

# Salvation: God's Love Forever

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, September 29, 2013

## “Renewed in The Spirit of Your Mind”

Over the past few weeks, we've enjoyed considering various “wonders” of our salvation. And this morning, we consider a “wonder” that makes it possible for us to accurately consider *any* wonders about our salvation at all--and that is, the way that God renews our minds in our salvation.

The apostle Paul spoke of the remarkable transformation that salvation brings about in the mind of the redeemed man or woman in 1 Corinthians 2. He wrote of how the truths of our faith are of a spiritual nature when he said, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (vv. 12-13). And because they are of a spiritual nature, they cannot be discerned except by a work of God's grace. He wrote; “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ” (vv. 14-16).

### I. OUR FALLENNESS IN ADAM HAS AFFECTED OUR THINKING.

- A. Before Adam sinned, his mind before God was in a state of perfect innocence. This, of course, doesn't mean he was simple and childlike. He was, in fact, brilliant. He had the capacity to perceive the characteristics of the animals God brought to him and summarize the essence of each creature into a name--something that would have involved great intelligence. Rather, his “innocence” means that there was no aspect of fallenness or rebellion against God in his thinking. He thought in accordance with ‘truth’, and perceived things as they truly are. His thinking was in accordance with God's revealed truth. His was a perfect human ingenuity without sin.
- B. But after Adam disobeyed God's clear command, he immediately began to suffer the consequences of separation from God--including the consequences upon his thinking. He no longer thought in perfect innocence, or in complete submission to truth. His thinking became ‘self-deceived’--even to the point that he hid from God his Creator, and said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate” (Genesis 3:12). Theologians refer to this as the “noetic effects of sin” (from the Greek word *noetikos*; which means “intelligence”).
- C. One of the most soul-damning effects of the ‘noetic effects’ of Adam's fall is that--apart from God's grace--our ability to reason rightly has been twisted by a bias against truth from out of a spirit of rebellion against our Creator. We know enough of the truth to make us responsible before God; because Paul wrote, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse . . .” (Romans 1:18-20). Paul points to the real problem when he adds, “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God,

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nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (v. 21). Verse 28 says that “they did not like to retain God in their knowledge”. The noetic effects of the fall are expressed in our behavior. As Paul puts it in Ephesians 4:17-19, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles [that is “unbelievers”] walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Ephesians 4:17-19).

## II. BY GOD’S GRACE, OUR MINDS ARE ‘RENEWED’ IN CHRIST.

- A. We could never pull ourselves up from the ‘noetic effects’ the fall has had upon us. But God--by His grace--renews our minds in Christ. As Ephesians 4:20-24 goes on to say, in respect to the old life of sin that came from our fallen thinking, “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” Paul urges us in Romans 12:2 to “not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
- B. This, of course, doesn’t mean that we now ‘know’ all things perfectly. We still must labor to ‘learn’, we still must ‘study’ God’s creation accurately in order to understand the nature and operations of things that exist, we still must be taught by the objective revelation of God’s word, and we must still practice the principles of sound reasoning in order to grasp accurate implications and make sound inferences of abstract thought. But what it *does* mean is that, as redeemed men and women, we are now no longer in rebellion against God and thus biased against Him in the processes of our thinking. We can now ‘reason’ in a way that accords with God’s truth and that truly ‘understands’. All knowledge comes from Him; and as Proverbs 1:7 puts it; “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge . . .”
- C. And what’s more, having now entered into a relationship with God through His Son, and being now indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to grasp spiritual truth accurately. There had been, as it were, a veil over our thinking; “Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (2 Corinthians 3:16). We are now no longer the blind leading the blind. Luke 24:45 tells us that the apostles met with the resurrected Lord Jesus; “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Old ‘truths’ that once seemed obscure to us come alive to us in Christ with a new freshness. As Jesus Himself taught, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old” (Matthew 13:52).

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This should impact how we talk to our unbelieving friends about our faith. We need to respect the fact that they appeal to ‘reason’. In fact, we should always embrace them doing so; because our faith is very reasonable. But we also need to remember that--for all of us who are the fallen offspring of Adam--the ability to reason rightly has been damaged and twisted by the fall. No sinner can simply be ‘argued’ into salvation. A receptivity to truth isn’t just a matter of reason

alone, but of the gracious work of God upon the fallen heart and of the will. We must pray for God to graciously open the eyes of our unsaved friends as we share the faith with them.

But another impact should be in ourselves toward God. How we should praise Him that He had graciously opened *our* eyes to the truth and enabled *us* to believe!

*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.*

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version; copyright 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc.