

First Words

When someone starts talking about the mind, to many evangelical Christians the speaker has strayed into the field of psychology, for many feel that the subject has little to do with the Christian life. However, such people would do well to read their Bibles once again, for the Word of God has much to say about the mind of the believer. This present work does not exhaust the subject, but hopefully it opens up to the believer the great possibilities of an active, controlled mind, resting confidently and expectantly upon the integrity of God's Word. There have been perhaps a hundred or more teachers of the Word of God who have enlightened my understanding, but anyone writing in the field of the renewing of the mind owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to Dr. E.W. Kenyon, whose books have blessed many believers with the truth that the mind does matter. His insights into this area of Christian living are still fresh today, and I thank the Father for Dr. Kenyon and his faithfulness to the Word.

I trust that you will be inspired and motivated as you read this book, and will go on to a life of greater victory and power for the glory of God.

-- Peter Wade

1 The Mind is the Battleground

The mind of the believer and its place in a Christian's daily life is a subject of great importance. It is important because it is the key to power, and because the Word of God gives so much emphasis to it. In the world today there is a tremendous battle for the mind of man: political parties, advertising, the media in general are all clamouring for our attention. It is not surprising, perhaps, to realize that there is nothing new about this situation. For example, in II Corinthians we read:

The god of this age [that is, Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (II Corinthians 4:4 NIV).

Here we are told clearly and distinctly that the way Satan stops people from becoming believers is by blinding their minds.

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus (John 13:2).

The devil had "put into the heart" (KJV), that is, the seat of the personal life, the mind, of Judas Iscariot that now was the time to betray Jesus. Satan works on the minds of men and women to get his work done, to achieve his purposes. Let us notice also the parable of the sower and the seed:

Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved (Luke 8:12).

Here again the teaching is very clear: it is Satan who takes away the Word of God out of the minds of people to stop them believing. The word "heart" is again used here of the seat of the personal life, the mind. So we see that Satan works on the minds of the unbelievers, either to confuse them or to place in their minds wrong thoughts, or to get their minds into a passive state so that they do not will to believe God's Word. Even in the Garden of Eden, the mind of Eve was attacked by Satan.

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ (II Corinthians 11:3)

Satan was able to influence Eve, first by suggesting she question the integrity of the Word of God, then to doubt it, and finally to twist it around completely to the opposite meaning. Satan deceived Eve; he did not attack her physically but he worked on her mind. God reminds believers of this incident to warn us that Satan will attack us in the very same manner, that is, he will attack our minds. Our minds do play a vital part in our Christian life! God also warns us here that the area of attack will be that of **"the simplicity that is in Christ"** (KJV). It logically follows then that Satan will attempt to complicate and confuse the truth of the Word regarding who we are and what God has done for us in Christ. There is ample evidence today that Satan is succeeding in his endeavours, for most Christians are bound in a works consciousness rather than a grace consciousness. Few believe in the reality that Christ is their life, that they are blessed with all spiritual blessings, and are absolutely complete in Him. Satan continues to attack "the simplicity that is in Christ".

In Ephesians, God gives a similar warning:

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming (Ephesians 4:14).

God's plan is for us to be mature, not to be minors in understanding. One of the signs of being a child is to be tossed to and fro by every outward circumstance, not having that firm rock or solid understanding of who we are in Christ Jesus. This verse speaks of being "blown here and there by every wind of teaching". Some believers are like this. When one evangelist comes to town they are convinced that their salvation is sure, but later when they hear another evangelist they believe they will retain their salvation only as long as they stay in fellowship. One time they are sure that God has provided for their every need and later they have half nights of prayer for needs that God has already been provided.

This tossing back and forth is not the normal Christian life. God tells us how Satan works in this situation. He uses the "cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming". Deception originates in the mind. Thus we see that Satan's attack on the believer is almost identical to his attack on the unbeliever, for with both classes of people he works on their minds. If he can get the unbeliever to think about something else apart from the Word of God, he has accomplished his purpose. And if he can deceive the believer into not walking on the basis of God's Word, then God's kingdom is hindered in its advance and the believer does not enjoy his liberty in Christ nor the more than abundant life. Obviously it is time that believers get an understanding of what God's Word declares about the mind of a Christian.

