**SELF-RENEWAL - 3**

**Renewing the Mind**

                We are studying the subject of the Christian and Self-renewal.  It is first, the idea of individual renewal and second, a process put into place to ensure continued and vibrant growth.  We have noted the importance of renewal in the life of the Christian.

Last week we noted that renewal begins with the mind – **ROM. 12:2** - speaks of being transformed by “the renewing of your mind”.  We noted several things we ought to “think about” that will move us to make efforts to renew our mind.  We addressed 1) the battle Satan has launched for our minds, 2) the realization of our past, 3) changing our perspective to things above instead of things of this world, and 4) our future hope – noting that we need to “invest” in our eternity.

As we continue our study today we want to notice some *more* things to think about to prepare our minds for renewal.  Brethren, we need to understand the importance of the mind.  Until we make up our minds to be what we ought to be and do what we ought to do, the motivation to “go on to perfection” - **HEB 6:1** - is NOT going to be strong enough to reach our full potential.

**SOME MORE THINGS TO CONSIDER ABOUT RENEWAL -**

**I.  REALIZE THE NEED -**

A.      Do you want to go to heaven?

a.   Everyone here says “yes”.  But WHAT ARE YOU DOING to secure your salvation?  We have already shown the need for growth.  But do we really believe we have to grow if we want salvation?  Do we really believe that our level of progress is satisfactory? (Maybe you do.  In fact I hope you do – IF you are what you ought to be!)

b.  **1 COR. 9:27** – What was Paul’s attitude? Paul disciplined his body “lest I should be disqualified”

c**.   2 PET. 1:10** – **“If you do these things you will *never stumble”***   What things are we to do? GROW in faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.  The word “stumble” is a word that means “to cause one to stumble or fall” (Thayer).   It is used 5 times in passages like **JAMES 2:10** which speaks of keeping the whole law, yet stumbling in one point and **JAMES 3:2** which says, “for we all stumble in many things.  ***“If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body.”***  **ROM. 11:11** says, ***“Have they stumbled that they should fall?”***
*As I understand this text* it is not saying that as Christians we will never again sin, but that as we grow in Him we will SIN LESS OFTEN.   Besides, IF we were to reach a state where we never again sinned, it would hinge on perfection in each of these attributes – but NONE reaches that plateau in this life.  And that is the goal of growth or renewal in the life of a Christian.

B.     Do you want others to go to heaven with you? That ought to be the goal of every Christian.

a.  “Lift up your eyes…”.  This was the message of Jesus to His disciples in **JN. 4:35** after the woman at the well.  And who was she?  A Samaritan woman of questionable character.  An UNLIKELY prospect whom Jesus took the time to speak to and look what it led to **(39-41).** Brethren we need to WAKE UP to the fact of this lost and dying world.  There is a great need!
**2 COR. 5:11** – Paul realized the need ***“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord…”***
**JUDE 22-23** – Jude realized the need – ***“On some have compassion, but others save with fear, “snatching them out of the fire”.***
**JN. 9:4** - Jesus Himself realized the need – He said, ***“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day…”***

b.   IS TODAY ANY DIFFERENT? We need to KNOW that we are the only hope some in this world will have.  For each of us there is probably someone for whom we are their best opportunity to hear the gospel taught.  Will we meet the challenge?  How often do we remind ourselves that UNTOLD MILLIONS ARE DYING UNTOLD?

**II. WE HAVE A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY -**

A.  Sometimes in life, the reason we do something is because of a realization that we need to be doing it.  Many things we do as a country are done because we realize that as the greatest and most prosperous nation in the world we cannot sit back and do nothing.  That is why sometimes when we see suffering or tragedy we need to “step up to the plate” and take the lead in dealing with problems.

B.  On a more personal level, when we hear someone crying for help, if we have the ability to do so, we need to help.  A few years ago there was woman in central park being attacked.  Her cries were heard by numerous individuals but they did nothing.  She died!  Those who heard her cries and did nothing were NOT acting with moral responsibility.

C.  AS Christians, we need to realize it is our GOD GIVEN responsibility to warn the lost and do what we can to “snatch them out of the fire”.
**1 COR. 9:16** – Paul realized this - he said, “Woe is me if I do not preach…”

a.   **EZK. 3:17-20** – the Lord made him “a watchman over Israel”.  He was given the responsibility of warning them.  Note vs. 18, 20 and the responsibility Ezekiel had.

b.   Do we see Christianity as a stewardship that we are responsible to nurture and develop?  Do we see the need to share with others who will die and spend eternity in hell if we do nothing?  Can we sit back and not share in the responsibility for their condemnation?
**ACTS 20:26-27** – Paul told the Ephesians elders he was innocent.  Why?  He had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

**III. UNDERSTAND LOVE – HOW MUCH DO YOU CARE?**

A.    Christian love is not just a feeling.  While it involves our mindset, it is how we act.  Defined love is, *caring enough to sacrifice for what is best*.

