**Measuring Spiritual Growth**

**Faith That Thinks**

**Romans 12:2**

**Introduction**

We’ve been doing a series of messages on Growing in Faith and it is my prayer that every member of the Chapel will grow in faith and become the person God wants you to be for His glory. So far we have learned there are at least five kinds of faith. There are many benefits to exercising your faith. And there are different levels of faith. There is little faith, great faith, and perfect faith. Abraham is considered to be the father of faith and Romans 4:20 says that Abraham grew strong in faith giving glory to God.

This series is based upon six principles that govern the development of our faith. The first principle is that faith is developed by what you? Hear. Romans 10:17 “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” Principle #2, faith is developed by what you? See. Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Principle #3, (which we will study today) faith is developed by what you? Think.

It’s sad to think that some believers become so heavenly minded they’re no earthly good! It seems they quit using their minds when they become Christians. Believer, don’t quit using your brain just because you know God is omnipotent! Strengthen and exercise your mind with faith and use your sanctified intelligence to walk the walk of faith. Renew your mind in Christ. Remember faith is developed by what you think.

Let’s turn to Romans Chapter 12:1 and discover how we can develop faith by what we think. “I beseech you therefor brethren by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, (One translation has it: Do not let the world press you into it’s mold) but be ye transformed (the Greek word used here is the one that gives us the word – Metamorphous – the kind of transformation that causes a caterpillar to become a butterfly) by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God! For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” God has given each of us a measure of faith.

We have learned already in this series that we cannot approach God apart from faith; we cannot please God apart from faith; we cannot receive God’s benefits apart from faith; we cannot accomplish anything spiritually apart from faith because Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. Matthew 19:26 says that with God all things are possible! Do you believe that? But not only are all things possible with God, Mark 9:23 says that all things are possible to them that believe.

That means faith links the Eternal, Omnipotent, and Almighty God with us as natural and even fallen human beings. Our link to the Eternal, Almighty God is through the avenue of faith. And it’s not our faith it’s Christ’s faith in us! If you are a believer you have faith. The bible says that all things are possible to you. However, it’s so easy just to give mental assent to biblical truth and nod your head in agreement to what the Word of God says without really internalizing it. We don’t really allow it to become a part of our belief system. We must allow the Word of God to sink deep into our spirit where it can influence our mind and transform our attitudes and emotions.

Most of us have no problem believing that with God all things are possible. We know and believe God can do anything. The problem is with the scripture in Mark 9:23, “All things are possible to me because I’m a believer.” That’s harder to believe! The challenge is learning how to make this a living part of my life! Not just in reasoning; but in reality and relationship! The impossible becomes possible because I know who Jesus is! I have a relationship with Him that allows me to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit through me that released the faith of Christ in my world.

Once that truth gets a hold on you it will revolutionize your life! It will change what you believe and how you practice the faith that Christ has placed within you. Faith is developed by what you think.

1. **Thinking With A Renewed Mind**

We’re not talking here about having a positive mental attitude. It’s great to have and practice a positive mental attitude. But we’re talking about the renewed mind concept; the biblical teaching on renewing your mind.

You can’t believe positively and negatively at the same time. It’s impossible. It can’t be done. That’s why Romans Chapter 12 says that your life can be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Even after you give your heart to Jesus and your spirit is awakened and you are alive spiritually; your mind still needs to be saved! Unfortunately, for how ever old you are when you receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior, your mind has been programed for that many years to think negatively; because we live in a fallen, sinful world. Sometimes our mind still wants to think the old way. When I give my life to Christ my heart; my spirit is immediately saved and transformed. My spirit IS saved; my mind is BEING saved (by the washing of the Word, by the renewing of my mind by Word of God.)

I begin to dig out the principles of God’s Word and begin to think with the mind of Christ. I allow the Holy Spirit to retrain and reprogram my carnal mind to become more and more like the mind of Christ until my thoughts become more like His thoughts and my ways become more like His ways. I do this until my mind no longer thinks negatively. I read and study the Word of God until my minds thinks positively, until it thinks faith, until it thinks all things are possible because of Christ. Because faith is developed in the mind! That’s why you can’t believe positively and think negatively. Believer, let go of your negative thinking and renew your mind with positive faith filled scripture; because it is the Word of God that triumphs over every situation.

Now, that doesn’t mean Christians never have negative thoughts. Renewing your mind is a process. There are gains and losses unless you have a perfect brain! For instance, there was a time when some believers were so caught up with saying and confessing positive things that if you ever expressed a negative thought you were considered to be weak in faith if you were considered to have any faith at all.

That thinking and behavior breeds an attitude of denial. People would say things like, “If you admit you’re sick, you don’t have faith.” You couldn’t admit there was anything wrong or you didn’t have faith. It forced you to cover up the reality of your struggle by saying you only have symptoms of a problem. Real faith, however, is able to acknowledge real problems but understands that every problem must yield to the power and word of Jesus Christ. Negative circumstances and negative confessions do not disturb the reality of the Word of God. Your healing is not dependent upon you, or what you say or what you think; it is dependent upon Him – Jesus the author and finisher of your faith. Even as a believer, you don’t have a perfect brain yet! Your mind is being renewed.

1. **Overcoming Negative Thoughts**

Christians still have negative thoughts. It isn’t what we want, but it is a reality!

