

Phroneō Part 1

– *mindset, frame of mind, attitude* –

Concept

The Greek concept of **φρονέω** (phroneō) encompasses the frame of mind, mental attitude, and mindset. It is not about individual thoughts, as much as the entire mental approach to all of life. Our reaction to every circumstance we encounter reveals our mental attitude. The Bible teaches that a humble frame of mind is the key component to genuine fellowship. Furthermore, it describes Spiritual maturity as functioning with the mindset of Christ.

Introduction

We are beginning a seven-part study on the Greek word **φρονέω** (phroneō, Strong's 5426), another Greek word used in Scripture to describe the function of the mind.

Definition

The verb **φρονέω** (phroneō) is translated as *savourest, thinkest, mind, understood*, and even *affection*. When joined with other words it is also translated *highminded, likeminded*, and is part of the compound word *humble minded*. The meaning of **φρονέω** (phroneō) has to do with *the frame of mind, mindset, mental attitude*.

Usage

φρονέω (phroneō) is used nearly thirty times in the New Testament, all but three instances are found in Paul's writings. **φρονέω** (phroneō) can be used to describe a mind focused on the things of man, the flesh, and the human; or one focused on the things of Christ and the Spirit.

Meaning Part One ~ Philippians 2:3,5-8

Our textual basis for part one in our study of **φρονέω** (phroneō) is Philippians 2:3,5-8. The theme of Paul's letter to the Philippians is fellowship; and in chapter 2, Paul is focusing on the most important element of fellowship, **φρονέω** (phroneō).

Humble-Minded

Paul presents a humble frame of mind as the main ingredient necessary for genuine fellowship among believers.

Doing nothing according to strife or vain-glory, but in humble-mindedness, esteeming one another as being better than themselves.

Philippians 2:3

The phrase *humble mindedness* comes from the compound Greek word **ταπεινοφροσύνη** (tapeinophrosunē, Strong's 5012). This word is made up of the adjective **ταπεινός** (tapeinos, Strong's 5011), which means *humble, lowly*; and the verb **φρονέω** (phroneō), which means *frame of mind*. It is literally a *humble frame of mind*, which denotes a mental approach that is lowly, other centered, and does not draw attention to self. Paul goes on to explain how this humble frame of mind functions using a detailed example.

Command

In verse 5, Paul begins with a command and then names our example:

**For let this mindset be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 2:5**

The command - *Let this mindset be in you* - is in the passive voice. The passive voice designates the subject is receiving the action, not doing the action. Thus Paul is commanding us to be receptive to God's process working to create in us a mindset - an attitude, a view of life - which was also in Christ Jesus. Whatever frame of mind He had, whatever approach to this earthly life He took, that is what He desires to work in us.

Mindset of Christ

What was the Lord's frame of mind? What was His attitude and approach to this earthly life? Paul goes on to describe this for us in verses 6-8:

- 6) Who, while existing in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal to God:**
- 7) But emptied Himself, having taken the form of a slave, having become in the likeness of men:**
- 8) And having been found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, having become obedient until death, even the death of a cross.**

Philippians 2:6-8

Verse 6 ~ Considered

Paul says that Jesus "existing in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal to God." The word translated *consider* (**ἡγέομαι**, hēgeomai, Strong's 2233) means *the leading thought of His mind*. And the word translated *equal* (**ἴσος**, isos, Strong's 2470) means *exact same in qualities, character, and attributes*. At this time, prior to the incarnation, Christ was existing in the very essence and substance of God because that is who Christ is.

Verse 7 ~ Emptied

Paul uses a conjunction of sharp contrast to show a change in circumstances. Verse 7 tells us Jesus "emptied Himself, having taken the form of a slave, having become in the likeness of men." The word translated *emptied* (κενόω, kenoō, Strong's 2758) means *to empty, to make useless or vain*. It means Jesus did not carry His reputation with Him. While still being all that God is - possessing the same qualities, character, and attributes - He became flesh and functioned as a slave in service to all of humanity.

Verse 8 ~ Humbled

In addition to taking on the form of a slave, Jesus "humbled Himself, having become obedient until death, even death of a cross." The word translated *humbled* (ταπεινώω, tapeinoō, Strong's 5013) means *humble, make low, abase*. When Jesus came, He chose the low road, humbling Himself even to the point of death on the cross.

Putting it All Together

In summary, Paul commands believers to submit to the Lord as He creates the same mindset Jesus had toward this earthly life in us. Paul, using Jesus as an example, tells us exactly what that mindset looks like. While being equal to God, Jesus approached His Incarnation with humble mindedness. He emptied Himself of His glory, took on the outward appearance of a man, functioned as a slave to all mankind, and submitted to a humiliating death on a cross.

Conclusion

φρονέω (phroneō) is an important concept that describes another aspect of the intimate process between believers and the Lord. As the Lord develops a frame of mind (φρονέω, phroneō) like Christ's in us - one that approaches the material things of this life in moderation and places the needs of others above ourselves - then we will experience genuine fellowship. Moreover, when we have arrived at this place in the Spiritual growth process - where what we want no longer matters and we stop insisting other believers (and even churches) conform to our expectations - then we will be functioning as servants like Christ.

Notes

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