B.   **1 JN. 4:8** - It is best demonstrated in God who IS love.
**JN. 3:16** - It is manifested in what He DID for us!
**JN. 15:13** – What did Jesus do for us?

**EPH. 5:2** - He gave Himself for us

C.    We NEED this love in we are to grow –
**1 COR. 13:1-3** - Tells us how important it is.  Without it we are nothing.
**2 PET. 1:7** – it is the pinnacle of the “graces” we are to build upon our faith with.

D.   **1 JN. 4:19** - It is a motivating factor in our relationship with God – ***“We love Him because…”***
**2 COR. 5:14** – ***“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if one died for all, then all died.”***
**JAMES 1:12** – the crown of life is promised to those who love Him

**IV.   Optimism**

A.  Optimism is a word we are afraid to talk about because of the way it has been abused.  There are many who teach a positive Christianity to the exclusion OR neglect of the negative.  We cannot do that and be pleasing to God.  WE have to expose error, and maybe even name names at time.  And there are times we need to be rebuked or condemned – but the fact is that such is only needed because things are not as they ought to be.  Optimism is associated with the one who is right as he stands before God.  It is as we OUGHT to be.
It is a proven fact that the way you think has a major influence on who you are and what your potential is.  Far too many people in our world today never amount to anything because they think too low of themselves.  They believe they cannot do something or there is no room for improvement in their lives.
They realize this in the business world.  That is why major corporations will hire motivational speakers.  Optimism means productivity.  But sadly there are many who don’t advance because they don’t look ahead.  They settle where they are at and stay there.

B.  Many Christians don’t grow more than they do because they don’t have enough confidence in themselves OR in God.  They settle for mediocrity or complacency.  They tell themselves, “I can’t teach anyone” *and they are right* – but not because they are not capable, but they choose NOT to develop in that area.
They think, “I know it all” and quit growing in “the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
Churches don’t grow because they have the mindset that they have gone as far as they can go.  They reason that “nobody wants to hear the gospel anymore” or they become bogged down in what’s wrong with us and everyone else rather than building upon that which is right.  This is not saying that we should not address error – that’s what the positive preaching movement does – but we need to know what is right and HOW to live it.

C.       There are a number of reasons why Christians ought to be optimistic.

a.   **COL. 3:1-2** - Because of the spiritual blessings we have received – Christians have a different perspective about life as we discussed last week. They have set their mind on things above!
We have reason to live in this life and things to do.

b.   **PHIL. 4:13** – We can be optimistic because God is on our side - ***“I can do all things through Christ…”***
**ROM. 8:31** – ***“If God is for us, who can be against us.”***
**ROM. 8:37** – ***“We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”***
**1 JN. 4:4** – ***“Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world”***
Do we really believe these things?

c.   Because of the results of pessimism – There are numerous examples in God’s word of those who were pessimistic.
Consider Israel in the wilderness for 40 years.  Why did it take that long?  Because they did NOT believe they could overtake the Canaanites.  Only Joshua and Caleb believed it was possible.
To the best of my knowledge, not once do we find such an attitude commended.  Lord willing, next week we will notice some of these examples as we examine how NOT to think.

d.   God’s word calls for optimism.

D.      Not a false optimism

a.   **MATT. 7:21-23** - An optimism of ignorance such as the one who believes he is forgiven even though he refuses to obey the gospel.

b.   Or one who thinks he is better than he is.  Examples of this include:

                     i. **REV. 3:17** - The church at Laodicea.  Note what they said about themselves.

                    ii. **LUKE 12:16-21** - The rich fool who saw his great possessions and left God out

                   iii. **LUKE 18:11-12** - The Pharisee who went to the temple to pray

                   iv. **1 COR. 10:12** – ***“therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.”***

c.   There are times we need to feel bad because of the way we have acted.  There are times we need to mourn and repent because of sin.  But this ought NOT to be our way of life.  We are striving to grow BEYOND that which is RENEWAL.

**CONCLUSION** –

We can see some things we ought to think about if we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

It has not been my intent in this lesson to say that we should ONLY dwell on that which is positive, because that would lead to ignoring serious flaws that need to be addressed.

The way of the Christian ought to be is upbeat and hopeful.

If we are living as we ought to such will be the case.

THINK ABOUT IT!