

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, August 22, 2010
Renewing Your Mind

There's a story about an elderly man from the old country who was carrying a heavy sack of potatoes on his shoulder when a neighbor came by on his horse drawn wagon. He said, "Friend, climb aboard so I can help you on your way." The elderly man thanked him and got in the back of the wagon. After some time the driver looked back and saw the man with the heavy sack of potatoes still on his shoulder. He said, "Friend, what are you doing with that heavy load still on your shoulder? Put them down on the cart!" The man replied, "It's enough that your horse has to carry me extra weight, I don't want him to carry my potatoes as well."

It's a funny story that illustrates the way many of us have approached the grace of God. We have an experience with God that heightens our awareness of our own sinful nature and we want to do better. We can look too far inward rather than looking upward. There is nothing we can do to add to what Christ has done for us. It is by grace we are saved through faith in the finished work of Christ. It has nothing to do with us and everything to do with him. The only thing we can take credit for is the sin that made it necessary for his going to the cross. Even the faith we have is a gift. However, it is incumbent upon us to use that faith to embark on the journey called "life in him." Without our participation it will not be realized. Our part is to just trust him to do his part. He made promises and he keeps them.

Romans 11:33-12:2 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

CHAPTER 12

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 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. (NIV)

Notice what the Apostle Paul says, that it is *from him and through him and to him*. As soon as our self-centered introspection causes us to look too closely at ourselves we lose sight of our way and get caught in a web of self-effort. That self-effort is a huge part of the "pattern of the world" that Paul tells us to avoid. We need to have our minds renewed. This renewal takes place when we fix our eyes on what Christ has done for us. It inspires us. It motivates us. It empowers us!

If you've found yourself frustrated in not living the Christian life the way you think you should, the way out is not to try harder. Rather it is to draw nearer to him. You may think you have to clean yourself up to come into his presence, but there again that's that wrong thinking pattern of the world. We are accepted by God because of what Christ has done for us. Confess your sins and come humbly, yet boldly into his presence because he meant it when he said we were forgiven. The victory has been bought and paid for and God wants our minds renewed to be able to test and approve what his will is.

Other Scriptures for consideration: Ephesians 4:22-24; Romans 8:28-39