

I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok: Part 6, Renewing the Heart by Renewing the Mind

The Dynamics of the Heart

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to Romans 12. Our text this morning is Romans 12:2, a familiar passage. We're continuing a series, a break from our exposition of the book of James that we've been doing for a better part of a year, I guess now, but we will be resuming chapter 5, Lord willing, next Sunday but today I want to continue, this is the sixth message in a title series titled "I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok," taken as kind of a response to the very popular book back in the seventies, culturally popular book, "I'm Okay, You're Okay," written by a psychiatrist, and basically the thesis of the series is that the Bible says something very different. It says that I'm not okay, you're not okay. We have something very fundamentally wrong with us and what is essentially wrong with us is not something that can be fixed through education or through cultural changes or through chemistry, medication or biology. What is wrong with us goes to the very core of our being to the inner person, the problem is our hearts. I'm not okay, you're not okay. We have sinful hearts and this is essentially the message of the entire Bible, that the Scriptures tell us from Genesis to Revelation that what we need is new hearts, that the way of salvation is when God gives a new heart. He takes out the heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh. It's not religion that man needs, it is a new heart. It's the Gospel. It's the message of Jesus Christ who can give a new heart, who has done everything necessary to give us a new heart through his death in our place on Calvary, and by living himself a perfect human life and offering to God a perfect human heart, and so that we become partakers of his righteousness all the way through inside and out when we place our faith in him.

So that's the essential thesis, I'm not okay, you're not okay, we need new hearts, and we looked at a number of things and last time we looked at the subtitle last week, this is the subtitle last week not today, last week was, "I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok: The Renewal of the Heart," and that we as Christians when you are born again, when you get a new heart, that the inner core of your being has been transformed but the heart is something, the inner man, there is something mysterious about it and elusive even as the Scripture presents and paints for us the picture of how the soul operates, that there is this inner connection between what God has changed and yet this new person, this new heart is enmeshed in still flesh and we still have problems. You remember that we've said that the Bible presents the inner man or what we're calling the heart, that's the Bible's favorite

term for the inner man, the heart, a thousand times in Scripture, but the heart biblically is something different than how we think of it in our culture. In America we think of it essentially as just basically the affections. Love flows from the heart. You know, we value the heart and there are some ways that our understanding is right but the Bible has a bigger picture of the heart. The Bible sees the heart as being constituted by three faculties, three sub-components that constitute the heart. The heart is the mind. The heart is, secondly, the emotions. The heart is, thirdly, the will. When you look at the Scriptures, these three things are all attributed to the heart. The mind, the thinking is the heart biblically, as a man thinks in his heart. The emotions, the second component, or the affections, the feelings flow from the heart biblically. And the will, the purposes and intentions and decisions that people make, the will is a function of the heart. So these three things are a function of the heart and the Bible says that our heart is what is wrong with us; that our minds, the way we think, the way we feel and what we want is messed up and what we do and what we choose is all messed up by sin.

So when a person is born again, this inner control center of life, the heart, the inner control center of life where we think, where we feel and want, where we choose, there is a great restoration that happens in the very core of the heart. The heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh. We now have within us a new way of thinking. We have the mind of Christ. We have new desires for the things of God that we didn't have before. If you've been born again, you have a new principle of life inside of you that thinks differently, that wants differently, and that chooses differently. Now that new principle of life is inter-meshed with an old old heart as well. This is the part of the ministry of it. We don't get whole new hearts. One of the quotes that was shared with me, one of the brothers in the church said a quote by Thomas Boston, he said that it will humble the most spiritual of us to see how much corruption is interlarded with our grace. That's an old expression we don't use much, interlarded. Lard, I think it's a great expression. Lard, we need more of that in my view in cooking. But anyway.

Interlarded. The idea is it's a good piece of beef steak, you have the marbling of the fat through it, that you can't cut all the fat out, especially like a ribeye, right? You can't just cut all the fat out and eat it because it's all marbled through. So he's saying our corruption is marbled through like that and that's the reality. God has transformed us and yet there is still this interlarding of all of these things in our thinking, in our wanting and in our choosing, and so that the Christian life is God giving us grace through the power of his word, through the fellowship of the saints working together to renew our hearts. We have new hearts, yes, but we are also renewing our hearts every day. That's essentially a theology of sanctification. So that's what we're about.

