

Winter conference

Message 1

Colossians 3:10, *“And have put on the new man, which is **renewed in knowledge** after the image of him that created him”*.

Rather than doing an in depth study today, I just simply want to talk about the Scriptures, and talk about something very important in the manner in which God deals with mankind. When the Lord first saved me, I had no idea that 17 years later I would be teaching some of the most wonderful children of God on the face of this earth. I had no idea, when the Lord first saved me, that there was so much to know about Him, and also so much that I still don't know about Him. Growing up I was taught quaint little stories about God and His Son, and never dreamed the wealth of wisdom that was in this blessed Book until the Lord opened my eyes. The only things God allows us to know of Him are the things revealed in this blessed book, but don't ever get the idea that this is all there is. This is just what He wants us to know of Him. There are things of God that stay solely with Him, things that are not revealed in His Word.

When the Lord first saved me, I thought that all denominations were fine. I felt that they all had something to offer, and I had absolutely no idea just how misguided they were. When the Lord first saved me, I didn't even think that there was something wrong with the Catholic church! That is how naïve I was. When the Lord first saved me, I saw nothing wrong with simply lumbering down an aisle and asking Jesus into your heart, nor did I find nothing wrong with the sinners prayer. In fact, the very night I was saved, I had said that prayer, but interestingly enough, it was the saying of that prayer that caused me to ask the question, “If I am saved by grace through faith, why then do I have to say this prayer?” That led to other questions like: why then are there alter calls? Why then are there so many denominations, and just a flood of other questions were entering my mind. I did not know or understand it at the time, but what God was doing was giving light to a previously darkened mind.

Now you may be asking yourself, what is he leading up to? Or is he just going to stand up here and philosophize for an hour? No, I'm not, but what I am going to do is tell you something that I think we all know, and I think we all know it from experience, and this is something that the so-called Christian today is completely unaware of, and that is that God renews the mind. Many today are taught that God renews, not the mind, but the body. In other words, that the sure sign of a Christian is one that has become moral. One that no longer does the things that he once did.

I recall the night the Lord saved me back in July of 1992, how that one of the men from the local church had come over that night and the first things he said he did when he accepted Christ was to throw out all his Playboy magazines, and stopped listening to rock music. Now that is certainly commendable but those are not signs of a renewed mind, what I recall the first things I did, was to read and study the Scriptures. I knew I had things in my life that needed changing, but they stopped due to the awful conviction the Holy Spirit brought about.

You see, God does not renew your life, your manner of living, you are required to that, 2 Timothy 2:19 is proof of this, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” The Lord knows them that are His, the Lord knoweth those whose minds He has renewed, God works from the inside, and you work from the out. But God must move first and renew your mind, otherwise all manner of holy living is futile, just look at the Mormons for proof of that.

We are being taught today in the churches, and truly for the past several thousands years, that God honors good works, that God requires good works and that this is brought about by an act of man's free will. You decide whether or not to serve God, you renew your life, but no one stops to consider that all the time, your mind has not been renewed, only your flesh. You can attempt to renew your flesh all you want, but your flesh is useless to God.

And so I want to talk today about the necessity, the total and absolute necessity of having your mind renewed before you can call yourself a Christian. In fact, I'll go a step further and say that this is the first and only requirement for becoming a believer – a renewed mind. But imagine what would happen if you or I were to stand up at the local First Baptist church or Presbyterian church or Catholic church or any church for that matter, and state the following: *“Salvation is a renewing of your mind. Its not changing your life style, its not becoming moral, it is simply this: a renewing of your mind. That is what makes you a Christian. There is no Romans road to travel, no acceptance of Jesus into your heart, but simply this: a renewing of your mind. And, by the way, only God can do this. You cannot do this, you cannot ask God to do this, you cannot help God do this, God must do it all, and you cannot coherst Him into it, you cannot plead for Him to do it, for He will show mercy only upon those He so chooses to have mercy upon”*. What then can I do, you might ask? All you can do is believe, believe in what I'm telling you, for it's the truth.

