**The Renewed Mind: Humility and Empathy**

In his letter to the saints in Rome, Paul urged them to present their bodies a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1). But he continued by telling them that it is impossible to offer an acceptable sacrifice while being conformed to the world. The person intent on offering up a life God will accept must be transformed so that their life reflects the will of God (v.2).

Paul devoted much of chapter 12 to outlining behaviors that will characterize the transformed life. But he did not suggest that the way to please God is to simply comply with a checklist of tasks. Notice that the very basis for the transformation from worldliness to godliness is the “renewing of your mind”. God wants my heart right first, then He expects my behavior to reflect my sincere devotion.

The intended meaning of the word renew in the text is not so much improvement as it is a complete change for the better. I must be committed to a new way of thinking if I hope to offer a living sacrifice that will please and glorify God.

Two signature characteristics of the renewed mind are humility and empathy.

Humility. Paul emphasized the arrogance that often accompanies worldly attitudes. He warned of thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (v.3). He suggested that some might delude themselves into thinking they are more important to the cause of Christ than others (vs. 4-8). Some might even become so haughty they would consider others too far beneath them to associate with them (v.16).

A person whose life has been transformed by a renewed mind will recognize that they are no better than anyone else and that every member of Christ’s body has an important role to play. They will regard others as more important than themselves (Philippians 2:3) and their relationships will be the better for it.

Empathy. Paul admonished the Romans to “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (v.15). While normal humans have inherited a natural sense of empathy from our Creator, the worldly-minded will look for ways to turn off the impulse.

What I don’t know won’t hurt me. If I am determined not to help someone who is suffering, I can simply insulate myself from their pain so I don’t have to share it. Out of sight, out of mind.

They probably deserve it. If I can convince myself that the victim must have brought their suffering on themselves, I may be able to appease my conscience for not getting involved emotionally. Of course, when we think this way, it often fails to occur to us that we were the cause of most of the problems in our own lives.

Why not me? Lack of empathy sometimes rears its ugly head when something great happens in someone else’s life. Alas, it seems that envy is a stronger emotion than empathy in those circumstances.

The renewed mind is a humble heart, one that shares in the suffering of those who weep and that feels true joy when good things befall folks around them. In fact, these attitudes are crucial to a life of sacrifice that God will accept.

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