That’s why the bible says to renew your mind by the washing of the Word. It’s part of the Christian growth process. But there is a difference between having a negative thought and having a negative attitude. What we need to see is that God’s Word is strong enough and life changing enough to influence our thinking and transform our attitudes. Even when you’re not as positive as you could to be, or if your words are not as inspiring as they ought to be, it doesn’t change the power or ability of Christ’s work or faith. We all succumb to moments of negativity. But what I’m talking about is a lifestyle of being a positive; a lifestyle of being an overcoming, faith-filled believer rather than a down-in-the-mouth, never encouraged, negative outlook kind of believer.

Jesus does not want you, with a transformed heart of saving faith, to continue your life with negative thinking. Why? Because Jesus is alive within your spirit! In the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus wants to express His life, and His love, and His concern for the world; and He wants do this through you! But how can He do this if you are filled with a negative consciousness and attitude. That’s why we need to have our mind renewed! Because when your mind is renewed your life is transformed.

1. **Moving From Spiritual Faith to Material Fact**

Proverbs 23:7, “For as a man thinks in his heart so is he.” Ephesians 4:22, “…put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” In the spirit realm, faith is a reality.

The conflict arises when you begin to exercise the faith you have in the spirit over your natural, physical circumstances. When I enter the spirit realm, I start to believe what I cannot see, when all of my life I’ve been taught to believe only what I see. I start to believe what I cannot hear, when all of my life I’ve been taught to only believe only what I hear in the natural. Then to make it even more challenging, God says whatever the need, whatever your prayer, you can receive it if you ask with the faith of Christ that is released within you. Whatever you ask in faith, whatever you ask according to the will of God, whatever you ask based upon the Word of God you can receive if you believe.

Does that mean a person doesn’t have faith if they don’t get healed in this life? No, of course not! There are several biblical examples. Even if we are healed in this life, our life here on earth is still only temporary. Our completed victory occurs when we receive a glorified body. When we pray in faith and don’t receive what we ask, James 4:2 says that it’s possible, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.” Even when we ask in faith the problem is that we receive the answer by faith in the realm of the spirit. The bible teaches in Ephesians Chapter 1 that all of God blessing are spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

For instance, if you’re facing a financial need, and you know according to the word of God, that He will supply all your need according to His riches in glory, you know the moment you pray in faith you receive God’s blessing and answer in the spirit. Well, that’s wonderful Pastor, but why is it when it comes time to pay all the bills I don’t have enough money? What if the bank statement isn’t very encouraging, and the mailman is delivering bills instead of cash! What if the creditors won’t take faith as payment, they want cash instead! In fact, the landlord called the other day and wants to know when I’m going to pay the rent. The landlord has a problem operating on faith. The landlord wants to receive payment in the form of a check. The landlord wants to write Paid In Full on the receipt. So as wonderful as a teaching on faith is, I’m pretty sure my creditors aren’t going to be satisfied if I tell them God is taking care of things in the spirit realm.

That is why we must learn how to move from where we are and what we have in the spirit, to where we are and what we have in the natural. The challenge is that in order for us to take what we receive as God’s promise in the realm of our spirit and make it visible in the material world we must pass through the battleground of the mind.

My heart knows that God can do anything. But my head asks, “Really?” Your mind is the traffic light between the spirit and the natural. When you begin the journey of faith, and you encounter a financial need, or a medical need, or any other need in the natural; if you pray in faith, and according to the will of God, in the name of Jesus, according to the Word of God, you receive God’s answer. But you receive God’s answer in your spirit. You can’t see it in the natural and even though faith is a reality in the spirit world the problem in the natural world is that you can’t spend faith, you can’t eat faith, you can’t pay your bills with faith. However, the journey of faith begins in the spirit realm! That’s where it all starts!

But then I must move from the spirit realm, the invisible realm to the visible, to the natural realm; from the real of faith to the real of material fact. The problem is not in the spirit realm. The problem is in the realm of the mind. The challenge is to teach and train our mind to listen and respond to what our spirit says. Your mind must become an ally of your spirit. Your thought life must line up with what the Word of God teaches.

**Conclusion**

The battleground is in the mind! If I believe that God is real, and I believe that all things are possible, and I receive that truth in my spirit and let the Word of God begin to influence my mind and my emotions and my attitudes until my circumstances begin to reflect what God has spoken to me within my spirit. The Bible says, “But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:13. God is not limited to providing for your need through your employer. God is not limited by your circumstances. He is not limited by the difficulty of the situation or problem you’re facing. God is above every physical limitation. God is Lord of every circumstance and every situation.

When I allow God to speak his Word into my heart and I allow the Holy Spirit to use God’s words to influence my mind and reprogram my mind, and change my mind. I begin to believe that what I thought was impossible in the natural becomes possible because of the supernatural, divine intervention of the Living Word of God who is the author and finisher of my faith. As my thoughts begin to align themselves with God’s Word I begin to believe that all things are possible and my mind begins to believe what my heart already knows!

You can never move the answer of faith from the spiritual realm to the physical, material world as long as your mind will only believe what it hears, what it sees, what if feels, what it thinks in relation to the physical world. As long as my mind rejects what God’s speaks to my spirit, even though my heart knows it, I cannot make progress in the realm of faith until my mind accepts and believes what my heart and my spirit knows by faith. You will never receive the fulfillment of God’s promise if you allow your mind to cut off every blessing that God wants me to have because it doesn’t make sense to me in the physical world. That’s why we must learn to see with the eyes of faith and hear with the ears of faith, and think with the mind of Christ until my mind becomes an ally with my spirit. That happens when I renew my mind by listening to the Word of God and hearing what the Spirit is saying through the Word of God to my spirit.

When I listen to the Word God speaks and I train my mind to affirm that Word, I can move from having the promise and blessing of God in my spirit to seeing it released in my life and circumstances in the natural because faith is developed by what you think.