And since renewing of your mind is such a critical part of your salvation, in fact it is your salvation, let us take some time this afternoon and see exactly what that means. Now the identical Greek word for “renewing” is found in only one other place, and that is 2 Cor 4:16, which reads, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” And so, based upon this, we see that we are renewed inwardly each day, and that is an important first concept. The outward man cannot be saved, he cannot be salvaged. God has no use for him, and the simple fact that our outward bodies return to dust after we die, must show us that God has no need or use for this outward shell we all possess. It is riddled with sin. Knowing this, then we can say with certainty with Isaiah “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”.

Therefore when we continue to please the flesh over the soul, when we continue to live for the wants and needs of the outward man instead of the inward man, we are doing things of no effect. In other words, they will bring you no spiritual value nor will they bring you any eternal value. Now had the Roman Catholic church understood this, then they would not be so steeped into the works of the flesh, the confession of the flesh, and so forth. The outward man perishes, all the times you partook of the Lord's supper, all the times you were baptized, all the many times you made a profession of faith were all for nought. All the times you went out on visitation, all for nought – works of the flesh. Not that any of these things are bad things, but they all, as Paul once said, “perish with the using”, and they are “not in any honour, and to the satisfying of the flesh”. And this he said just prior to the passage under consideration today.

The outward man perishes, and the Lord Jesus Christ made this abundantly clear in Matthew 23:25-26 when He said, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.”* Our Lord tells us here that the outward man is useless until first the inward man, that is the mind, is renewed, and according to our passage, our mind is renewed in KNOWLEDGE.

Another passage where this word “renewed” is found is in Romans 12:2, which is not the exact same word, but is very, very similar in meaning. “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” And this is the first thing I want you to get: **To “renew” means to literally “renovate”**. You must have your mind completely renovated by God in order to truly call yourself a Christian. I do not adhere to those that feel they are saved because they were raised in a Christian home and raised on the Bible all their lives, for their minds have not been renovated by God.

You are transformed, you are renewed, renovated by KNOWLEDGE, this is the manner in which God saves a man. It is by grace through faith, and that not of works. I have always thought that faith is a work, but I think a bit differently now. Faith is not a work, it is a gift of God. God gives you the faith to believe, and faith is a mere acceptance of facts. Faith is a mere acceptance of facts. The mere acceptance of some facts does not save you unless it is generated by God's grace. Remember that, faith is a mere acceptance of facts. It is not a work to accept evidence! I have faith in the airplane that it is going to get me from point A to point B. I have faith in the pilot that he knows what he is doing. I have faith in my car that its not going to break down. I have faith in our history books. All these things are facts that I accept, therefore it could

be said that I have faith in these things. But faith in Christ comes only from God, and it comes only from a renewed mind, not acceptance of facts, but of a renovated mind.

And so to simply have faith in the fact that Jesus Christ died upon the cross is not enough, for there is no work on your part when it comes to salvation, all there is for you is a renewing of your mind, the putting off of the old and putting on the new, and this is done as a result of your salvation, not in conjunction with it. Titus 3:5 reads, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” And again we see that it is the renewing, the renovating effect of God upon our lives that has saved our souls. The Holy Ghost renovates our hearts and minds, and He does so through what? Through knowledge.

I have three things that I’d like to share with you today that are signs of having a mind that has been renewed by knowledge. I’m sure that there are more, many more, but there are only three that I would like to look at for a moment today. The very first being, **your total depravity**. You cannot know you need a Saviour, until you first know that you are a sinner. I don’t know of any true believer that does not believe that they are totally depraved, totally void of goodness, not were void of goodness, but ARE. In order to ever be saved in the first place, you must see yourself as lost, truly lost. I recall about 10 years ago my brother Dane telling me that he knew he was lost, he knew that he had no desire for Christ and knew that eternal damnation awaited him in his present state. All I could say was, “That’s half the battle right there”. And it is.