In Matthew we have this record of Jesus speaking to Satan:

Jesus answered, "It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4).

The physical life must be sustained by appropriate feeding, and so too the spiritual life. The food is stated to be "every word that comes from the mouth of God". We must feed our minds with God's Word.

The five senses

Natural man, the man of body and soul, receives into his mind information via the five senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Everything that man has learnt about the world around him has come by this process. These avenues of information are not necessarily perfect -- they may be damaged by accident, they may become impaired through age, or they may not be accurate enough to distinguish one thing from another. The five senses, therefore, are not a reliable means of information.

God knew this, and so He gave believers His Word, a sure foundation, an accurate source of information. As we work the Word of God we find that so often the information of the senses contradicts what we have read in the Word. Then there is a battle between the Word and the backlog of information that we have gained throughout our earthly life. The believer should know that the only way to success in the Christian life is to follow the Word, not the five senses. I do not doubt that your senses are probably sharp and normal, but when they contradict the clear teaching of the Word of God, your senses are wrong. The Word is always right; the senses are often wrong.

It is therefore obvious that if a person can only take in information through his five senses, then sooner or later he gets to the place where he has to guess. This is called philosophy, the science of man's wisdom. So much of philosophy is a series of what might be termed educated guesses. Throughout the centuries, guessing man has come up with some great philosophies, and even today people wander to and fro in their thinking and allegiance to the philosophers. However, God knew that man would do this, and so He gave believers His eternal Word -- sure, steadfast, unchanging. Now it is a matter of choosing between the revelation of God and the reason of man. For the believer, only one choice is logical: the revelation of God.

2 The Command is Clear

Do not conform any longer 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 (Romans 12:2).

The key verse can be divided into three parts: a negative command, a positive command, and the result of the action.

The negative command

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world..." Some translations throw light on the word "conform", although it is an adequate translation of the text. "Don't copy...", "Do not imitate...", "Adapt yourselves no longer...", "Instead of being moulded...", and perhaps the most expressive of all, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould..." (Phillips). The world is trying to do just this. Every day, through the media, through advertising, through the influence of family and friends, the world attempts to squeeze you into its accepted lifestyle. This conformity goes far beyond keeping up with current trends in clothing fashions or the latest model cars. There are many subtle ways in which both commerce and government are trying to get you away from the simplicity that is in Christ. Any suggestion that is contrary to my completeness in Him, to my being the righteousness of God in Christ, to my being blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, comes from one source: Satan. God wants the best for me, He has provided the best for me by sending His Son to Calvary's cross, and anything contrary to this is to be rejected.

The Greek word here translated "conform" is used in only one other verse in the New Testament. **"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance"** (I Peter 1:14). The "evil desires" are stored in your mind and did not get eradicated when you experienced the new birth. They are based upon the backlog of sense knowledge collected since birth. Now that you are a child of God, these desires need to be replaced with the promises of the Word, and the way to do this is to renew the mind.

Let us also look at the words "the pattern of this world". It is not the physical world that is mentioned here; there is an entirely different Greek word to describe the earth. The words would be better translated "this age". This lengthy but expressive definition by R.C. Trench will clarify the word: "We speak of 'the times', attaching to the word an ethical signification; or, still more to the point, 'the age', 'the spirit or genius of the age'... All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, being the moral, or immoral, atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale, -- all this is included in the [age]" (*Synonyms of the New Testament*, page 204).

Luke 20:34, 35 speaks of two ages: **"Jesus replied, `The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage'"** (Luke 20:34-35). We are not to be conformed to *this age*, but to *that age* which is coming. Galatians 1:4 speaks of Christ, **"who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father"** (Galatians 1:4). The Word of God has much to say about the age in which we live, and very little of what it says is in its favour. It speaks of its walk (Ephesians 2:1-2), its worries (Matthew 13:22), its wisdom (I Corinthians 2:6, 3:18), its riches (I Timothy 6:17), its disputers (I Corinthians 1:20), its chief men (I Corinthians 2:8), its children (Luke 16:8), and finally, this present age has its god (II Corinthians 4:4). Look up each of these references. The Word of God certainly does not paint a glowing picture of this present age. No wonder we are commanded not to conform to it!

