

Lives Transformed by the Renewing of the Mind

by Pastor Bob Hoekstra (IPM Director)

One of the great privileges the Lord has given us here at IPM is taking His message of transformation into the prisons of America and overseas. People everywhere (inside and outside of prisons) are in need of having their lives changed. God's effective means for transforming lives is described in Romans 12:1-2. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do 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."*

This call to being transformed is addressed to the *"brethren,"* those who are in the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Lives can only be in the process of spiritual restoration, if Christ is personal Lord and Savior. Many believers, however, are not being transformed, Rather, they are being *"conformed to this world."* The outward pressures of this world system shape much of their thinking, which impacts their daily lives in a destructive manner. Again, this is true both inside and outside of prisons.

The Lord wants to give His people a new way to think. He wants to renew minds. He wants to teach us to think like He thinks. This will radically change our lives. *"**Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**"* We desperately need to have our minds renewed. Before we came to the Lord Jesus, our thinking was characterized by futility, darkness, ignorance, and blindness. *"This I say . . . that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened . . . because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart"* (Ephesians 4:17-18).

Such selfish, earthbound thinking can be replaced by Christ-centered, godly thinking. This renewing process takes place as we get to know the mind of the Lord. God's way of thinking is revealed in His word, the Bible. As we study the scriptures, we are learning to think like the Lord. This brings a transformation in our lives. Our values change. Our habits change. Our words and attitudes change. Our relationships change. No surprise - - this process of transformation can take place in the life of any believer - - inside or outside of prison.

The necessary setting for this process is not defined by which side of the bars we are on. It is defined in respect to the altar of God. Is our life on God's altar? *"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."* Do we view our lives as belonging to us or to God? *"You are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Those who place their lives on the altar of God are the ones who have a passion to learn the word of God.

One last truth - - if we have not confessed to the Lord that our life belongs to Him, then we need to consider again His merciful kindness. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, **by the mercies of God**, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice."* It is God's great mercy that draws us to live at His altar. We, who deserved eternal judgment, have received eternal forgiveness. We, who have no hope in ourselves, now have Christ as our daily hope and strength.

Some time ago, I taught in a prison on this grand subject. Many inmates told me of the

encouragement the Lord brought to them - - a strengthened hope of a transformed life. This same hope is available to all of us who are on the outside of the walls as well - - the hope of **“lives transformed by the renewing of the mind.”**