When God saves a person, He never allows them to think that there is anything in them that is worthy of being saved. When God renews your mind, He gives you a proper sense of who and what you are. There has never been a believer that does not have a proper knowledge of what they are. Jeremiah 17:9 reads, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” A proper renewing of your mind begins with a proper knowledge of your heart. You were born dead in trespasses and sins, dead brethren, dead. And we would still be dead today if God did not supernaturally reach down and save our worthless souls.

And God does not show you your depravity in order that you might feel bad, or feel inferior, He shows you your inadequacy for this one reason – so that His Son will appear all the more glorious to you. We can ask ourselves why God created this world, and the answer is: to the glory of His Son. We can ask the question why did God allow sin into the world, and the answer will always be: to glorify His Son. So that one day every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. We can ask ourselves why God allows things to go on in this world without stopping it, why all the debauchery and homosexuality in the country today, why is there a radical, black muslim in the highest office in this country and the answer to every question is: to glorify His Son. So kicking against this, is to be kicking against the pricks. The answer to every and any question we have regarding what God does and why will always have the same answer: to glorify His Son.

And a firm understanding of this, will aid you greater in matters of the second thing God does when He renews your mind, for when He renews your mind, not only gives you a proper sense of who YOU are, but also of Who He is! Oh it is not enough, not nearly enough to recognize your inferiority, but you must also recognize His superiority. That was the entire reason for the book of Hebrews – to show the superiority of Christ over Judaism. It is not nearly enough to recognize your darkness, you must recognize His light. It is not enough to recognize your evilness, but you must also recognize His holiness, His purity, His sinlessness, Jesus Christ is the total opposite of you and I, and we could and would never appreciate holiness unless we had sin to compare it to.

In Jesus Christ, according to Psalms 85:10, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” And there is no lack of imagery in the Bible for Jesus Christ. Every shadow, every type, every story, every word in the Bible points towards Jesus Christ. He is Apple of God’s Eye, and that phrase came from Ps 17:8. To get a right understanding of God, you must understand His Son, and He only reveals His Son to those He has so chosen to renew their minds. Before God renewed your mind, you had a worldly view of Christ. Maybe it was a reverential view, but it was worldly, just the same. You

knew some facts about Christ, you even probably said that you loved Him, but you never knew Him. You loved Him but you had never fallen in love with Him, because your mind had not been renewed through knowledge of Him. And trust on this, God loves His Son so much that He will only reveal His intimacy to one with a renewed mind, it is part, a great part of this renewal process.

A renewed mind will fall in love with Jesus Christ so very easily. It is impossible not to love Him for Who He is. I fear that many today that claim to love Jesus Christ, love Him with only a benevolent type of love. A false love that stems more from appreciation that He died on the cross, more than anything else. But a true lover of Christ, a man with a truly renewed mind, falls in love with His Saviour because of Who He is, not because of what He has done. **NOW GET THAT STRAIGHT!** If you love Jesus Christ because of what He did for you, then you have got it all wrong. You must love Jesus Christ for Who He is. If your main enjoyment today of salvation is that you have dodged hell, then your mind needs renewing. A renewed mind understands that we deserve hell regardless, and that if God sends you to an eternity apart from Him, it is something that you and I deserve, and this same renewed mind will look upon Christ as the single most blessed Being to ever grace this earth.

Had He not perished for you upon Calvary, it is still your duty to love Him. If you find one day that you never were a believer to begin with, it matters not, for it is still your duty to love Him, because He is the epitome of love. He is the Altogether Lovely One. I would have to say that the Song of Solomon is my absolute favorite book in the entire holy writ, and the entire book is summed up in those few words. Should I die and go to hell and spend eternity without Jesus Christ, I still have more in this life than most ever will have, and that is an intimate knowledge and love for the Altogether Lovely One, the One Who loved His elect enough to die for them.

