

Session 4

August 6, 2023

SET APART IN THE WAY WE THINK

Romans 12:1-5, 9-13

Salvation is a complete act. When Christ saves us, we are saved body, soul, and spirit. Simply put, Christ transforms the whole person. And a wonderful byproduct of our *regeneration* (see Titus 3:5) is the *renewing* of our mind. Not only does our very being change, but the way we think changes as well. And that peculiar new way we think (often called our “worldview”) is distinctive to believers. It is yet another way that Christ-followers are set apart from the rest of the world.

Our renewed mind helps us discern (vv. 1-2). Romans is the apostle Paul’s great doctrinal treatise. It starts at a slow and simple pace and builds in both depth and breadth as it runs. Here, after piling on doctrinal proof after doctrinal proof, it is the time for application of the truth and exhortation to live as though we actually believe it! That Christ-followers are to present themselves back to God’s grace as a sacrifice is drastic. But Paul supports the assertion thoroughly. First, his “therefore” sets the assertion on the previous eleven chapters of truth. This is what God has done for us; “Therefore....” Second, the motivation is *intrinsic*, not *obligatory*. In other words, we do so willingly as a response to the great mercy of God (as opposed to fear of His wrath). Third, we are to offer ourselves wholly and fully. As the offerings of the Old Testament were *presented*, we now present *our own bodies*. Fourth, the sacrifice is not a blood sacrifice for sin, but a *living sacrifice* for service. Fifth, such an act of worship is *pleasing* to God. Finally, offering this living sacrifice is *entirely reasonable*. That is, it makes perfect sense when seen with the renewed mind that believers now have. The result? The renewed mind is a transformed mind, able to discern the perfect will of God (v.2). For reflection: *The exhortation to not be conformed...but to be transformed indicates there is the possibility to both do it, or not do it. What do you think about that?*

Our renewed mind helps us serve (vv. 3-5). Here, Paul prefaces what he is about to say by reminding them of his apostolic authority (see Rom 1:1). This renewed mind is never to be seen as particularly “special.” Rather, the standard Christian worldview is one that values both *humility* and *sensibility* (v. 3). Why? Because the renewed mind comes from God, who distributes wisdom and discernment to every believer as He sees fit (v. 3). That means there is no room in God’s church for intellectual elitism. Rather, God has *gifted* every believer in the body of Christ and given every believer a *function* in the body of Christ. Once church members learn to appreciate and apply their own gifts individually, the body functions wonderfully as a whole. But that mindset is not natural; it’s *supernatural*. It requires a new way of thinking. For reflection: *We know that together we form the body of Christ. But how can we “individually” be “members of one another?” (v. 5). What do you think Paul meant by that?*

Our renewed mind helps us to act (vv. 9-13). This series of commands flows from the previous verses. Like the “mind of Christ,” the renewed mind does little good if the “regenerated rest” doesn’t respond to it! The dozen pithy exhortations aren’t meant to be comprehensive, but rather

to illustrate the distinctive attitudes and behaviors that are to characterize believers. Since there is no elitist attitude, there can't be any elitist love (v. 9), for such love would be hypocritical. Likewise, as regenerate believers, we must detest the evil that once characterized us and cling to that which is good. Brothers and sisters in Christ are to be treated like brothers and sisters in Christ (v. 10). Laziness must be replaced with fervent service (v. 11). Hope, patience, and perseverance (v. 12) are all attitudes that result from a change in perspective, and selfishness will be replaced by selflessness (v. 13). For reflection: *Too often, we tend to react with knee-jerk emotion and then have to think of a way to justify it! Wouldn't it be better if we thought first...and let our thoughts control our actions instead?*