Last time we talked about this idea of the renewal of the heart and we looked at Hebrews 4 and we talked about the complexity of the heart; that it's hard to understand why we do what we do but that when we really have a right understanding, that there is sort of a three-dimensional aspect to the way we think and even our sin problems. We need to see it in a three-dimensional way, not a two-dimensional way or a one-dimensional way, and the three dimensions are basically those three aspects of the heart. You can think of it like graphing the X axis, the Y axis and the Z axis. That's three dimensions, right? So X axis,

in a sense just to work out this mathematical metaphor which I'm sure many of you are really enjoying. I am myself so just indulge me. And some of you guys, I know really are so we'll have a meeting after church, the 8 or 10 of us that are really enjoying this. No but seriously, the x-axis, the Y axis and the Z axis, the idea is, okay, if I have a sin problem, what's happening is my thinking is wrong in certain ways. I'm believing, thinking, believing things that are fundamentally wrong. You could chart that, as it were, on an axis and say that's where the problem is, but it's not just a problem of thinking and believing. That's the mind, you see, thinking, reasoning, believing is a function of the mind part of the heart. It goes beyond that. It's also feelings and wanting and desires. There are things that I'm wanting and desiring that flow from values. This is another axis. This is maybe the Y axis, the values that you have. Then you've made choices and you've formed habits and these are ingrained and this is the Z axis, and when you see that correctly, these different aspects, it gives you a fuller repentance and the real ability to turn from sin. It's much more precise when we see and the Bible approaches life in three dimensions. I'm seeing this the more I read the Scriptures. I mean, the older I get and the more I study the Bible, the more amazed I am at the beauty and glory of Scripture. It is just so perfect, immanently perfect and I feel like every day I know a little more than I did before of how perfect it is and I see how much I don't know.

God's word is glorious and it deals with life in three-dimensional ways that will really deal with our problems. It's not going to happen instantly. God is not big on just instant healing spiritually. He's more glorified by faithfulness and walking with God and he gives us problems that are so complex that we need other people to help us to get that three-dimensional view and to really turn from sin. That's his purpose. Like Jess was talking about earlier, the beauty of the church. One of the things that the church is precious to him and he wants the church to be precious to you if you belong to him, and one of the ways he makes the church precious to you is this is his intent, to make the church precious to you is to show you how much you need the church and how much other people need you, and it's all to the praise of his glory. So we need each other, this three-dimensional view of our own sin so that very often we're struggling because we're not sharing in having people pray for us and help us.

I heard an illustration or I saw something online actually, I saw it online and I think it's helpful to get a picture of what God's word rightly divided does in dealing with our sin problems, okay? It's a new process within the last few years called conformal radiation therapy. Conformal radiation therapy. In treating cancer, we know that often surgery, there's chemotherapy, there's radiation, sometimes other things as well, but those are the main deals and radiation is something that they use and radiation, you're sending, you are radiating waves into the body that are then destroying flesh, destroying cells and upsetting the function of the cells so that the cells break down and then they are removed from the body. Well, historically two-dimensional radiation, you take a machine emitting radiation and you aim it at the tumor, but now think about this, the tumor is two and a half inches inside of my abdomen behind my, I don't know, my spleen or whatever, you know, all the stuff that's down there, right? So in aiming at the tumor, this two-dimensional radiation, I'm also burning other stuff all the way as it goes toward that tumor. Do you see that? The skin, the cells underneath the skin, whatever is in between

the machine and that. Conformal radiation therapy is this really cool thing they've invented where the machine works all around you and it emanates radiation simultaneously from different angles. Like you've got something shooting radiation this way, this way, this way, this way, this way, this way, and so that it's a minimal amount going through all of the tissue, the points of intersection are where the tumor is. All these things intersect at the point of the tumor in a three-dimensional way and they are isolating and focusing the power of the radiation. That's brilliant.

Well, that's essentially what God's word does. It cuts to dividing joints and marrow, soul and spirit. It discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. In this passage, what we talked about last time in the why that we struggle the way we do, because the complexity of the heart and we need the word which is essentially the message last time, this morning we are going to talk about more of the answer of how. How does the word transform us? How does the word do the surgery that we need on our hearts? Romans 12:2, we'll read verses 1 and 2, to get the context but verse 2 is what we're focused on. Romans 12:1, we read,

1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, how grateful we are for your word and we are grateful that we not only have the word of God but we have the Spirit of God to minister the word of God to us, and we ask that even now that your Spirit would have his way in our hearts that you would illumine the minds to understand and that you would grant grace to our affections to love your truth, and to our will to obey your truth. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

So what we're talking about, we're talking about the importance of renewing the heart last time and that the heart is complex and that the heart is renewed by the word, but we are looking at how and so that's why the subtitle of the message this week, remember is, "I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok: Renewing the Heart by Renewing the Mind." Did I ever give you that actually, the subtitle earlier? That's what it is. Sorry about that. I'm not okay, you're not okay, renewing the heart by renewing the mind. That's the teaching of Romans 12:2 and that's what we're going to look at.