And yet only one with a renewed mind can truly appreciate the beauty of Jesus Christ. I can stand here and tell you that He is the Altogether Lovely One, and if you are not saved, these words are meaningless, it is the exact equivalent of describing a sunset to a blind man. Imagine trying to do that, to tell him, there are beautiful glowing colors of burnt orange, deep red, crystal blue, etc., when he knows not what these colors are. The same holds true with our Saviour. He is the Altogether Lovely One, and yet only a renewed mind can understand His beauty and bathe in it.

Do you not see the true beauty in Jesus Christ? If not, then you need to realize that the more you humble yourself, the more beauty in Him you will see. The first thing we spoke of today was that God gives a renewed mind a true sense of who and what man is. He causes you to search your soul and it is not a pretty sight. When you do so properly, you cannot help but determine that the flesh is corrupt, that in your best state you are altogether vanity, that all your righteousnesses are as filthy rags. In doing this, God humbles you, and the more He humbles you, the more beautiful Christ appears. It is a two sided coin, and you cannot have one without the other.

But it is most necessary to note that the true knowledge of self will always come first otherwise the beauty of Christ is meaningless. Do you honestly think for one moment that men such as Oral Roberts see any beauty in Jesus Christ? Of course not, and neither do their followers. My 13 year old son has a truer knowledge of Who the real Christ is than they ever will. They, like he, see God as a healing school, as a means of wealth and success in this world. And such is the case if almost all, if not all, of the preachers on the airwaves today. But remember this, if you remember nothing else, but for the grace of God, there go I!!!!

If Jesus Christ is the Altogether Lovely One, then that means that although there are lovely things in this world, He is the totality of them all, spiritually. When it comes right down to it, I am but a beggar, waiting beneath the table for a crumb to drop so that I might gobble it up. Jesus Christ is to us as a 10 course meal, each crumb that falls to the floor is worth more than all the gold in the world. A crumb falling from this table is worth more than all the best earthly food in the world. I look to watch the food channel (as you can probably tell), I love to watch them make and prepare food, and I notice how it is all in the presentation. A these 6 star hotels, if you order a meal, it will come out prepared perfectly. Every bite of that meal is prepared and presented in such a manner to show the beauty of the food.

Our Saviour is much like that in a spiritual way as He is presented to us through the Scriptures. On the day of His crucifixion, all the Roman soldiers saw was another Jew being rightfully killed. When they looked upon His glorious body hanging there, all they could see was a piece of cloth that could be worth some money. When He cried out from the cross, all they heard were words to be mocked. When they saw the blood trickling from His brow, the very blood that redeemed you and I, all they saw was a fit punishment for a criminal. They were not touched by His sorrow and pain.

And yet when we look at the cross and the dying GodMan hanging there in all His agony and shame, we must not allow emotion to interfere with what was truly happening at that time. Our sins were being paid for, they were being forgiven, our souls were being redeemed, our eternal destiny was being prepared. The heinousness of sins was being displayed, God's estimate of sin and the sinner was being openly displayed for all to see. Certainly it was a sad sight. Sad does not begin to rightfully describe this scene, but our language cannot plum the depths of this sorrowful event. But again, do not get caught up in the emotion of it, look to Calvary and see God's estimate of sin and the sinners, and thank Him for including you in the redemptive process for Christ was dying for you.

When He cried out upon the cross "Eli, Eli lamasabachthani, that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me", these cries were not due to the hands of these vile men, but rather to the hand of God. God forsook His Son, withdrew His grace, His love, His compassion, all at once from His Son at the very moment He needed it the most. This was done to maximize the sufferings of Christ for He was paying for your sin and mine, not His own, but for ours. Our Saviour was forsaken by all, even His Father, and yet He gives us this assurance in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And think of this: He never gave His Father reason to forsake Him, but He did. And yet how many times, how many thousands of times, if you are honest, have you given the Son of God a reason to forsake you!!

