

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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How You Think Will Determine How You Live

by Dan Trygg

“Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,² fulfill my joy that you might think the same thing, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose (lit., ‘thinking the one thing’).³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard (‘consider, think’) one another as more important than yourselves;⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.⁵ Have this mindset in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard (‘consider, think’) equality with God a thing to be held on to,⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of humans.⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself (‘made Himself low’, or ‘lowered Himself’) by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Philippians 2:1-8

“Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same way-of-thinking, because he who has suffered in the flesh has caused sin to stop,² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human lusts, but for the will of God.³ For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the will of the unbelievers,¹⁰ having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and lawless idolatries.⁴ In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same flood of recklessness, and they malign you;⁵ but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.⁶ For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to people in the flesh, but they might live according to God in the spirit.”

1 Peter 4:1-6

“For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;¹⁵ and He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who for them died and was raised.” 2 Corinthians 5:14,15

These three passages have one thing in common. They all describe how the way we think will determine how we choose to live. That might be obvious, but it is often not taken very seriously. At most, we might expend the time and focus to read the Bible, or learn scriptural teachings. That is far different than what is being described in these passages. We might focus on what behaviors we desire to see develop in our lives, but we do not do much, in the way of taking practical steps, to bring this about. We want to see the fruit magically appear in our lives, without recognizing that **the desired fruit is the end result of nurturing a mindset, ...a way of thinking.**

In Philippians 2, the apostle Paul mentions the idea of a thinking process, a mindset, *five times* in those first five verses. “...you might think the same thing...”, “...thinking the one thing...”, “...in lowly-thinking-ness...”, “...consider/think-of...”, “have this mind-set...” (lit., ‘think *in this way*’) in y’all which was also in Christ.” He is really hammering home a point. **There is more to walking the Christian life than knowing theology, or Bible doctrine or content. We need to build a mindset, a way of thinking.**

The apostle Peter also agrees. In 1 Peter 4, he says, “arm yourselves” or “equip yourselves” with “the same way of thinking” as Jesus had exemplified.

And, in 2 Corinthians 5:14,15, Paul says that the love of Christ became a compelling influence when he came to the conclusion (the outcome of a process of thought) that Christ died for all, and therefore all died. He died for all so that those who live (those who believe in and identify with Him) should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died and rose on their behalf. **Here a realization (conclusion from thought) produced a change in intent and purpose, from living for self to living for God.** This conclusion produced an entirely different mental orientation in Paul’s life. The love of Christ, which initially touched Paul, became a supporting, empowering motivation that affected and directed his perception of others and his purpose in living. The word for “compels” literally means to “hold together” as in to “hold one’s focus or attention, to occupy the mind”. **The love of Christ arrested Paul and preoccupied his focus going forward in his life.**

So, we have three very different mindsets or ways of thinking mentioned in these three passages.

(1.) We have **the mindset of self-emptying** from Philippians 2, a way of thinking whereby we are willing to lay aside privilege, comfort, convenience and self in order to serve others, to meet their needs and help them.

(2.) In 1 Peter 4, we are to arm ourselves with **a mindset that is willing to undergo suffering, hardship, rejection and mistreatment in order to live well for Jesus.** Just as Jesus willingly embraced suffering on our behalf, we too are to be ready to face, endure and even embrace suffering, in order to reveal Jesus more clearly and distinctly in our world. In the context of 1 Peter, **this suffering comes as a result of our choices to no longer live for selfish desires and self-gratification, but to live for God.** People will notice this change, because we no longer participate in *their* sinful activities. At first, they are surprised, but soon some may rise up to attack us with ridicule, hostility or even abuse. **Maintaining our composure and grace under such an assault is what will reveal Jesus most clearly.** Such assaults may take a person by surprise, or come with surprising intensity. **Being mentally prepared for**

such contingencies is important, so that you are not surprised, crushed or react in retaliation. Part of our spiritual armor should include a mental preparation for such things.

(3.) We are to ponder the love and redemptive work of Christ to motivate us to live for Him, and not ourselves. Thinking about the finished work of Jesus causes us to see every person, not as they appear, but as potentially new creatures in Christ. The good news is that Jesus *already died and rose* on their behalf. All that they must do is accept His finished work, ...by faith to identify with Him in death, be reconciled to God, and choose the love of Christ to direct *their* hearts to live for Him. Maintaining a mindset of Christ's love and sacrifice of grace keeps our hearts in gratitude and wonder, and impels us to serve Him and speak of Him to others.

