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**MIND**

By Ralph Woodrow

Text: Romans 12:1-3:

“I beseech you *therefore*...” When we see the word “therefore” we should ask: What is it there for? “Therefore” implies certain statements or pieces of information have gone before; and now we are coming to the summary or concluding point, as it were. In this case, in the verses before, Paul wrote about the mercy of God, how he has confined all—Jews and Gentiles—in unbelief that he may have *mercy* upon all.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your BODIES a living sacrifice...” (Please note the word “bodies”—more about this later.) A sacrifice, in the usual sense, speaks of death. But the subject here is a *living* sacrifice. Some folks say they would *die* for the Lord; what they need to do is *live* for him! Indeed some have died as martyrs, but most of us are called to serve the Lord as a LIVING sacrifice. One man said, “God needs LIVERS, not DIERS!”

“...a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Christ actually *died* as a sacrifice for our sins, so it is only reasonable that we *live* for him. To live a holy life—to shun the wrong and do the right—makes good sense. It is reasonable, the right thing to do.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your MIND...” It is with our bodies that we do right or wrong in this world. And since it is the mind that tells the body what to do, the importance of having a renewed *mind* is evident.

Someone asked a man, “Do you want to change your mind?” The man replied, “No, I believe I’ll keep the one I have!”

As believers in Jesus Christ we can have a mind change—it can be renewed, transformed—so that we can

“...prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-3).

What a powerful passage of Scripture!

It was no exaggeration when the Psalmist spoke of the human body being “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psa. 139:14). The body has 206 bones, 640 muscles, 400 tiny cups on the tongue for taste and 20,000 hairs in the ears to tune in sounds.

There are 600 million air cells to the lungs that each day inhale 2,400 gallons of air. The heart beats around 100,000 times a day, during which time it pumps about 2,000 gallons of blood.

Though it requires a microscope to see some blood vessels, it has been estimated there are about 60,000 miles of them in the human body. Considering that the distance around the earth is about 25,000 miles, these blood vessels, if laid out end to end, would circle the earth over two times!

The male body averages about 20 square feet of skin—the female body about 17 square feet—and each square inch of skin contains 19 million cells, 90 oil glands, and 60 hairs.

The Bible says the hairs of our head are numbered (Matt. 10:30,31). Blonds have about 146,000 hairs, those with black hair about 110,000, those with brown hair average 100,000 and those with red hair 86,000.

The various parts of the body are connected by a complex network of 10 million nerves and branches, along which electrical

impulses run to and from the brain at speeds up to 170 miles an hour!

A human brain contains 10 *billion* nerve cells and generates more electrical impulses in a single day than all of the world’s telephones. It is the fastest known computer, estimated to be capable of about 10 quadrillion (10 million billion) calculations per second.

The *mind* controls the actions of the *body*. This simple fact is demonstrated thousands of times each day in our lives. If the mind says: “Go to the store,” we go. The mind tells us to get in the car. The mind tells our fingers to turn on the key. The mind tells the foot to press on the gas pedal or the brake—as the case may be. The *actions* of the body are the result of thoughts in the *mind*. We can see, then, how important it is to have our minds, our thoughts, in subjection to Christ.

Paul the apostle put it this way: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK on *these things*” (Phil. 4:8). The actions of the body can be no better than what we think about.

This does not mean, of course, that a wrong thought coming to the mind—a temptation—is, in itself, a sin. Even Jesus “was in all points tempted like as we are, *yet without sin*” (Heb. 4:15). We should not assume that being tempted to do something is just as bad as doing it. Not realizing this, one young man, a new Christian, was tempted to do something wrong. He thought to himself: “Well, I’m tempted to do this; it is just as bad to be tempted as to do it.” So he did it!

Anyone may have a tempting thought come to mind. But it need not remain there. We cannot stop birds from flying over our

heads, but we can keep them from building a nest in our hair!

When wrong thoughts come our way, we can cast them down. The Bible says: “Cast down *imaginings*, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every THOUGHT to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). It is up to us!

If our minds are filled with good things, there will not be room for evil thoughts to enter and remain. We can hang up a “No Vacancy” sign.

Years ago I heard a story that illustrates this principle. The setting for the story is back in the days of the Old West when the worst drunkard in town was gloriously converted during a revival meeting. Night after night he testified of his salvation and many rejoiced.