Now just to set this in context quickly, Romans is essentially Paul's explication of the Gospel. God's providence, the book of Romans is the fullest explanation of the Gospel we have in the New Testament and it is that way because when Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans, he had not yet been to Rome which is somewhat unique. There is another epistle that he wrote before he had been there. Usually, though, he's writing epistles to churches he planted. He goes to Corinth, he plants the church, he stays there, he goes to Ephesus, he plants a church, he stays there and he teaches, he teaches, he teaches, then he

leaves and then he writes the letter back. You see, so he's reminding them what he's already told them, but in Romans, he's writing to people that he knows some of them, he's met them in different places but he's never been to Rome at that point to preach and to teach his Gospel and so he gives the fullest explication of the Gospel that we have in the New Testament in Romans all because he hadn't been there. What a treasure we have.

So the Lord gives us the book of Romans and essentially the message of Romans is the way of salvation. The way that people are saved is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That's God's way of salvation. You cannot enter before the throne of God apart from the righteousness of Christ which must be given to you and received by you by faith alone. There's no other way. Every other way is false. No matter if they call themselves Christians, if they are not teaching by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, they are in error, a deadly error. Paul makes this abundantly clear when you read the book of Romans, there is no other conclusion. This is how we are saved.

So when we come to Christ by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, he gives us a new heart and he sets us about living for the Lord. So the first 11 chapters of Romans are essentially, as Paul sometimes does this in his letters, he gives his doctrine upfront. The first 11 chapters of Romans, this is a basic outline of Romans, chapters 1 through 11 are theological and doctrinal; chapters 12 to 16, the last five chapters of Romans, are ethical and practical. You basically read it and you'll see that it's not 100%/100%. It's not like there is no practical. No, there is practical in the first 11 chapters too but it's mostly overwhelmingly theological in the same way the last five chapters. There is some theology there too, of course, but it's mostly practical. So it's interesting to note how do you join your theology and your practice. How do you make your theology come out in life. That's a question that has puzzled many throughout the history of the church. Doesn't it seem that it is so much easier to believe right doctrine than it is to live a right life?

Well, I think these two verses, actually, are a treasure trove of helping us understand that and essentially the way that you unite your theology and your life, the way that you unite your doctrine and your practice you see in these two verses, and essentially it's through living your life in worship. Romans 12:1 and 2, you can see that these two verses are really the hinge upon which the book of Romans turns, or they are the binding of these two books together. You have a book of theology and a book of ethics, a book of doctrine and a book of practice, and the hinge that holds them together are these two verses and essentially what Paul is saying is, "Listen, in light of all that God has done for you in Christ, this is how you are to live. You need to live every moment of every day offering up to God your body and your mind. This is it, offer to God, live your life as a priest who is continually offering up to God a sacrifice of your body and your life."

I'm going to resist the temptation to go into verse 1 because there is so much there but we are going to go to verse 2, offering up your mind, which I want to suggest to you is offering up your heart by focusing on the primary function of the heart which is the mind. God wants our lives and he wants our hearts. He wants our obedience but he doesn't want obedience that is merely external, he wants us to obey from the heart, and you have this

perfectly laid out here right here in Romans 12. Offer your hearts by offering your minds. Renew your heart by renewing your mind is another way what we're going to see here.

So I said our problem is that we still have sin interlarded, right? I almost would like to give anybody five dollars if you can use that in a sentence this week. You know, somewhere with somebody else. Actually, I will do that actually. Limit two customers only, the first two. Suddenly we'd be in financial problems here if everybody takes us up on that. Okay.

But anyway we have this corruption interlarded in us. It's running throughout our hearts and how do we deal with this? Paul says the way to deal with the sin that is in your heart is to renew the mind. That's what he's saying here in verse 2, and so I want us to unpack this. There are basically two points we're going to organize our thoughts around, spending most of our time on the second, but essentially to really look at what verse 2 is teaching us, let's consider it under two points. How do you renew your heart? Essentially, first of all, the first point: resist the conforming pressure of this present age. You and I must actively resist the conforming pressure of this present age. Resist the conforming pressure of this present age.

I use the phrase age because that's actually what the word says in the original. All of the major translations say, "Do not be conformed to this world," but there is a footnote there in the NASB and when you look at the footnote it says, "this age," because that's really what the Greek says. I think "world" is a pretty good, I mean when you really work it all out, "the world" is a pretty good summary but I like "this age" a little better because it connotes some other things like this age, this present evil age, according to Galatians 1:4, we live in this present evil age. You've been redeemed, if you have been redeemed, if you have been born again, you now have the future age has invaded this present evil age and it has changed part of you and the essential part of you that has been changed is really a citizen of heaven. You're a part of the future age. The eschaton, the eschatological reality of the new kingdom, the new heavens and new earth has come into your life but you have this treasure in this present evil age.

