that sex is a glorious gift that is to be enjoyed, but only in the context of marriage; and that He will judge all sexual offenses either at the cross of Christ or in eternity

On clothing:

The world says that the clothes make the man; that we need to be up on all the styles; that if your not wearing the hottest styles, you're nothing. The world says you can gauge someone by their external appearance and their attire

God says that clothing is given to cover our nakedness, that we should not be anxious about our clothing, because He clothes the grass of the field; He says that external appearance is nowhere near as important as what's in your heart

On time:

The world acts as though tomorrow is guaranteed, that you can do whatever you want with your time, not to sweat it because there will always be more; to eat, drink and be merry with the time you have

God says that time is finite and of infinite worth; that we are to redeem the time because the days are evil; that we should number our days and gain a heart of wisdom; that we should not assume that we will even be alive tomorrow, but should say "If the Lord lives we will live and do this or that

Friend... the Bible is a huge book with God's way of thinking about every significant topic or issue you will face in your lives... you should present your mind to it every day, and meditate on it throughout the day... let God's word transform EVERY AREA of your thinking and through it, every area of your life

**THEN AND ONLY THEN WILL YOU BE ABLE TO TEST AND APPROVE GOD
GOOD PLEASING AND PERFECT WILL!!!**