But a few days later when he passed the saloon, he was tempted to return to his old ways and drinking. He wrestled with the temptation, but finally went in and ordered a drink. He realized that for him, if he took this drink, it could lead back into his old drunken lifestyle. His testimony would be ruined.

Then, just as he was about to put the glass to his lips—about to take the fatal step—he looked out of the darkened saloon. Right across the street, in the brightness of the noonday sun, was a sign: BUTTERMILK—ALL YOU CAN DRINK FOR A NICKEL. (This *must* have been long ago!)

Suddenly he dropped the booze and ran across the street. “Quick, give me a glass of that buttermilk,” he hollered. He gulped it down and asked for another. And another. Finally he asked for one more glass of buttermilk. By stretching and moving around, he was able to drink about a third of the glass. He could hold no more!

Then what do you suppose he did? He walked back over in front of the saloon and declared: “Devil, let’s just see you try to tempt me now. I’m so full of BUTTERMILK I don’t have room for BOOZE!” Then he shouted “Hallelujah,” and marched victoriously down the street.

The point is: if we keep our minds full of godly, righteous and pure thoughts, the other thoughts will find no place in our lives. To put it another way, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21). If people keep busy serving the Lord, they won’t have time for the Devil.

Jesus spoke of an unclean spirit that left a man’s body, but later returned and found the house *empty*. So he invited seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they entered in so that the latter state of the man was worse than the first (Matt. 12:43-45). Had the man’s life been filled with the Holy Spirit and the good things of God, there would have been no room for the Devil.

To those who may be troubled in mind, God has promised to give “perfect *peace*” as their minds are stayed on him (Isa. 26:3). *Perfect peace*. What a blessing!

Too often we get our minds on people, on failures, on shortcomings. But if we will keep our minds on the Lord, we will have good thoughts, “for the Lord is good” (Psa. 100:5). We will have powerful thoughts, for he is All-powerful. We will have victorious thoughts, for he is the Victor. We can let the rest of the world go by. We will remain in the cleft of the rock, protected by his wonderful peace, perfect peace!

Without this peace, some have minds that are in constant chaos, agitation, and turmoil. They may be wealthy, but money can’t buy a *satisfied mind*. A song by this title, recorded by Johnny Cash, Porter Wagoner, and others expressed it this way:

*Money can't buy back your youth  
when you're old,  
Or a friend when you're lonely,  
Or a heart that's grown cold;  
The wealthiest person is a pauper at times,  
Compared to the man with a satisfied mind.*

“To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and *peace*” (Rom. 8:6). What kind of mind do we choose to have? Certainly it should be that which provides life and peace!

Some allow their minds to be garbage pails. Almost anything they hear is made into a dirty joke. The Bible says: “Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *nothing is pure*; even their MIND and conscience is defiled” (Titus 1:15).

Jesus said to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all you soul, and with *all* your MIND”—not just part of it (Mk. 12:30).

Jesus often talked about the wonders of faith. He talked about believing in one’s heart. But he also said, “Neither be of a doubtful MIND” (Lk. 12:29).

Paul wrote: “Let this MIND be in you,

which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). As a young man—probably about 16 or 17—I read a booklet that set forth the idea that having the “mind of Christ” meant one could have the same mental knowledge as Christ; that is, understand all mysteries, know the very thoughts of others, know the future, make accurate predictions, know all things!

But this is not what this verse means. All Paul intended by this statement was that even as Jesus was humble in mind—not proud—so we should be of a *humble* mind. The context makes this clear: “...in *lowliness of mind* let each esteem others better than themselves...Let this *mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God...made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a *servant*...and being found in fashion as a man, he *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto death” (Phil. 2:2-8).

The people at Berea were commended because they “received the word with all readiness of MIND, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). Many who attend church pay very little attention to what the preacher says. Their minds wander. They think about other things, other people, their jobs, their homes, their pleasures, their problems.

Some may read the Bible, but by not paying attention, may glean little from what they read. We can learn something from those Berean believers who received the word with *all readiness of mind*!

Are you depressed? Discouraged? Defeated? Let me recommend that you “delight yourself in the Lord” (Psa. 37:4). Ask God to brighten your thoughts, to flood your mind with his sunshine, to give you his joy for the spirit of heaviness.

Let us not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds!

Let us think on things that are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report!

“And the *peace of God*, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and MINDS through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). Praise God!

—Ralph Woodrow