That's the struggle and the idea is this new heart, this new way of thinking and valuing, thinking and wanting and choosing, the new part of you that is there is surrounded by this old flesh and an age that is working to conform you continually. It's like the world, the flesh and the devil basically could be summarized by this present evil age. They are working together to conform you and the word conform is a Greek word, *syschematizo*, it's an imperative. It's a command. Resist the conforming. He says, "Do not be conformed." *Syschematizo*, the word "schema" is in the middle of it. The world is trying to press you into its scheme, its mold. This age is trying to conform you to its scheme, the way it operates; the things that it thinks; the values and the desires it values; the decisions that it makes; the commitments it makes. It's pressuring you continually. In fact, it's not just an imperative, it's a present tense imperative, "Do not be conformed." Remember, the Greek present is really about the kind of action even more than the time of action. That's the way Greek tenses work and so it's about continuous ongoing action. So it's almost like it could be better translated in a way, "Do not go on being conformed."

The conforming is happening now. It's presently exerting itself against you continually, continually bombarding you, pressuring you, shaping you, seeking to mold you. He says stop being conformed. In fact, a present imperative negative like that often can be just translated that way, stop being conformed. It's another way of saying don't go on being conformed.

So you have to make a determinative act of the will to resist. The world is continually trying to affect your thoughts, your beliefs, your affections, your values, your choices, your habits. In fact, the thing we start off behind as believers because we come into this world and we have no choice but to be conformed because we don't have a new heart and we have a sinful heart that all the pressures of the world, we gladly cooperate with. In fact, the only time we don't cooperate with a certain sin is because we'd rather have another sin more. You think about that, that's exactly true. Before you were born again, you had no holy desire for righteousness. The only reason you didn't, unbelievers are faithful to their wives but they are faithful to their wives because they have some other idol they are worshiping more. "I don't want to do that because it will embarrass me. I value the opinions of men so much that I don't want to do this particular sin." You see, it's not really godly, it's just a matter of which idol you worship.

So we spend our lives being conformed, all these beliefs, all these values being pressed into us, all these patterns of action and habits formed, God changes the inner person of the heart and now he says resist and continue to not be continuing to be conformed. Stop letting yourself be conformed and the good news is you have the power because the miraculous power of God has come into your life. I love that Paul in Romans 1:16 says, he is laying out his basic point of writing and he says, "I'm telling you I'm basically writing to tell you about the Gospel." He says, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel." What does he say next? "For it," the Gospel, "is," what? "The power of God." This way of salvation that you place your faith in, in Christ you accept it and you unite yourself to Christ, the Gospel itself is the power of God. It is the explosive power of God coming into this world and doing something miraculous every time someone believes. Like Jess said we've got three baptisms next week, when they saw the Gospel and God opened their eyes to the Gospel, what happened was the power of God was unleashed and they were delivered from the domain of darkness, translated into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. That is a miracle.

No greater miracle in the universe than that. In fact, that makes any other little miracle look, this is why Jesus said, one of the most mysterious things he said, you know, think about Jesus, you have these records of Jesus as he's going through Galilee and it says he healed all of them. People are coming with all these different maladies and he healed all of them. But one of the things that Jesus said near the end right before his death, "The one who believes in Me will do greater things than I have done." Do you believe that? Well, if you're honest, you probably if you thought about it have wondered about it. I've never healed anybody. The best I can do is give them some Advil. What is he talking about? He's explaining that his whole ministry of healing and even of preaching happened on this side of the cross. It happened before the inauguration of the eternal kingdom, the full inauguration, the new age, and so that everything that he did was

