

Good morning, I, Grantley have the joy of sharing with you this morning. As I am recording this, I am in the sweltering heat of Senegal, enjoy the coolness of Pretoria.

Back on the tenth of September, I spoke on defiant grace and the radical power of the opposite spirit—how to respond when someone treats us poorly by choosing a completely different spirit. Then on the sixth of October, we explored what to do when negative circumstances come our way. If you haven't listened to those devotions yet, I'd encourage you to check them out, as today's message builds right on those foundations.

Let's start with Romans chapter 12: Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Here Paul is telling us not to allow the mindsets and pressures of this world to mould us, but to let God continually transform how we think.

Years ago, as a young university student, I was having a down day, feeling completely sorry for myself because I felt I didn't have a single true friend. As I sat there sulking, God gently asked me, "Grantley, what do you expect in a friend?"

I grabbed a pen and paper and wrote out a detailed list. When I finished, God asked, "Can I be that friend to you?" To my horror, looking at my list, I realized it was so self-centred that not even God could satisfy my demands! Then God asked, "If you were a true friend to someone, what could they expect from you?" I wrote a second list, and looking at those new criteria, I was shocked to realize I had five people in my life who fit that description and were true friends!

Nothing outward had changed in that single hour with God, my pen, and my paper. Yet everything had changed inside. I walked in feeling isolated and depressed, and walked out elated. My mind had been renewed by a truth that was right in front of me all along.

In his book *Telling Yourself the Truth*, William Backus talks about taking every thought captive. That means whenever a thought enters our mind, we pause and question it: Where did this thought come from? Is it true? What does God say about it?

Think back to Genesis chapter 3. After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God asked them, “Who told you that you were naked?” Notice that the serpent never actually told them they were naked. So where did that voice come from? And why did they choose fig leaves—which are notoriously rough and scratchy—to cover themselves? Were they trying to punish themselves for their sin?

Just like Adam and Eve, we succumb so easily to inner voices without checking their origin. We assume it’s our own thought, but we need to ask: Who told me that I’m ugly? Who told me that I’ll never fit in? Who told me that I’m worthless? We know these are not God’s thoughts towards us, so we need to replace them with “God made me beautiful, He has given me a place in His kingdom, I fit right into His family and Jesus saw I had so much value that He died for me.”

In the cool of the day, God used to walk and talk with Adam and Eve. I imagine He spent that time telling them how much He loved them, how precious they were, and how much He delighted in giving them the garden. If they had taken the serpent’s lie captive immediately—questioning its source and turning to God—they never would have fallen. Even after they ate, if they had taken the thought of their nakedness captive and turned to God in honest

repentance, I believe He would have forgiven them. Instead, they listened to the lie, hid in shame, and blamed each other.

We face these exact choices in everyday life. When a taxi driver skips a red light or zooms down the dirt shoulder to cut ahead, my knee-jerk instinct is anger, which can ruin the next fifteen minutes of my day. Or I can take that angry thought captive. I can remind myself that making an extra trip during rush hour helps him put food on his table tonight, and I can choose to bless him in Jesus' name instead of stewing in resentment. The taxi driver has no idea what I'm feeling, but my choice of thoughts will either lift me up or sink me.

King David was a master at navigating these mental battles. Whenever he faced deep emotional distress, he didn't pretend everything was fine or suppress his pain. He brought his raw feelings directly to God in prayer. In Psalm 13, he candidly cries out, "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?" By bringing his dark thoughts into God's presence, he stripped them of their secret power.

David continually separated his volatile emotions from objective reality. Even when he felt abandoned, he anchored his heart in truth: God was his shield, his refuge, and his deliverer. When overwhelmed, he meditated on God's past rescues to reignite his hope. In Psalm 103, he didn't wait for someone else to cheer him up; he addressed his own inner self, commanding his soul to "Bless the Lord!" He talked to his emotions instead of letting them dictate to him. David often began a psalm in tearful lament and ended in worship—not because his circumstances changed, but because he chose to trust God's character in the storm.

Consider the extraordinary life of Dr. Helen Roseveare. She arrived in the Belgian Congo in 1953 as a single medical missionary facing severe supply shortages. She transformed an old leprosy camp into a hundred-bed hospital

and built a training centre for nurses that provided the only healthcare within a 200 km radius.

In 1964, civil war erupted, and Simba rebels captured her village. Dr. Roseveare was held hostage for five terrifying months, during which she was brutally beaten and raped. In the depths of that trauma, she experienced a profound breakthrough when she felt God ask: "Can you thank me for trusting you with this experience, even if I never tell you why?" Surrendering to that trust brought her supernatural peace. After returning to England to recover, she made the astonishing decision to go back to the Congo in 1966, spending another decade rebuilding hospitals and training workers.

Romans 12 urges us not to conform to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. As we take every thought captive and let God renew our thinking, we discern His good, pleasing, and perfect will, freeing us from broken mental patterns.

Let's pray together:

Father, thank you that we aren't left to fix ourselves in our own strength. As we centre our minds on your truth, we find real freedom. Help us walk in that freedom every day and not give in to our emotions. Guide our thoughts and actions so that everything we do brings worship to you. May your kingdom come, and your will be done in and through us. Amen.

Have a blessed day