

Phroneō Part 6

– *mindset, frame of mind, attitude* –

In the past five studies, we have gained insight into this important word and concept. Last week we looked at Paul's letter to the Philippians where he instructed believers to submit to the Holy Spirit as He matured their mindset or frame of mind into the mindset of Christ so that the Body of Christ would be able to function in true fellowship and under the true leading of the Lord. To this end, Paul exhorted Christians to find their satisfaction in the Lord, not in the things of the world or in pursuing their own way. The Philippian Church is not the only one to receive this teaching. Paul addresses this same issue in his letter to the church at Rome; therefore, this week's study is taken from Romans Chapter 12:3-16.

In Chapter 12, Paul addresses the believer, the one who has received all that God has done for him through Jesus Christ (as presented in Romans 1-11). Paul presents the response to the Lord each believer is to have for all of the mercies Christ has shown toward him.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul presents one encouragement and two commands. In verse one, Paul encourages believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices. In verse two, Paul expresses two commands. He says that believers are to be continually not being fashioned by the age in which they live, and at the same time they are to be continually being transformed by the renewing of their minds. The word for mind is **νοῦς** (noos, Strong's 3563) which describes the perceptive abilities of the mind. Paul is saying that believers are to be continually involved in having the perceptive abilities of their minds transformed. Paul uses the rest of the chapter to present the concept of true fellowship among believers and the relationship they should have with non-believers. Our study word, **φρονέω** (phroneō, Strong's 5426), is found in verse 3 and in verse 16.

3) For I say through the grace which has been given to me, to everyone being among you, not to set your frame of mind on high things beyond what is necessary to think, but to set your frame of mind toward being sober minded as God divided to each one a measure of faith.

Beginning with this verse and continuing through verse eight, Paul addresses the issue of a believer approaching his or her function in the Body of Christ with a "sane" frame of mind. In verse 3, Paul teaches that a believer is to not set his frame of mind on high things that go up and beyond reality. The Greek word for setting one's "frame of mind on high things" is **ὑπερφρονέω** (hyperphroneō, Strong's 5252). It is a compound word derived from **ὑπέρ** (hyper, Strong's 5228) a preposition meaning "above," and **φρονέω** (phroneō, Strong's 5426), the frame of mind. The verb form used here denotes an action - the setting of the frame of mind on things above and beyond reality, thinking too highly of one's self. Paul's exhortation is found at the end of the verse where he says, "Set your frame of mind toward being sober minded." The Greek word for "sober minded" is also a compound word, **σωφρονέω** (sōphroneō, Strong's 4993). It comes from **σῶζω** (sōzō, Strong's 4982) "to save, to deliver," and from **φρονέω** (phroneō, Strong's 5426) the frame of mind. **Σωφρονέω** (sōphroneō) expresses the idea of being sane or in the right frame of mind. To be "sober minded" is to think with a frame of mind that approaches

life with sound, sane judgment. In the context of this verse, Paul is referring to the believer's perception of his own function or place within the Body of Christ.

The next phrase in verse three defines what Paul means by thinking soberly, "As God divided to each one *a* measure of faith." The message of Romans 12:3 (continued through verse 8) is that a believer is to function in the Body of Christ with the realization that God measures faith to each one for their function and purpose within the Body of Christ. It is interesting that Paul does not present a lack of faith as being their problem; but rather the problem believers face is having a frame of mind wherein they think of themselves above and beyond reality, actually going "beyond" faith – the faith that God gives to each one for their ministry with and among believers.

In verses 9-13, Paul presents the function of love (**ἀγάπη**, *agapē*, Strong's 26) among believers. Most English translations have handled the Greek of this section by adding commands so that the text would make sense. However, according to the Greek diagram of this section, verse nine starts off with a statement, not a command: "Love *is* without hypocrisy." This statement is followed by verses 10-13 in which Paul presents 11 areas, using mostly participles, to show how love is to function. A command is found in verse 14 where Paul commands Christians to "Bless the ones that are persecuting you, bless and do not curse." He goes on to explain what he means by saying, "to rejoice with *the ones* rejoicing and weep with *the ones* weeping." Then, in verse 16, Paul adds this admonition about the believer's approach to persecutors:

16) Having the same frame of mind toward one another. Not setting the frame of mind on high things, but associating *with* the humble. Do not become wise from yourselves.

Paul uses the verb **φρονέω** (*phroneō*) once again to describe the mind-set a believer is to have, only this time he uses it in reference to a believer's approach to those who are persecuting him. He says that the believer is to have the same "approach" or "frame of mind" toward one another not setting his frame of mind on high things, but rather associating with the humble or lowly. The "high things" would be an attitude of pride exhibited against those who administer the persecution. Instead of "rising up" in pride against those who are persecuting, we are to "go along with" or "associate" with those who are humble or made low. The believer is to submit to the humbling process and is not to think more highly of himself than is necessary. He is to make his association with those who are being humbled.

Most of Paul's ministry to other believers centers on bringing sane, sound thinking to the Body of Christ. To that end, he commanded, "Do not become wise from yourselves" (Romans 12:16). The word for wise is **φρόνιμος** (*phronimos*, Strong's 5429) which is the adjective form from the root word **φρονέω** (*phroneō*). Paul completes this part of his teaching by commanding believers to not allow their frame of mind to be developed from themselves and from their own lofty view of themselves; but rather they are to submit to the growth process that develops their frame of mind through sound, spiritual thinking represented by the same lowliness of mind with which the Lord approaches life.

Paul's letters to the churches tell us that the early Church had to deal with going "beyond" faith more than they had to deal with not having enough faith. In Romans 12:3, Paul expressed that

God gives each of His children a measure of faith to enable them to function within the Body of Christ. This is the Lord's provision, by His Spirit, for His work. The early Church had the same problem as we do today. Many modern Christians think that the Lord ascended into heaven and left us to do His work for Him until He returns. Many today are caught up in their own abilities and "gifts." They function within the Body of Christ from the mindset that they are God's specially anointed messengers. They exhibit an attitude of being far above other believers in importance. Consequently, our churches suffer factions and disputes; they lack the strength of true fellowship and the Body of Christ appears disjointed and weak. It is my hope that these studies will help each of us understand the instruction of Scripture so that we submit ourselves to the maturing process administered by the Holy Spirit, not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought, functioning humbly in true fellowship under the true leading of the Lord.

Next week we will see from I Corinthians 4 how Paul ministered this same concept to the Christians in Corinth.

Notes

- phroneō is the English font spelling of the Greek word φρονέω.
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