There are two reactions that can be taken to this present evil age. The first is suggested in II Timothy 4:10, **"...for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me..."** This is conformity to the spirit of the age because of the outward comforts and

pleasures it provides. The other reaction is given in Titus 2:11, 12, **"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."** The second reaction demands non-conforming believers. The negative command, then, stands out in great clarity and simplicity, for God has never asked us to do anything that is impossible. His command is: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world..."

The Dynamics of Renewing the Mind

Foundational scriptures on the mind

Before I share in detail some aspects of this great subject, I first want to draw your attention to a few basic verses concerning the believer's use of the mind. The key verse is Romans 12:2, and we will spend much time with this scripture in the next study, but here we must start our path of exploration.

Do not conform any longer 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 (Romans 12:2).

Now the pattern of "this world", this age, the times in which we live, comes to us through the five senses. The media, our family and friends, the people with whom we work, present and defend a pattern that they expect us to follow. However the Word is clear: "Do not conform..." The positive action we must take is to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." We are told to renew the mind we have, not that we received a new mind at the new birth. Watchman Nee wisely observed: "How many of God's children, although hitherto saved and possessed of a new life, still carry about them an old head. Nothing of their former theories, thought processes, or prejudices has been altered: only a Christian casing has been added." The command of the Word is to renew the mind, to bring it back to the state of newness that God intended.

An interesting fact to note in passing is that the Greek word here translated "mind" appears only in Paul's epistles, with three exceptions. Obviously God has much to say about the mind, especially in the Church Epistles addressed to believers today.

The key verse states that the result of renewing the mind will be to "test and approve what God's will is...". The test is by experiencing what the Word of God promises. Renewing the mind is a present tense, continuous action of walking on the Word of God. It is not possible to do this unless you have first renewed your mind to the Word. But when you do, you will test by actual experience, in reality, that the will of God is good, pleasing and perfect.

A similar statement about the mind is given in Ephesians:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds (Ephesians 4:22-23).

Here the Greek text employs a different word for "renewed" (KJV), "new" (NIV) -- a word meaning "rejuvenate". Get some new life, a new zest into your mind. Notice also the words "put off" (verse 22) and "put on" (verse 24). The old deceitful desires which are corrupt have to be put off; the new attitudes of your mind which are **"created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness"** (verse 24) have to be put on. Both actions imply work. These things did not automatically happen at salvation, but are something that you and I must do by an act of our wills. The balance of this passage gives clear direction in many areas of how to go about fulfilling the exhortation.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3).

The human mind has the ability to concentrate on specific matters according to the will of the individual. Here we are commanded to concentrate on spiritual matters, for earthly things are no longer of interest to those who have died. Notice also verse 10 in this same passage: **"And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."** Here the renewal of our minds is to revelation knowledge from God, not to sense knowledge or the reason of man. **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom..."** (verse 16). The renewing of the mind is to fill it with what God says in His Word, so that the Word does "dwell richly" in you. Now you can walk and act upon it, and live the great life that God has made available for you.

Unless we renew our minds we are not going to enjoy our relationship, rights and privileges as sons and daughters of God. God said that we are justified, that we are sanctified, that we are redeemed; God said that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies; God said He shall supply all our need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus; God said He wished that above all things we may prosper and be in health as our soul prospers -- all these tremendous truths of the Word will have no effect in our lives because we cannot apply them until we first renew our minds to what the Word declares. The statements are eternally true but will not become a reality to us until we renew our minds.

It is therefore imperative that we learn how to win the battle between the senses and the Word of God. It has been well said that there is a three-man committee of which you are the chairman. One is voting against the victorious life -- that one is the knowledge gained by the five senses; another One is voting for your victorious life -- that is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, one vote each way is a tie, and the chairman must cast the casting vote, and whichever way he votes wins the motion. So your vote does have value! You, as chairman, can vote on the side of the five senses -- you do this every time you agree with the illusion of lack or the outward circumstances or the physical pain. On the other hand, you, as chairman, can vote on the side of the Word -- you do this every time you renew your mind to that Word.

