

**DISCOVERING GOD'S WILL (10)**  
**THE IMPLICIT WILL OF GOD- PART SIX**  
**“RENEWAL BY JESUS”**  
**Sermon 8/12/18**

My wife and I like to watch home improvement shows on HGTV (Home and Garden Television). We watch shows like Property Brothers, Flip or Flop, Fixer Upper, Love it Or List It, Rahab Addict, and Income Property. These shows all deal with renovating or remodeling a home which the owners will either continue to live in or get ready to sell as they look for another home better suited to their growing (or shrinking) family. Some of these homes have been built over 100 years ago.

Though the homeowners have agreed to allocate a certain amount of money for the repairs and improvements there are always added expenses that occur once the renovation begins. For instance, the roof or plumbing is found to be leaking, the heating or air conditioning units are insufficient for the added square footage, the wiring is outdated or not to code, they find asbestos in the floors, ceiling, or walls, the sewage system is insufficient or needs replacing, etc. Just because a house looks good on the outside does not mean it is in good repair. What you can't see is often where the problems are hiding.

Even with the fixer upper homes where the repairs are obvious, unknown issues are still discovered as they look behind the facades. Solid walls once opened have exposed rotting wood with termite damage, replacing windows has revealed moisture damage and mildew hidden under the window sill, and replacing floors has revealed a lack of structural and foundational support requiring hours of extra labor and additional material costs. Even home inspectors have missed things such as faulty utility meters, insufficient circuit breakers, and incorrectly installed plumbing.

Watching these shows has taught us that no matter how good the property looks on the outside, no matter how long you have lived in the house you are remodeling, you will inevitably discover that more needs to be repaired or replaced than you originally thought and you will either need more money to complete the project or you will have to take something off your list of “must have” improvements; which may make you wish you had never opted to improve your home in the first place.

These renovation shows remind me our personal lives. We all do our best to look good on the outside and to maintain the status quo of our lives. We present ourselves like these houses as being in good repair, solid and stable, able to weather the storms of life with perhaps just a little bit of improvement needed. But if someone were to go digging deeper into the interior of our lives they might find what these home improvement workers have found – there are rotting foundations and hidden faults in our lives. If the walls of our lives were opened people might see how we have tried to put our lives back together in a sloppy and hasty manner after the trauma we have experienced. And we have covered it over with spiritual plaster in order to hide the insecurity and shame which we do not want people to see.

Romans says, *“There is none who does good, there is not even one.”* Isaiah also says,

*“All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.”* Scripture presents each of us as damaged goods in need of repair. The lives we live, the bodies we inhabit have all been affected by sin. We are not naturally good. We tend to decay. We instinctively know this so we do our best to put on a false front, to show others something different, something better and more attractive than what know is on the inside. We are the houses that look good and stand tall but keep the hidden dangers and faulty workmanship hidden inside where no one can see.

The hymn “A Mighty Fortress” written by Martin Luther has a verse which says, *“Did we in our own strength confide our striving would be losing. Were not the right man on our side, the man of God’s own choosing. Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is He. Lord Sabaoth His name, from age to age the same. And He must win the battle.”* What Martin Luther was saying is that we cannot rely on our own strength if we are to win the battles in life. We must rely on the Lord Jesus Christ because it is He that must win the battle for us. On our own we cannot build a house free of decay. On our own we cannot build a life free of sin. On our own we cannot keep rot from invading our homes. On our own we cannot keep evil at bay. But when we allow Christ to do battle for us we can win and bring health and wholeness back into our lives.

While it is true that God is the victor it is equally true that we partner with God in our battle over evil. God will be the Victor but we have a part to play as well. God expects us to participate with Him in order to experience the victory; more on this later.

So how do we prepare for a battle which God has promised He will win for us? According to His word here is what He expects of us. We must not be anxious for anything, but in everything with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known. When we do this the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. We are also to set our minds on the things above and not on the things on this earth; we are to think on the good things and not the negative things in life. Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, these are the things we should dwell on. And when we do the God of peace will be with us.

All of these things are dependent on faith and hope and trust. If we do not trust we worry. If we do not have faith we doubt. If we do not believe God is in control we are fearful and lack the joy that God desires for each of us. We can fake our way through a trial or two but if we lack faith and hope and trust then we will eventually crumble no matter how much we may be holding it together on the outside.

Don’t be easily deceived by people’s outward appearance. I have known some people who seem to be naturally happy, who appear to never have a bad day; people who seem content with their life, never complaining or striving for more. But when I get to know them most will admit that not everything is as calm and together as they make it appear on the outside. They too have their struggles and defeats in life. They too wonder why everything they try does not result in a consistent victory over sin. Here is my theory as to why victory did not occur for them.

Sometimes when we obey the Scripture we simply try too hard. By that I mean we are trying to do what Scripture says by our own power. Using our own strength of will we attempt to

please God by being obedient to His Word. But instead of victory we find defeat. Why? because we are trying to fight the battle ourselves without relying on His Spirit to go before us and lead the way. Instead of offering ourselves to God to be used for His glory we offer up our best efforts and expect God to find His victory through them.

