

- To all the Saints at Manatee Life Church,

**SCRIPTURE:**

Hebrews 12:2 (CEB) – Larger reading: Hebrews 12:1-13

*Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.*

**STORY:**

Robert Fulton, an artist and engineer was responsible in the early 1800's for putting sailing ships out of business. He made the steamboat a standard on the open seas. It is said that he presented his idea to Napoleon. After a few minutes of this presentation Napoleon is reported to have said, "What, sir, you would make a ship sail against the wind and currents by lighting a bonfire under her decks? I pray you excuse me. I have no time to listen to such nonsense."

**OBSERVATION:**

One could only imagine what Napoleon would have actually become if he had allowed a new way of thinking enter his mind and take root in his soul. The phrase, "renewing of your mind" ... as in Romans 12:2 mentioned above has been running through my mind as I take my morning walk. It is usually still dark and the sound of the night critters greet me. There are only a few homes with lights on. Seldom do I cross paths with anyone except maybe someone walking their dog. It was quiet ... peaceful ... a great time for "the renewing of your mind".

The idea began to emerge, from someplace deep within my gray matter, that it takes the entire being to "renew the mind" ... the entire being as in mind, body and spirit. So, my thinking began to process as to just how could I renew the mind? Well, by reading and exposing my thought processes to new ideas is but one way. My granddaughter is fond of asking, "Papa, how many books are you reading this time?" My answer varies from 3 to 8 depending on the subject matter and author.

Another way to "renew the mind" would be to try to learn something new ... here I think of Lee Taylor Stokes who was a long time educator in Hillsborough County (i.e. Tampa, FL) who, the day after retiring, registered to audit some classes at the University of South Florida, a practice he continued for the rest of his life. "Keeps you young," he often shared. "Just being around all those young people and trying your hand and mind at something different." "Trying something different" is usually a struggle for the best of us. Just thinking about trying something different can give us a headache.

Renewing the body encompasses eating the correct foods – something that I must confess that I haven't been doing recently (I've successfully gained the Covid 19 – and exercise – something that is hit or miss ... more miss recently. Confession is good for

the soul, I haven't been very committed to following my regiment ... excuses are too easy to make ... just taking too many shortcuts, but expecting the same results.

Spirit renewal can include worship, reading the Bible, devotional reading, prayer, fasting, and a large score of other disciplines. Of the three – mind, body and spirit – it is usually the spirit realm that gets the “leftover” time. It is the easiest to ignore or put off to a “more convenient time” ... to relegate to some of our “down time” ... or simply expect the “preacher” to take care of that portion of our renewal ... after all it is “his or her job” isn't it? But, then I re-read Romans 12:1 – *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers (and sisters), 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.”* Hmmmm, but there is a problem with “living sacrifices” ... they keep climbing off the altar!

Let's be honest, when it comes to body, mind and spirit we/I don't stay on task very well, do we? There is always something that is getting my attention ... or I allow it to get my attention ... drawing me away from the task at hand. Maybe that is the problem ... I view it as a task, a job, something that “has” to be done, completed, finished ... instead of something that delights our soul and causes our spirit to soar on eagle's wings ...

And so today maybe, just maybe, we can start to begin the “renewing my mind”. We can concern ourself with tomorrow when it arrives.

**QUOTE:**

*“Dr. J. Elder Cumming contended that ‘in almost every case the beginning of new blessing is a new revelation of the character of God--more beautiful, more wonderful, more precious.’”* - J.O. Sanders

**PRAYER:**

And so, Lord, here we are. We confess that we are the same person we were yesterday, last month, last year. Nothing new. We are afraid of new ideas, of trying something different. We even eat the same food that we've always eaten. And then there is your word calling us to “renew our minds” ... to be “transformed” ... but we kind of like our life just as it is. This is going to be hard. We are going need your help. In the name of the one who came to change the world, Jesus Christ. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

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