

Phroneō Part 7

– *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.

Review

So far we have studied this important word from Paul's teachings in Philippians, Colossians, and Romans.

In Philippians 2:5, Paul says, "Let this frame of mind (**φρονέω**, phroneō) be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

In Philippians 3:13-16, he presents his own manner of thinking as an example of the frame of mind a mature believer must have.

In Colossians 3:2, Paul says, "Be setting your frame of mind (**φρονέω**, phroneō) on things above, not things upon the earth."

In Romans 12:3-16, Paul teaches that the problem believers face is having a frame of mind wherein they think of themselves above and beyond reality. They are actually going beyond the faith God gives them for their ministry with and among believers.

We understand from these teachings that a believer's frame of mind must be changed so that he is able to mentally approach this earthly life in the same way as Christ.

Introduction

The frequency with which Paul uses the word **φρονέω** (phroneō) in his letters to different churches highlights the importance of this teaching to the early church at large. This week we are going to study what Paul has to say to the Corinthian church regarding **φρονέω** (phroneō, Strong's 5426).

Meaning Part Seven ~ I Corinthians 4:6-16

Paul makes it clear in I Corinthians 3:1 that he is sending a corrective letter to a carnal (fleshly) church. He presents the fact that they are abnormally carnal because, after having first been fed with the milk of the Word, they should now be ready for the meat of the Word, but they are not. Paul describes their carnality in I Corinthians 3:3-7:

- 3) **For you are still carnal. For where there is jealousy and strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal and walking according to man?**
- 4) **For whenever someone should say, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?**
- 5) **Therefore who is Paul? And who is Apollos? But ministers through whom you believed and to each one as the Lord gave.**
- 6) **I planted; Apollos watered but God was giving growth.**
- 7) **So that neither the one planting is anything nor the one watering, but God giving growth.**

After ministering to them about their carnal frame of mind that emphasized human accomplishment as success, Paul summarizes his presentation and shows them their real need in I Corinthians 4:6-16, our focus for this week's study.

Verse 6 ~ Examples

In verse 6, Paul uses himself and Apollos as examples to the Corinthian Christians.

- 6) **Now these things, brothers, I transferred unto myself and Apollos on account of you, in order that in us you might learn to not set your frame of mind (φρονέω, phroneō) above what has been written, in order that you are not puffed up on behalf of one against the other.**

The examples are meant to impart two things:

- 1) That they might learn not to let their thinking go above (or beyond) what has been written in God's Word. When Paul ministered to believers, he had only one motive: to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5). This is one of the most important concepts taught in the Bible.
- 2) That they might not be puffed up with pride, elevating one person above another.

Verse 7 ~ Given

In verse 7, Paul asks three questions:

- 7) **For who makes you to be different? And what do you have which you did not receive? And if also you did receive *it*, why are you boasting as not having received *it*?**

The Corinthians' frame of mind was one of thinking the anointing of God made them to be something special. By asking these questions, Paul is directing their attention back to the fact that everything they are and everything they have has been given to them by the Lord. A believer's function in the Body of Christ is based solely upon the ministry that God supplies.

Verses 8-9 ~ Carnality

In verses 8-9, Paul presents the current frame of mind of the carnal believers in Corinth.

- 8) You are already satisfied; you already became rich; you reigned *as kings* apart from us; and I wished that indeed you did reign, in order that we ourselves also might reign with you.**
9) For I suppose that God displayed us the apostles last as appointed to death; because we became a spectacle to the world, and to angels and to men.

They are glorying in the flesh and reigning as kings here on the earth. Paul presents this behavior as coming from out of the carnal mindset of pride.

Verse 10 ~ Contrasts

In verse 10 Paul presents three contrasts between the carnal attitude of the Corinthians and his own attitude toward himself and the conditions of his earthly life.

- 10) We *are* fools on account of Christ, but you *are* wise (φρόνιμος, phronimos) in Christ; We *are* weak, but you *are* strong; you *are* glorious, but we *are* without honor.**

The word translated *wise* is the adjective form of our word (φρονέω, phroneō). Paul is pointing out that their mental approach to this earthly life was going above and beyond the reality.

"Super" Apostles

We learn from II Corinthians 11:5 that some came into Corinth presenting themselves as "Super" Apostles. They were pointing to Paul's "deplorable" lifestyle of suffering and hardship as proof that he was not empowered to be an Apostle.

Verses 11-13 ~ Circumstances

In verses 11-13 Paul lists ten things about his circumstances in this earthly life.

- 11) Until the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed and are being beaten, and wandering homeless,**
12) and we labor, working *with* our own hands; while being verbally abused, we speak well of; while being persecuted, we bear up under *it*;
13) while being blasphemed, we encourage; we became as refuse of the world, until now *the* scum of all things.

From a human viewpoint, Paul was not very successful. However, Paul is attempting to show the Corinthian church what is carnal and what is spiritual, so they can correctly discern between the two.

Verses 14-15 ~ Children

In verses 14 and 15, Paul expresses the heart behind his warning.

14) I write these things not shaming you but warning as my beloved children.

15) For if you should have myriads of tutors in Christ, but not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I myself fathered you through the gospel.

Paul says he is ministering to them as a Father to his children whom he cares for.

Verse 16 ~ Command

In verse 16, Paul ends this section with a command.

16) Therefore, I encourage you, become imitators of me.

Reinforcing the presentation this passage started with, of himself as an example, Paul now commands believers to use him as the pattern of spirituality.

Putting it All Together

To carnal believers, Paul was neither anointed nor successful. They were gauging spirituality based on the appearance of his flesh and the condition of his circumstances. This puffed up frame of mind with an emphasis on the physical parallels the mental approach of many Christians today.

Man's natural frame of mind is to judge the moving of the Spirit of God based upon the physical realm. But Scripture tells us that is not the way God looks at things.

Jesus said in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

In Samuel 16, when Samuel was sent to Jesse's house to anoint the next King of Israel, he looked upon Eliab, the oldest son and said, "Surely, the Lord's anointed is before Him." But the Lord corrected Samuel telling him, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (I Samuel 16:7 KJV)

And here in I Corinthians 4, Paul presents that he took the low road just as Jesus did. He presents his frame of mind and attitude toward the physical realm to be the same as the Lord's, as exhibited in Jesus Christ.

Paul is trying to impress upon believers that they must learn to make sound judgments from a spiritually mature frame of mind. That is, a frame of mind that has been developed with a proper view of the reality of the physical realm in which we live. There is no greater need in the Body of Christ today - where bigger is better and large numbers are believed to be the indication that God is working - than to hear and understand this important lesson being taught by Paul.

Notes

- phroneō is the English font spelling of the Greek word φρονέω.
- All Biblical quotes contained herein are a Literal English Translation of the Bible produced by BTE Ministries - The Bible Translation and Exegesis Institute of America.