That is not how it works. According to Scripture, all our good deeds, all our noble efforts, even when offered up to God, are as filthy rags. If we are to be victorious in life we must be willing to sacrifice our own desires for God's desires. We must be willing to lose our life in order to gain it. We don't bring our good deeds to God for Him to bless; we bring our whole selves to God for Him to use. We let Him make good out of us instead of what we bring. Paul explains it best in

Romans chapter 12 when he says:

ROMANS 12:1-2

*"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. 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."*

Over the past several months we have been on a journey to discover the will of God. We have looked at many things which God requires of us but none is so central to discovering God's will as is this verse. This verse tells us that we can prove what the will of God is, and we do that not by being conformed to this world by being transformed by the renewing of our mind. The Greek word translated as "renewing" means a "renewal, a renovation, a complete change for the better." Like a home in need of repair our minds are in need of a renewal.

When we first moved into our home nearly 34 years ago we could not afford to have air conditioning added. We had three kids who had their own bathroom but that bathroom did not have a shower, only a tub. As the kids grew older they started to use our master bathroom to take a shower. That was not always convenient for us as we did not always know when our kids would be coming through our room to take a shower. We lost a little bit of privacy during those early years.

After we came into some money we purchased an air conditioning unit to cool the house and decided to renovate the kid's bathroom and add a shower. Later we added a deck outside our patio door so we could enjoy the back yard. These changes greatly improved all our lives. But there was more renovation needed as the house got older, even after the kids left and had homes of their own. The windows and the roof needed to be replaced and the kitchen needed to be remodeled. So we tackled those as best we could. All of these renovations were a change for the better. Our house was being renewed year after year and we certainly benefitted from the changes. But as any homeowner knows once you start renovating your home it never stops. There is always more work to do.

Like a home that needs renovation, our mind needs renovating as well. And the list of areas that need addressing is just as long. The things we did, the way we thought as non-believers, these things need changing. It took a lifetime to establish bad habits so a restructuring of our actions will not happen overnight. But it starts with the desire to change and with His help continues as you

win one battle after another.

You know, you can put a slip cover on an old sofa and make it look like new, but if the springs are broken or the padding has worn out, no amount of fabric will change the old sofa into a new sofa. You can paint over old walls and make them look like new but if you did not fix the leak or get rid of the mold, no amount of paint will fix or remove the problem.

So it is with our minds. We can make a covering for ourselves to hide the faults that lie within. We can cover over our inadequacies with what we consider good deeds done out of obedience to God's word, but if we are not presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice to God then all our efforts are in vain. Presenting ourselves to God as a living sacrifice is the starting point. It is the beginning of the process of mind renewal. And as our minds become renewed we are able to see clearly what the will of God is. And when we see God's will clearly and follow it sacrificially then we do the will of God out of a righteous motive rather than a selfish or fleshly motive.

All of us have spent a lifetime thinking our way through life. God gave us minds for a reason. He expects us to use them to figure things out. Our minds are storage banks for all the things we have said and done. It would be nice if, after coming to faith in Christ, God took an eraser and erased all the bad things dwelling in our minds. But unfortunately we retain and remember the bad things we did and the evil thoughts that led us to commit them. Thankfully we have a new master now; One that does not lead us into temptation but rather leads us onto the path of eternal life. So we can look to Him for guidance as to how to think and act like the new creature that He has made us to be despite the things we have done.

Yet there are still times when we think that if just pull ourselves up by the bootstraps we could think of a way out of our emotions or our dilemmas; that we will eventually find a way to do righteous things all on our own. But if our old way of thinking could produce righteousness within us it would already have done so and there would have been no need of a Savior. It was our old way of thinking led us into sin and continues to do so as long as we rely on it and not on God. If we are to live a life of righteousness we must go through a renovation, a renewal of our mind, so that God can effect a complete change for the better.

So the first question we must ask is "How do you go about renewing your minds? First of all you stop dwelling on the things you used to dwell on. You do not allow your mind to wander into areas that lead to sin. If you have remodeled your bathroom you do not go out to the junk pile and continue to use the old rusted-out sink. You don't get the old paint color and cover over the new. You use the new sink and you enjoy the new paint color. You rejoice over the transformation of your bathroom and display it proudly to others. So it is with your mind. You do not long for nor return to the old ways.

What does a renewed mind think about? It stops dwelling on the thoughts that led you into sin and begins to dwell on those thoughts which will prevent and lead you out of sin. A renewed mind does not allow you to participate in the things you used to participate in but rather starts new habits and new activities which will enhance your spiritual journey. A renewed mind gives your struggles to the Lord before they become a burden. It gives your worries to the Lord before you become anxious. It seek forgiveness immediately after you sin and rejoices over the cleansing that

God gives when you repent.