Jesus Christ perished upon the cross of Calvary because of our sin. God the Father deserted Him upon Calvary because of our sin, therefore we all deserve to be deserted by God, especially when we sin. This is the just recompense and demerit for sin, and yet our Lord and Saviour took upon Him the burden and the punishment for our sin. If you find no beauty in Christ this morning, then you ought to question your standing before Him. If you do not feel you have fallen short of His glory, then you must question your standing before Him today. If your mind has not been renewed, renewed in your manner of thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ, then you ought to question your standing before Him today. But love Him for Who He is, not for what He has done for you. That is a true sign of a renewed mind.

You only love Him because He first loved you, make no mistake about that, 1 John 4:19 clearly confirms this, and yet when you look at Jesus Christ, there is nothing about Him not to love. He is like a multi-faceted diamond that regardless of what angle you view Him from, He appears more lovely than anything around Him. A renewed mind loves Jesus Christ because of Who He is, and He is the Son of God. And if you need reasons to love Him for Who He is, just listen to this short list:

He is the One for Whom and by Whom all things were created (Col 1:16),

we have redemption through His blood and that means the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7),

we have obtained an inheritance in Him, Eph 1:11,

he might reconcile us unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: (Eph 2:26),

he hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. (Eph 5:32).

It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell (Col 1:19)

in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (Col 2:9)

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross (Col 2:14)

A renewed mind will view these things as important, as necessary to understanding the Lord Jesus Christ.

And lastly, a renewed mind is an open mind. Everything you examine, everything you believe, must be placed in the light of this one question: does it bring glory and honour to the Lord Jesus Christ? There has been a lot of good teaching in Maranatha over the years, but you must decide and discern for yourself what is Scriptural and what is not. What is rightly divided and what is not. A renewed mind is one that is able to discern truth, it is able to reckon truth and to put whatever he believes in the light of whether or not it brings glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

An open mind is one that is ready to receive knowledge, and if you think this is not a rare thing, just go share some truth with the local Baptist church. Trying telling them that man is totally depraved and that man has absolutely no say so about his salvation. Try telling the Catholic person that the act of confession is blasphemy, try telling the Mormon that God does not honor good works. I could continue on right down the line, but what they all have in common is that God has never opened their mind. They cannot think outside the realm of the natural for they have not been renewed in knowledge.

Every one of you are here today, first and only because God was gracious to a sinner, but also each of you are here today because God gave you an open mind to receive His truth. Just think back to some of the things that you once believed. I can recall going over to Virginia Davis' house with my mother to listen to a Dusty Rhodes tape before the Lord saved me and thinking that he was no different than any other preacher and that he was dry as dust. But boy when God opens your mind and you begin to receive truth, you are like a starved puppy searching everywhere for it. There were things that I once held dear – like mans free will, but an open mind received the truth and now mans depravity is a sweet truth to my ears.

Suffice it to say that there are more, many more things that are marks of a renewed mind, but they all deal with knowledge, for it is knowledge that God uses to saved you. I just don't know if I buy the fact that someone can be saved and never grow in knowledge. I think you have to grow, you have to believe more and more as it is a part of the putting off of this old man, this old man that did not know he was depraved, that knew nothing of Christ and had a closed mind. I believe that God has to renovate your mind for you simply are not saved if you still cling to your beliefs of old.

But today if you are clinging to Christ as your only hope, your only refuge, if you cling to Him as the only truth in this world that you will ever know. If you cling to Him because He is holy, because He is everything that you are not. If you cling to Him because of Who He is, the sinless Son of God, then you are well on your way to putting on that new man that God has renewed in knowledge. Know all you can about the Son of God, study, read, pray, meditate on the Word, and on your spiritual condition, and continue pressing for the goal of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.