basically more or less temporary. He healed people and it was wonderful healing and it showed his glory and there has never been anyone that has done anything like that, unbelievable and he was showing but it was all a sign, an outward sign of the inward reality that he is the one who is really going to change everything else. So that what happens, it doesn't mean that you do it by yourself and he doesn't, no, you do it because he did it. Actually he does everything that he does through you. That's why the acts of the apostles are really the acts of Jesus Christ of the apostles that he continues to do. When you read Luke's preamble, you see he's basically telling you what Jesus continued to do through the apostles. But now what I'm saying is what does that mean, then? When you preach the Gospel to someone and they are born again today, something more radical happens than even when Jesus was preaching because the Holy Spirit is given to them instantly today and it wasn't then because he had not yet died, and when you share with someone and you help them see their sin, their bondage, and God uses the word of God through you and helps get a three-dimensional deliverance from their sin where their thinking changes, their values change, their habits change, what has happened is more amazing than a lame man getting up and walking. It is much more glorious and if we thought rightly, we would understand that. It would just be obvious. This is what's wrong with the whole signs and wonders movement. They want to go back and just have all that stuff. In a sense, God's mostly done with that. I mean, he can still do anything he wants to do but those were signifying the real deliverance. I mean, if he was to raise somebody that you loved that died, raised them from the dead and they lived 20 more years, they're still going to die, but if you preach the Gospel to them and they come to life, they will live forever.

So that's what God is doing and so when we are sharing the word with each other to help each other deal with our sin, we are doing things of the highest order and we are unleashing the power of God. The Gospel is becoming real in someone's life in a new way. Even though they are already saved, the Gospel is being applied and the power of God is going forth, and this is exactly what he's saying in Romans 12. So you resist the conforming pressure of this present age. You have to be determined but how do you do it? Essentially it's answered. So these two points are actually one long sentence. Point 2 goes together with point 1. It's like point 1 did not have a period. Resist the conforming pressure of this present age. That was point 1, point 2 is: by unleashing the transforming power of a renewed mind. The way you resist, the first imperative leads to the second. Don't be conformed to this world but be transformed. The way you are not conformed is by being actively transformed and you are actively transformed by the renewing of your mind. So resist the conforming pressure of the present age, point 1, by unleashing the transforming power of a renewed mind. The second key word in the sentence is "transformed." It's the word metamorphoo, our word metamorphosis comes from that. It means to change the form. It's also a present tense verb so you stop being conformed by being transformed, by continually being transformed.

I want to show you how this relates to the heart and essentially in this passage you have two thirds of the heart directly spoken to. Remember what the heart is: it's our mind, our emotions and our will. You have explicitly dealt with here the mind and the will. Look at it, "transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove," you may test and

approve, judge and discern, "what the will of God is." Do you see that? Now he doesn't deal directly with the affections and the emotions but we are going to explain how that operates. So anyway, with that let me come back to my subpoints. We have three subpoints here. The second point: unleashing the transforming power of a renewed mind. The first subpoint is: transformation starts with the thinking. Transformation starts with the thinking. That's why he uses the word "mind" rather than "heart." Now remember, essentially in the Bible I'm telling you when you read the Scriptures carefully and you look at it, heart equals spirit equals soul and they overlay each other but they are not 100%. It's like if you think of set notation and they overlay each other and there are little parts that aren't the same. Like this part goes here, this part is different, but essentially this part here is the inner man and the heart is the closest to that that the Bible gives us, and the other things kind of overlay it.

Well, the mind is a part of it. This is why like I said the mind, the heart occurs a thousand times in Scripture, the word "mind" about 150 because God is concerned with the heart, but the mind is a part of that and he has made it so that how do you change the heart? You change the heart through the mind. That's why Paul is using the phrase "mind." You need a renewed mind. In fact, a comparative passage would be to look at Ephesians 4:21 to 23 where he says put off the old man and put on the new man, that's verse 21 and 23, I think. No, it's 22 and 24. Verse 23 in the middle of chapter 4 in Ephesians says, put off the old man, put on the new man. The hinge there, be renewed in the spirit of your mind. That's how you do it. That's how you change. You must be renewed in the spirit of your mind. So Paul says, listen, transformation, the resisting of the conforming pressure of the world begins with the transforming of the mind. It starts with the thinking but it doesn't end with the thinking, it goes all the way to the will because you prove what the will of God is. You start doing the will of God because your thinking has been changed. So he gives like the bookends of the whole heart thing, the way the heart works. You start with the thinking and you end with the doing.

Now, let me say a word about that. It's important because there are people who act like you can really have spiritual experiences by bypassing the mind. Charismatic theology does this. Eastern mysticism. You can have feelings. You look for the feelings and you reproduce the feelings and that's what changes you. No, the way God deals with it is he appeals to the mind. Isaiah 1:18, "Come let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, I will make them white as snow." God has given us his word. He gave us his spoken word in sentences and paragraphs and propositional statements. He's appealing to the mind.