What outward signs can be seen from someone whose mind is being renewed? Old habits are dying and new habits are forming. Selfishness is diminishing and generosity is increasing. Personal desires are being surrendered to the Lord so they do not overwhelm and interfere with God's requirement to love. Anger is being controlled so sin does not occur while angry; manipulation of people is being overcome with compassion, and dependence on the things of this world for happiness is being replaced with a love for the things of God. In short a person whose mind is being renewed is constantly surrendering the desires of their flesh to the desires of the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *"If anyone is in Christ he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come."* This is a true statement. We are new creatures in Christ. The old things have passed away and new things have come. But we must take hold of those new things. We must let the old things pass away and not cling to them. We do this by changing our way of thinking. We remodel our old structure of thinking that continues to reside within our minds. We do a complete mind make over. I say "we" because we are participants in this process. We have a will and we must use it to accomplish what God asks of us. But it is the surrender to God of our body (mind and soul included) that allows this renewal to occur. It is God that brings the renewal. It is His power moving within us that allows us to make this change. But we are active participants in this mind renewal process. We join forces with God to fight against the evil that exists within each of us.

If you look at the battles the Old Testament saints fought you will see that God was the one who went before them and guaranteed them the victory, but they did not sit at home waiting for the report that God had been victorious over their enemies. They did not sit idly by twiddling their thumbs while awaiting news of God's victory. God required them to go to war with their full armor and fight the battle as well. They did the marching and fought the battles but God gave the victory.

God gave Joshua instructions on how to breach the walls of Jericho so that He would win the battle. But Joshua and his men had to march out following God's instructions before any victory was obtained. David consulted God on whether or not he would be successful in many of his battles. When God assured him of success David went out and fought the battle knowing God was going before him to guarantee the victory. Christianity is a relationship with the living God. It is not one we live on our own but one that we live in unity with the Spirit of God who lives within us. There are battles we must fight but we are not alone. God goes before us to assure our victory. We cannot rely on our own strength to win this battle. We must rely on the strength God provides and the One who goes before us to win the battle. But we must work in tandem with God to realize the victory.

Romans 13:14 says to *"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regards to its lust."* The Lord made no provision for his flesh in regards to its lust. His mind was renewed daily by the word of God, by His relationship to the Father, and by the Holy Spirit residing within Him. We are to do the same. When we put on the Lord Jesus Christ we put on a renewed mind. The Lord Jesus Christ is holy. We do not put holy things over defiled things. We do not simply add another layer to our sinful nature. We come to God for cleansing and renewal and

then we put on the Lord Jesus Christ. We pay no attention to evil desires and the lust which entices us to commit evil deeds. Instead we redirect our thoughts to think on the things on which God desires us to dwell.

We remove our old way of thinking - the thought processes that once ruled our lives - and replace it with a new way of thinking. We remove the stream of defilement running rampant in our minds and replace it with the river of cleansing. We pave over the ancient sinful paths our minds once followed and begin to make new paths leading to righteous living. We rely on our future inheritance to guide our way rather than succumbing to the consequences of our sin as we have in the past.

For a home remodel to be successful, a complete renovation is necessary. It involves the addition of something new but it also involves the exposure of all that is faulty. You cannot leave “knob and tube” wiring used in the 1880’s to the 1930’s in the walls of your home. It has to be replaced with modern electric wires. You cannot leave leaky pipes in the kitchen or bathroom to continue to rot the floors. They have to be replaced in order to prevent further damage and possible mildew. A leaky roof will not heal itself. Putting off a new roof will not stop the rain from damaging the interior of your home.

A mind renewal is like a home remodel. It is necessary to put new things in your mind but it is also necessary to find the hidden faults and get rid of them. You cannot simply put on Christ you also have to put off sin. You cannot add good thoughts to an already sinfully clogged mind. You have to make room for the new. You have to uncover the sinful thoughts and remove them so that you do not allow good thoughts to go down the path of evil. You cannot build a house of righteousness on a foundation of sinful thinking.

Mind renewal is a surrender to God of all that is fleshly. It is not painting over evil with a whitewash of good deeds. It is exposing the evil, removing it, and then replacing it with that which is good. When we come to God and offer ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice, desiring His will over our own, then we can experience a renewed mind. And when our mind is renewed then we can know and prove by our thoughts and actions what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. So here is God’s implicit will for today:

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GOD’S IMPLICIT WILL IS THAT:

We present our bodies as a living sacrifice

We are not conformed to this world

We are transformed by the renewing of our mind

How does mind renewal occur? Step One: We offer ourselves to God to do with us as He pleases, relinquishing our right to do as we please. Step Two: We move to withdraw ourselves from the world and its priorities and begin to seek after the priorities of God. Step Three: We allow the Holy Spirit to transform the way we think into the way He thinks so that we do not repeat the mistakes and thought patterns of the past. As we take these steps God will uncover the faults that we have kept hidden and He will expose them to the light in order to remove the crumbling walls and foundations which we have built in order to sustain life without Him. But what He tears apart

He rebuilds. He will reinforce our weakness, He will remove the rotted timbers, He will strengthen our foundation, and He will make all things new. The more we participate with Him in this renewal process, the sooner it will occur. The sooner it occurs the better equipped we will be to discern what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

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