Perhaps I should make it clear that when I speak of renewing the mind to the Word of God, I do not refer to your ability to quote the Word from memory. Nor do I refer to just reading the Word -- one has well said that it is not how often you have gone through the Word that counts, but how often the Word has gone through you! Nor do I refer to talking about the Word -- in the city

in which I live there are many people who gather once a week to talk about the Word, but as the old spiritual says, "Everybody talking about heaven ain't going there!" Renewing the mind is the replacement of our old values with the attitudes, beliefs, and concepts of God as revealed in His Word. We have seen then that Satan's primary attack will be against the mind of the believer. The mind is the only territory over which you have complete control. You determine what you think about; you determine what you do.

The complete book is available in electronic format on our CD, Positive Words: The Collected Works of Peter Wade. The CD includes 9 books, 4 booklets, 2 audio teachings, and web site highlights. Follow the link for full details.

Now revised and reprinted as Renewing Your Mind (Positive Principles Book 3).

"Transforming the Mind"

(Romans 12:1-2)

INTRODUCTION

1. Worldliness is a challenge for the Christian.

I John 2:15-17 - "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

James 4:4 - "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

2. Our text identifies the battleground of worldliness: the mind.

Romans 12:1-2 - "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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."

3. Thus, to overcome worldliness, we must win the battle for the mind.

DISCUSSION: HOW CAN WE TRANSFORM THE MIND?

1. REDISCOVER THE MIND.

A. We need to understand the power of our minds. Our thoughts will determine our actions. "What's in the well of the heart will come out in the bucket of life."

Matt. 12:35 - "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."

Prov. 4:23 - "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Prov. 23:7a - "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

B. We see the importance of the mind in the work of Satan.

II Cor. 11:3,4 - "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him."

C. We see the value of our thoughts in the Lord's appeal to us.

Matt. 22:35-37 - "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

Prov. 23:26 - "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways."

2. REDIRECT THE MIND.

A. Our hearts must be turned toward heaven.

Col. 3:1,2 - "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Repentance is "a change of mind, brought about by Godly sorrow, resulting in a reformation of life." (see II Cor. 7:10).

B. Our priorities must be brought in line with God's values.

Matt. 6:33 - "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

3. REEDUCATE THE MIND.

A. When a computer program is not producing the desired output, a technician is brought in to reprogram the system. With the new program, the computer can render the desired output. Our minds need to be "reprogrammed."

B. What you feed your mind will determine your spiritual well-being.

Prov. 15:14 - "The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness."

C. Feeding the mind properly is as important as feeding the body properly. Therefore, we ought to be careful about the books we read, music we listen to, etc. We must fill our minds with thoughts of God.

"Vacant lots and vacant minds usually become dumping grounds for rubbish."

Matt. 12:43-45 - "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

D. Our hearts should be comfortable with thoughts of God and His ways.

Phil. 4:8 – "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

II Cor. 3:18 – "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

E. Just as Jesus defeated each of the temptations we read about in Matthew 4 with Scripture, we must use the Word as our weapon. God's word must become our daily bread:

1. Memorize the Word (Psa. 119:11).
2. Meditate on the Word (Psa. 1:3).
3. Minister the Word (I Pet. 3:15).

4. RENEW THE MIND.

A. This is where we continue to educate the mind. Unfortunately some fail here.

B. Some feel that because they studied, learned the Lord's way in past that they have no further need for study or learning. Not so!

I Cor. 10:6-12 - "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Bible is replete with examples of knowledgeable people who fell through lust of flesh, lust of eyes, pride of life: David fell through passion. Peter stumbled through pressure of peers.

C. Scripture teaches an on-going process of learning, growth.

Eph. 4:20-24 – "But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

One older preacher in days gone by said he had been preaching for over thirty years but every time he studied God's word he learned something new.

Col. 3:9-10 – "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:"

II Pet. 3:18 – "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

CONCLUSION

1. The way to defeat worldiness is to fill our hearts with heaven.
 2. We can be Christians IN the world, but not OF the world.
- "All the water in the world, However hard it tried,
Could never sink a ship, Unless it got inside.
All the evil in the world, The wickedness and sin,
Can never sink your soul's fair craft, Unless you let it in."