Now not merely the mind, you see. Not the mind only in sort of Greek philosophical ways, but you start with the mind, and anybody who advocates Christianity is not reasonable is wrong. God is the author of reason. We don't reject rationalism because it's rational. Rationalism, the idea that reason, we can know everything we need to know by reason and it was basically a philosophical movement of the 1700-1800s. We don't reject rationalism because it's rational, we reject rationalism because it does not start with God in his revelation. It starts with man and his own ideas and tries to reason from there. If you start with God and what he says, then you reason from that. That's biblical rational

thought and God is always rational. He is not irrational and if you hear somebody saying he is, run. Now his ration and his reason at times is above our ability to comprehend, yes, but it's not irrational. We just don't have the capacity to understand how some of these things fit together but we do have the capacity to understand most of what he has given us and he says, "Come let us reason together."

So it starts with the mind and so he says you've got to start with the mind. You've got to start thinking differently about your sin. There are things that you believe about your sin that are not true and you must replace those thoughts and you must do it so well that eventually you're now changing the way that you act. You are now approving the will of God. You are learning all the way through to discern and to change the will. So the second subpoint, if transformation starts with the thinking, secondly, transformation always reaches the will otherwise it's not transformation. God is interested in changing our lives. He doesn't want us just to have people that have good theology but live godless lives. That's the Pharisees. Holiness is what he's after. He's after a heart of worship lived in submission to him.

So transformation starts with the thinking but transformation, biblical transformation reaches the will. It's a change of behavior. He says we are able, because we've been thinking like we need to think, we are now able to prove what the will of God is. The word "prove" there means "to test; to examine," like doing almost an experiment. You are looking at it, you're testing it and you're saying, "That's it," and you're recognizing it and you know it with certainty because you've done the experiment, you've proven it and now you are doing things differently. That's the goal of what biblical transformation is.

Now the affections, the third subpoint, are not addressed directly in this particular passage. They aren't but when you let Scripture interpret Scripture, I think it's clear that the way that we get from our thinking, renewing our minds to changing our wills goes through the affections, and I want to remind you and I encourage you to listen if you want to follow up on this the message I preached on the corruption of the heart. I talked about how in Genesis 3, and I'm going to summarize quickly, Genesis 3, remember Eve had never desired that forbidden fruit, that tree, she had never looked at it with longing before until she received in her mind a suggestion. Satan said, "That tree will give you what you really need. It will make you like God." Once she had something, a proposition reached her mind, it changed her affections and her affections were engaged, she looked at the fruit and she saw it was good for food, it was a delight to the eyes, you see, it's so laden with this language there and she took the fruit and she ate it.

So it goes through, it starts with the thinking but it goes through the affections to the will. Paul summarized for us the whole process here and I want to tell you, I think the Bible is about this process all the way through. It's about changing your thinking, captivating your affections, and transforming your life. This is what the Bible does and thinking does drive the whole process but it's not just merely thinking. This is what we have to watch out for. In Western civilization in particular, we can divorce thinking from feeling and doing. It was peculiar to Greek and Roman philosophy and most of us who have been raised in the West, that's our cultural background and that's problematic because it's not the way the

Bible sees it. The Bible sees your thinking and you're doing have to be connected. You don't just think things for the sake of thinking. You know, remember when Paul is preaching in Athens and it says there were people that just wanted to come out and hear the latest thing that people were saying. "Hey, that sounds interesting. You're talking about this resurrection." No, it was before the resurrection. "You're talking about this Gospel stuff. We want to hear you on this." And Luke comments, there are people that just did nothing more than just hear the latest ideas; just be infatuated with the thinking process. That is completely not a Hebrew mindset. To think something is to do it. To hear something is to do it. In fact, biblically that's the way God sees it but what happens is God is always about engaging our hearts, engaging our affections. You start with the mind and he engages the affections.

I've been reflecting on that this week how he does this and one of the ways I want to suggest to you, I heard a guy say something like this one time and I've changed it a little bit and I want to give you some advice that will help you engage your affections so that you really go from the Bible coming through your mind all the way out to your will. This is what you need to do: when you read your Bible, pay very close attention to the pictures. When you read your Bible, look at the pictures. Now unless you have a children's Bible, like I don't have any pictures in my Bible. Oh, the maps. I've got to spend a lot of times in the maps. Okay. No, that's not what I'm talking about. When you read your Bible, look at the pictures. I get more and more amazed at how God is painting pictures on every page of Scripture. There are word pictures, metaphors, similes, figures of speech, Jesus teaching parables. Even the fact, now think about this, God has given you a book on showing you how to live, don't you wish, I mean, this is how I think, I wish it was full of more, "Don't do this. Do this. This is how this works. This is what you need to do. This is what you need to understand. When you're in this situation, do this." Kind of like an instruction manual. You know, when you buy a new appliance or something, this is how you operate it. It's not like that because if it were, it would be you would treat God and his word like an instruction manual. It's a relationship. He's capturing our hearts to live with him in worship and dependence and to walk with him, and he has given us his word in a way that engages the mind. Here we are with all this mess, all this messed up thinking, all this messed up wanting, all this messed up choosing, and he gives us his word so that it comes and it confronts our thinking. It says what you're believing about life is wrong. It does say that clearly at times, but then it captures your affections with the pictures, and then it shows you what to do, how to replace it, and you have this throughout the Scriptures.

