

Coach House Church BEACONS

RENEW YOUR MIND

14TH MAY 2020

If you visit our church website, which I highly recommend you do, you might come across our vision statement. This sets out where God is leading us as a church. In as much as we have a future we also have a past and these are our roots. Roots are important for all of us, whether that is as individuals or as a group. Our past experiences, whether personal or shared, are all tools that God uses in our service of Him.

One of the Coach House Church's foundational roots is "Transforming" It states this, "transform...into a new person `We believe in the transforming power of Jesus – to make us better individuals, to move us from a place of sin to one of goodness`"

This statement is based on a verse from the New Testament book called Romans, which was a letter written by the Apostle Paul to new Christians who were living in Rome. It says this "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 Gods will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will"

This was a favourite verse of one of the former pastors of the Coach House. He quoted it often because he recognised that people needed to change, he recognised the pressure that the world around us exerts on our lives, he recognised that as Christians we need to move away from the ways of the world and towards the ways of God. As it says in our values, `to move us from a place of sin to one of goodness`

Different versions of the bible sometimes use different ways to translate the original version. Paul's letter was written in Greek, and because language is

conceptual, it can sometimes be difficult to express the original meaning in English. Our pastor used to like using one of the other translations, which adds considerable meaning to the verse. That version says "Do not let the world squeeze you into its mould" This adds understanding as it goes further that just saying don't be like other people in the world, it is more of a warning that if you don't take some sort of positive action you WILL be dragged into the worlds mould.

So what does this positive action look like, how can we take steps to avoid falling into the worlds trap? Jesus said "The road to life is narrow but the road to hell is broad" One road is easy to navigate in a crowd, especially if you are all going the same way, in the same mould. The other is difficult, you have to concentrate on the road as it is easy to fall off the edge and go the wrong way. So how do I stay on the right road and not get swept up by all the people going the other way?

The 119th Psalm gives us all the information we need to not only stay on the right road but to be transformed.

Psalm 119 is well known as the longest chapter in the bible. It has 176 verses divided into 22 shorter segments or stanzas of 8 verses each. In its original Hebrew each of the 22 sections started with a different Hebrew letter. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet hence 22 stanzas. In fact within each stanza each of the 8 lines begins with the same letter. Even in English it is a wonderful account of a young persons desire to walk closely with God. Despite it being the longest chapter in the bible it is really easy to get something out of this psalm. This is because each of the 176 verses stands alone. By that I mean that you can read just one verse and then think about what that verse is saying without needing to read a lot of other stuff to be able to understand it. Each verse reveals something about Gods character.

So what are the main pointers that we can take from this Psalm?

Well verse 105 says "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" Remember the road to life! It is hard to follow a road in complete darkness. A light, to be able to see where your feet are is vital and the Psalmist is telling us that it is Gods word that is our light. The bible illuminates our way as we read and study it.

The verse just before this, 104 says this "I gain understanding from your precepts, therefore I hate every wrong path". The psalmist has recognised that the bible tells him the difference between right and wrong. By doing this he has become aware that there is a real problem being on the wrong path, so much so that he declares that he hates the wrong path. He can see the pain and anguish that can result from being on the wrong path and rightly fears it. Verse 130 reinforces this idea saying "The unfolding of your words gives me light, it gives understanding to the simple" To get to this stage, however, we must first make a choice. None of us will ever accidentally read the bible, we must make a conscious choice to read it, and another conscious choice to put it into action. In verse 30 the psalmist says "I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart upon your laws"

We can see from verse 7 that the Psalmist has to put some effort into learning what the bible says. He says

"I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws"

A Pilot has to learn every part of the manual for flying an aeroplane. When a problem occurs you don't have time to read an instruction manual, you may have only a few seconds to respond if you want to avoid a crash. As a Christian you may find yourself in a situation where your knowledge of Gods word will determine how you respond. When you respond correctly it will, like the psalmist says, result in praise to God.

In verse 15 the Psalmist sets out his plan. He says "I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways" In this verse he is saying that he wants to think about the things that he reads in the bible. He wants to look at himself and compare what he sees against the character of God. If we do likewise we will always find ourself coming up short. Any truthful examination of our lives will always reveal a yawning great gulf between ourselves and God. The psalmist knew that he had strayed like a lost sheep and asked that God would come and look for him. Well the good news is this. God answered the psalmists prayer, not just for him but for all mankind. That gap which exists between man and God can only be bridged by one person and that person is Jesus Christ. The psalmist described himself as a lost sheep, Jesus said

"I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me – and I lay down my life for the sheep"

That gap that we can see between us and God is the result of our sin and by laying down his life for us Jesus paid the price for that sin. Only Jesus can bridge that gap and to cross that gap we must do so in Jesus arms.

For most of us the teaching in the bible is very different from the things that we have been taught as we grew up. Everything around us, TV, the internet, books, newspapers, teaches very different ideas and concepts to those that Jesus taught. 2000 years ago Paul understood this when he wrote his letter, 3000 years ago the Psalmist also understood this. Some things never change but there are two things that must change if you want to spend eternity with Jesus and that is your heart and mind.

Paul wrote:

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind".

The psalmist said

"Turn my heart towards your statutes and not towards selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word"

Let this be our prayer for today, its verses 36 and 37 if you want to look it up:

May God turn our hearts, minds and eyes,
and transform us by the renewing of our
minds. Amen



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