

Changes
Sermon August 23, 2020

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Dear beloved,

We are in August. At the beginning of this year, many of us made some plans about the direction we would like to go and in which way we would like to improve or even change. Many of us have made resolutions or decisions to improve diet, exercise more, and lose weight. Usually, these were at the top of the list. We want to be healthier. We feel better when we exercise and we build our core, when we work on our bodies, which is a good thing.

God says in the Bible in 1 Timothy 4 that physical training has some value in our lives. *“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come”* 1 Timothy 4:8.

So it is great to build a core through physical training, but Paul says that to be Godly is more. That is a focus on a different kind of core and that makes a difference for each of us.

Now, how do we do that? Paul says by renewing our minds.

OOPS, some would say at this point. Does that mean we need to change the way we think? Why would we need to do that? Why should I change my thinking?

I am concerned, that now some of you are thinking to turn your computer off, leaving the sermon, because this call would touch you in a sensitive way, and you are convinced that there is NO problem with your way of thinking. Please do not leave, because I have a much more positive message to share with you. I want to tell you that I am not trying to change anything about you today. I am not even suggesting that you need to change. But I am suggesting something else. We, including me, all need to take an honest look at our own lives, particularly to our bodies, our physical selves, and face with the reality, and see if we might have an issue to work on. We have to hear what Jesus says that it might be right for our lives. And then we have to be open to rethinking our plans and strategies to move forward with a plan. This is all I am asking you to do this morning.

Paul’s requirement is clear: *“Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”* We Christians learned from our Lord Jesus Christ to focus on our internal feelings, ideas, beliefs, and intentions. But, we all, including myself, very often make the mistake that our feelings, ideas, beliefs and intentions are not put into actions. And, for

this, our feelings, ideas, beliefs and intentions do not matter at all if we are not worshipping our God in actions.

We are often faced with a second issue these days. Most people start out by believing that their personal opinions are the basis of truth. Often, people make their moral and ethical decisions on the basis of whatever feels right or comfortable in a situation for them. If they **think** that something is right, it must be right. They believe that this is good old common sense. Practically, if they think that they are right, then they dare to raise their voice, or argue, to fight or even to humiliate the other person, whose vision or idea is different. So many friendships and relationships came to an end, just because two people did not see something the same way. Something seems right to a person but that can be unfair to the other one. And because one person thought he or she was right, excluded the other person from his/her life.

Because we all like our own instincts, our Lord is warning us saying: *“Do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”* Proverbs 3:5 Furthermore, in Proverbs 28:26: *“Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool...”*

We were taught to be courageous and to trust in our own instincts, in our own minds, and to do what seems to be right. And now it sounds so disturbing what we read here, that trusting my own instincts make me a fool. The prophet Jeremiah was dealing with this topic and as a conclusion in 17:9 shares with us the reason: *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”*

We, as humans, are all faced with a temptation to do what is right for us. As a human, I like to do what helps ME and serves MY needs, MY comfort and MY plans. We are eager to convince ourselves that we are allowed to do EVERYTHING if that is good for us. We can play with words, ideas and ideologies to convince ourselves that we HAVE the right to think or act in certain ways, listening to our instincts. The problem is that often we exclude even God from our way of thinking and this is why, much later, we regret some or many of our decisions and actions.

A person from England arrives for the first time to Canada. He enters the highway 401 from an opposite direction, as he used to do back home, not realizing that he drives into a wrong direction, against the flow. As he listens to the radio, in a few minutes there is an announcement: “Be careful on the 401 because a person is driving the opposite direction.” This gentleman says: “WHAT? ONE? No! Hundreds!”

In certain moments, somehow something is telling us that in a situation we have to act in a certain way, following our thoughts and feelings, but that can be wrong. We always have to wait for our second instinct, our second thoughts and second intuition in which God is included as well.

Often, I realized that God’s thinking is different from mine. I planned to do something but the Lord said: *“my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* Isaiah 55:8-9 I, too, have to struggle day by day to include

God's ways and thoughts in my own life. Until we learn practically to do that, we will always depend on OUR OWN instincts rather than God's and we will constantly end up messing up our lives and relationships.

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Romans 12:2

Where can I go to get God's way of thinking? – is the question.

If we place the medication on our night table, but we will not take it as it is prescribed, just buying the medication, or keeping it close to us, will not help us and won't have any healing effect on us.

Once, I visited with a person who kept a Bible on his computer desk. I asked him if he reads it. He said: “no, but I like to have it close to me”. In order to let God's words work in us, we have to open the Bible and to live with that daily bread God provides for our spirit.

I met people who open the Bible and they point with their finger on a verse and they try to take that as God's advice. That is totally wrong.

I read about a recent study, POWER OF FOUR, which says that if we are listening to a golden verse at the church on Sunday, we might think about it for a few seconds and it will touch our memories, but will have little or no effect on how we will think and behave. If we will try to recall it on Monday, that still might have just a little or no effect on our behaviour or thinking. If you repeat it again on Tuesday, we might get some impact from it. But if we will make the effort to meditate on it on Wednesday again, the word of God will begin to have a dramatic effect on how we will include that in our way of thinking. This study concludes that if we, Christians, church going people, do not engage the Bible most days of the week, statistically we live our lives as non-believers.

Dear beloved, the food will not nourish us if we won't eat it. God's Word cannot change us, if we don't read it.

It is crucial, for a Christian, to read the Bible regularly. In Joshua 1:8, God told Joshua, “*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success....*” Joshua 1:8

Please write down the Golden Verses, or when we are back in our church, please take the bulletins home with you, and meditate on golden verses every day, take and read the Daily Bread I am sending you for every day, and try to understand what God wants to do with you, or what He wants from you. Even reading the Bible, like a history book, it is not enough. We have to digest God's daily messages.

In the last few years, I heard two sentences, which penetrated my heart like a knife, and cannot forget those.

A person in my presence said: "I don't have any desire to read the Bible." I know that the person likes to read novels, newspapers, magazines and is interested in almost anything, but strongly denies to read the Bible, because that is about GOD.

Then somewhere I read that today people will accept everything and will agree with anything if that idea is NOT from the Bible.

Please, read the Bible as God's love letter, and not as a history book. In that way, God will transform and will renew your mind, and we will understand clearly what is the will of God, and we will be able to use the information in our discernments. This way we will grow day by day.

Probably you, too, had a measuring wallpaper or tape on your room's wall as a child. Or maybe you just made some signs dating them to see how much you were growing in 6 months or a year. Our children were so happy to see how they were growing in such a short period of time. Sometimes, the changes were very visible. Often, if we don't see a child for a few months, we mentioned to them how much they were growing since we last time met, and they seems to be very happy about our positive comment.

We all should have in our mind a measuring wallpaper which can show us how we are growing spiritually, how we are maturing. Let us grow together in the Lord, in our faith, experiencing that the Lord is good, and blessed are those who adjust their hearts, their minds and their spirit to God almighty, who is our Heavenly, living, loving, and caring Father and whose children we are.
Amen