I'll give you an example of paying attention to the pictures and how important it is. I really think this is the key to meditation. What I'm talking to you about right now is what I think the Bible is talking about when it talks about meditation. Biblical meditation, again is so unlike the world's meditation. In the world, they meditate by emptying the mind. God would never tell you to do that. He never tells you to do that. Christian meditation, you fill the mind with his word. You push out the other stuff by filling the mind with his word. But meditation, what it looks like is here God gives you his word and he gives you all of these pictures, these word pictures to reflect on, to engage your heart. I mean, think about this, more than 50% of the Bible is narrative. You know,

narrative stories. Half the Bible is stories. So much of the Old Testament, the Gospels and Acts, stories rather than proposition. I mean, you have that in the epistles, you have propositions like we're looking at right now. Don't be conformed, be transformed, right? I think it was 25% of the Bible is epistle and prophets, which are more like that, telling you what's wrong and what to do. 25%. 50% stories. The other 25% is poetry, wisdom literature and law. So you've got poetry and wisdom literature too, all these pictures, but stories, they capture your heart.

This week, the other day we had a situation at home where I got angry sinfully and spoke harshly to my wife. She had asked me something and I was thinking, there's no justification for it. I was harsh in my tone and spoke unkindly and said unkind things and I hurt her and I had to go and ask her forgiveness. Now, to really deal with that sin, though, I need to understand my heart more fully and I need to not just in a two-dimensional way say, "Okay, I was sinful. I spoke. My words were wrong. That was actions. I was believing things that were not right. I believed I'm too important and why are you bothering me with this? My life should be easy. You're making my life hard by giving me a question I don't want to deal with right now." There is other stuff like this going on. Can you relate to any of that? "You know, everybody should exist just to make my life pleasant. That's all I'm asking." And once you really see it, it's ridiculous, right? And that itself is part of the victory. It's not all about me. Yes, that's part of the intellectual thinking that needs to change but God goes beyond that, he takes and shows you he wants to capture the heart and so he gives us stuff like the pictures of what anger does. Think about Genesis 4, right after sin enters the world, Cain becomes angry and his anger leads to him killing his brother. Anger leads to killing. You read that story and you think how can that be happening? In the shadow of Eden, here he is killing his brother. Why? Because his brother did better than he did before God. He should have just learned from his brother, "Hey, Abel, tell me why do you do this offering this way?" No, he killed him. You read a story and it captures your heart.

Or if I want to overcome anger and rash words, Proverbs I think it's 12:18 says there is one who speaks rashly like the thrust of a sword, and God speaks in a very vivid word picture there. In a moment you say something and then you want to say, "Hey, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that." Right? "I really didn't mean that. I did not mean to speak that way. I love you and I didn't want to do that." But what have I done? Imagine, here's the word picture: I get angry, I stab you with a sword three times, and then I say, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do that." Meditate on that. Think about that. I'll kill my wife, my children live with the fact that their father killed his wife, I go to jail. I mean, you start just working it out, what a terrible catastrophic situation. You see how that's affecting the values. "I don't want to do this anymore." That's what God is doing in his word. That's why he says it's murder in James 4. You want and you don't get and so you murder. The word pictures is just learning to labor over them and to receive them as the treasure they are from God and enter into them, and this is where you allow God to direct your imagination. You're not doing some kind of hocus-pocus imagination thing like visualizing things you shouldn't visualize. No, you're letting the Scripture guide you. God is telling me to think about this.

One of the things that I've been trying to meditate on and was convicted I needed to meditate on some more is Jesus' beautiful invitation, really, one of my idols, the things that I want too much is I want rest and ease, comfort. I love ease and comfort. I love the feeling knowing that you've gotten everything done and now it's time... In fact, when I was in college my favorite thing was Christmas break. Finish your last exam, especially if things went okay, and you finish your last paper and I'm going home for three weeks of rest and ease and Christmas. Man, that was it. Well, okay, there's nothing wrong with that but you can want it too much. You can want it so that when somebody has a need, you see them as an obstacle and you murder them.

