**SELF-RENEWAL - 5**

**INTRODUCTION** - Today we continue our study of renewal in the life of a Christian.  By way of reminder, what we mean by renewal is first, a restored state in which you are pleasing to God and second, an attitude within ourselves that we will put measures into place to ensure that we are continually growing as we ought to.

Today we continue our study of the mind because it is SO important.  And the Bible has so much to say about our minds, our attitude and the way we think which are both influenced by our minds.  What we have noted are some things we ought to think about, or as one author wrote, “it is time to think about what you’re thinking about”: including our past as well as our future hope, looking at things with a proper perspective (other-worldly), our need to grow and to reach others, the importance of caring and our moral responsibility.  We concluded with some points about being optimistic.  Today, we want to develop the importance of optimism and not the consequences of pessimistic thinking.

**I.   The Need for Optimism**

A.  We have noted a number of reasons why Christians ought to be optimistic.

a.   **EPH. 1:2-3** - Because of the spiritual blessings we have received. We have reason to live in this life and things to do.

b.   **PHIL. 4:13** - Because God is on our side – “I can do all things through Christ…”

c. **ROM. 8:31,37** – “If God is for us, who can be against us.” Do we really believe these things?

d. **DEUT. 30:15, 19** - God’s word calls for optimism – “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil,…I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.  Therefore, choose life, that both you and your descendents may live;”  What is interesting about this verse is the fact that they are given the options of good vs. bad.  They are told to choose the good.

e.   But **not a false optimism** such as:

                        1.      Ignorance - For example – **JOSH. 7:3-4** – Israel has a false optimism as they go up against Ai.  NOTE: They SHOULD have been able to be optimistic, but there was sin in the camp and they failed to inquire of the Lord.

                        2.      **LUKE 18:11-12** - Or one who thinks he is better than he is such as the Pharisee in Luke.

3.  **1 COR. 10:12** – ***“therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.”*** 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.

**II. The Bible speaks of Optimism**

A.  **Assurance** - The word means “full assurance, most certain confidence” (Thayer)
It is usually used with *an anticipation toward our reward* when this life is over.

a.    **2 THESS. 2:16-17** – May God and our Lord give us everlasting consolation and good hope.

b.    **PHIL. 1:3-6** – an optimistic prayer – Paul knows God is there.

c**.    HEB. 10:22** – “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled …”

d.   **1 JN. 5:13** -  Can we as Christians know we are saved? John said we could know – “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

e. **1 JN. 3:19** speaking of our love says, “And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.” As Christians we KNOW that God is with us and that He knows what is best.  We have all kinds of assurances in our lives.  They give us HOPE so that no matter what man does, he cannot make us waiver.

f. **ISA. 32:17** says, *“The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever*.”  Note how Isaiah attributes true assurance to righteousness which is obedience to the law.

B.  **Confidence** – Christians need to be confident!

a.  The Biblical use of the word is somewhat akin to assurance, but implies a present trust. In English we use the word to imply trusting or believing in someone or something.

b.   **ROM. 12:3** – While this text says not to think too highly of yourself, that implies we ARE to think highly of ourselves (just not too highly – e.g. with arrogant pride)
Do you believe you can grow?  Do you believe in yourself? You need to.

c.   **JN. 4:35** where Jesus said, “lift up your eyes” – not only does this text tell us there are opportunities.  We are told to DO SOMETHING – OPEN OUR EYES and look for them.  We need to believe there are those out there who are looking. Are we LOOKING for the opportunities?

d.   **2 COR. 5:6** – Always confident

e.   **2 TIM. 1:12** – Paul was persuaded that God is able to keep what he had committed to Him until that day.

f.    Applying this term

                      i.      We are to be ready to always give an answer for our hope – **1 PET. 3:15**

                     ii.      We ought to be able to go to our brethren for help in times of need

                    iii.      We ought to be able to trust our brethren to do what they promise to do.

                    iv.      ALL OF THESE THINGS require optimism to reach their full potential.  If you don’t confidently believe – you will not be as strong with God’s word OR you will not go to your brethren as often as you can or should OR believe our brethren when we turn to them.

C.  **Faith** – The very idea of true faith expresses optimism.
It is what gives us assurance and confidence.  How seriously have we considered faith?

a.   Faith Defined – Thayer defines it as “conviction of the truth of anything, Belief”
It is the foundation of our faith - **2 PET. 1:5; ROM. 10:17**

                      i.      One time, I heard the definition of a Faith, “**F**orsaking **A**ll **I T**rust **H**im”

                     ii.      **HEB 11:1** describes faith as***, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”***  The ASV uses the word “assurance” for substance and “conviction” for evidence.  It is a word that means our foundation or the confidence of our mind.
WE all have faith and need faith – the question that remains is “Faith in what?”  IF we believe God then we have reason to hope.  As you think about this you can clearly see how optimism is associated with our faith.

                    iii.      **LUKE 8:35** - *WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?*  - while crossing the sea, the disciples feared and awoke Jesus.  He calmed the storm and rebuked them saying, “Where is your faith?”  He was pointing out they should have believed the best knowing who Jesus was.

                    iv.      Another word that comes to mind with faith is TRUST!  But whatever definition you use, it is clear it involves a belief that God IS!

b. Faith demonstrated

                      i.      There are numerous passages that demonstrate faith showing how it relates to being optimistic.

                     ii.      **MATT. 17:20** - Speaking to His disciples during the time of miracles Jesus said, “IF you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘move from here to there’ and it will move…” Consider the occasion here (14-21).  His disciples had failed to cast out a demon.  Jesus rebuked them in vs. 17 calling them a “faithless generation”.  When asked why they could not cast out the demon. *Note His answer in vs. 20*.
In these examples we find miracles required that they optimistically believe (not always the receiver but the giver).

                    iii.      **MATT. 9:27-31** - On Some occasions, even the receiver needed faith….”there were two blind men that followed Jesus crying, ‘Lord have mercy on us’.  Jesus asked them if they believed He was able to restore their sight and they said yes.  His answer to them was, “According to your faith let it be to you.” (29).  They received their sight.
THIS example gives us a good understanding of what faith is.  We have to believe when we put our trust in Him and when we go to Him in prayer.
ALL these examples show what TRUE faith involves: It requires optimism.

                     iv.      **PSA. 6:8** - Consider the faith of David. You see it in the psalms we have studied.  He writes requesting God’s help as if it has already been granted.  Where he speaks of his enemies departing because the Lord has heard his voice.

c. The importance of faith

                        i.      **HEB. 11:6** – without faith it is impossible to please Him.

                       ii.      **JAMES 1:6-8** – when you pray, you better believe what you are praying.  When we doubt – you will NOT receive anything from the Lord.

d As we understand faith we can see the importance of optimism.

**CONCLUSION** –

We can see the importance of renewing our minds if we are to thrive in our service to Him.

These past few lessons have been designed to help us focus our mind in the right direction so that we DO that which we need to do to grow in Him.

How is your thinking?

Is it optimistic?