You can't want it more than you want to please God and the invitation that I'm trying to meditate on in the last few years is when Jesus says, because I want ease and comfort, "Come unto me you who are weary and heavy laden." Do you feel weary and heavy laden sometimes? You've been working hard, things have been going, you've been dealing with a lot of stuff and now you've been anticipating that moment of rest, now it's here, I'm finally done, I'm finally there, here it is, and now you come home and there is no rest and ease. It's chaos and there is need everywhere and what happens? You've been wanting that too much and anger and resentment even if you don't sin in anger, you're cold and your attitude is uncompassionate because what you wanted you're not getting. So Jesus says, "Come unto me you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest."

So the message that I know that I need to go to Jesus but I need to see the word picture. What does he say next? "Take My yoke upon you." That is surprising. This is where we have to stop and read our Bibles and just look for what it's saying. I'm heavy laden, I'm burdened, you're saying come to me and I'll give you rest. Well, he doesn't lie. He's going to give you rest but how are you going to find rest? You take his yoke upon you. Who puts a yoke on? Well, they don't put a yoke on, they have a yoke put on them. An ox. You put a yoke on a team of oxen to keep the ox plowing together. An ox doesn't put a yoke on, it's not like the owner says, "Come and rest," to the ox and put the yoke on. No, he puts on the yoke on when he's about to go to work. Jesus says, "You will find rest. Every time you need rest, what you need to do, Ty, is you need to yoke yourself to Me and remember that that's what you signed up for. You're My slave and you need to be like Me and you will find rest in that because I will empower you. I will give you strength. You will run and not grow weary. You will walk and not faint. But you will be like Me. I didn't come," Jesus says, "I didn't come to be served but to serve and to give My life a ransom for many. Here you are My follower, you want rest, you want ease, you want comfort, take My yoke upon you."

Reflect on that. Meditate on that. This is what rest is. Rest is not what I want. You see, I'm changing my thinking. Rest isn't what I want, just having things go perfectly. That's heaven. You can't expect heaven now. How ridiculous that is once you think about it. Things are going to break, they're going to mess up, you get everything fixed in your house, you go through and you do a renovation and what happens? As soon you get done, bam, something else breaks. This is a fallen world. What were you expecting? Isn't God good to remind you that this is a fallen world. You and I would get happy and content thinking we've got everything we want here. He's so kind to just mess things up and he

says, "Listen, that's not what you're here for. You're not here for a rest that's going to come, the Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God, heaven. You're here to labor for Me," and so take that yoke and get under that burden and so when that happens and that interruption happens or whatever it is that I was wanting rest and now you are wanting, you see that God doesn't want you to have that rest, "Lord, I'm here as Your servant," and what you will see is you will find more joy and contentment in serving than you ever could have found just resting.

But meditation changes the values so now I value an opportunity. You see, if I think about this enough, I meditate enough, I will start valuing the reminder. I'm looking forward. I'm still going to be like that, I still want every light to turn green as I drive through it. I can't help it, I just want that. I'm like taking notes, "Man, seven out of eight, this is awesome," but when it doesn't, opportunity. This isn't a bad thing. No, it's a good thing. "Lord, you're reminding me. Yes, I'm here for You. Thank You." Isn't it amazing that the switch flip that is from it's an interruption to what I want, oh, it's an interruption, well, I'm here for Jesus. I need rest. It's an opportunity to yoke myself to him. That is the kind of thing that leads to us testing and approving what the will of God is and when people look at us and they start watching the way that we live, what they see is that which is good and acceptable and perfect. They start seeing, "That is something I want," and God wants us to help them want what we have.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we pray that you would help us to see that every moment of every day it really is a battle that we have living in a fallen world where the pressures of this present evil age, unrelenting, continually pressing in upon us, we cannot coast through the Christian life. Forgive us, Lord, for wanting to. Forgive us, Lord, for our foolishness to think that we can. Help us, O God, to take hold of the infinite resources available to us in your word, the Gospel that is the power of God. Help us unleash that power in our lives. Help us to change our thinking and to make it bow before your thoughts and to help us, Lord, to meditate and to stay in your word and to see the pictures and to feel the pictures until our hearts are fully drawn in, our affections are captivated so that we love what you love and hate what you hate. Then, Lord, with that transformation happening, that we would be able to test and approve your will and to do what you have called us to do. Father, we pray that you would make your people more and more holy. We pray for those that are here that have not yet repented and placed their faith in Christ, that they would, having seen the beauty of the Christian life would even now repent and place all of their trust in the all-sufficient death of Jesus; that he paid for the sins, every sin for everyone who would ever believe. He rose again to show that he was perfectly righteous and that he can give us a perfect righteousness so that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Father, we pray that you would have your way in our hearts and in our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.