How do we build a mindset, or equip ourselves with a way of thinking? Actually, to speak of this in terms of a mindset is a bit misleading. That sounds like we have to get or obtain some *thing*. No, there is not some *thing* to "get" that we do not have. Instead, if you look closely at the incidents in Philippians 2, it becomes clear that we are to learn to develop or cultivate *a way of thinking*.

Most of the words used in Philippians 2 for "mind" are actually verbal forms which really emphasize the activity and content of the mind, i.e., 'thinking thoughts'. We are to "think the same thing", "thinking the one thing" in verse 2. Then in verse 3, "in lowly-thinking-ness consider one another as more important than yourselves." [The word for consider (vss. 3,6) is from yet *another* Greek word, *hēgeomai*, which means to ponder, think and evaluate. It is about making a decision, or having an opinion, after careful thought and weighing the facts. In verse 3, it refers to esteeming or regarding others as more important than yourselves *as the result of careful thought and consideration*. In verse 6, it refers to an evaluation that is willing to empty ourselves of our privileges, power and resources for others, when necessary.] Then, in verse 5, where most translations render the original as "have this mind in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus", literally the Greek says, "*think this* among yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." So, **the thrust of what Paul is saying about a mindset in Philippians 2 is about engaging in a process of thought. It is about using our minds to actively think, consider, ponder, or meditate.** So, developing a mindset in Philippians 2 is not just about having a direction or an ideal that we believe in. **It is about actively thinking like Jesus thought.** Here, it is about regarding others as more important than ourselves (as Jesus did), and considering (*hēgeomai*) those privileges, resources, or self-comfort we may have as *not* being something to be held-tightly on to, but to be willing to empty ourselves (as Jesus did) in order to help others.

In 1 Peter 4, the apostle used a word that refers to a way of thinking that results in an insight or conclusion. Here, Peter says that since Christ was suffering in the flesh, we ought to "arm" or "equip" ourselves with the same way of thinking (or the same perspective as He had). Why? Because the one suffering in the flesh has caused sin to stop. Peter doesn't mean that suffering is the antidote or medicine to solve the sin problem. Jesus dealt with the power of sin on the cross, something we could never do on our own. BUT, what He is saying is that **the one who is willing to suffer in the flesh for Christ has put a halt to sin's power at that moment.** He or she has chosen Jesus over sin. He or she has chosen Jesus over gratifying or protecting the flesh. **This is like a doorway or a crossroads for a new level of victory and obedience.** The next verse continues this thought: "...toward no longer to live in this physical life by human desires (lusts) but by God's will." Peter goes on to say that this person had spent enough time already, in their pre-Christian past, living out the will of the unbelieving world, ...having indulged in sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, and so on. Those who do not believe think it strange that we would stop those behaviors, and they slander or speak negatively about those who change their ways to follow Christ. They might judge us for departing from their evil ways, but they will have to answer to God one day. The gospel is preached to the spiritually dead in order that, even though on the one hand they might be judged in the flesh (while living here) according to people, they might live in the Spirit according to the will of God. **The point is that we need to be thinking like Jesus did, who was willing to be unfairly judged by people, in order to carry out the will of God.**

This was the same for Paul in 2 Corinthians 5. As he considered, pondered and evaluated the fact that Jesus died for all, ...he concluded that therefore all died, and could potentially find life in Him. Paul found himself almost held captive to this vision of the love of Christ, ...a love that freely took that first step toward making reconciliation and transformation for humans a possibility. He died on behalf of all, in order that the ones who respond and experience life might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose for them. People needed to hear. People needed to know what Christ had done for them. It filled him with passion. **If Christ would do that first part, ...he would be willing to do the next part, ...which was to tell other people about this amazing love and grace of God, and guide them along the path of transformation.**

For me, it seems that **the lesson is that we must be consciously choosing to focus our thinking toward Christ.** God has given us the ability to direct our attention, and engage our minds to actively pursue specific avenues of thought. We have become too accustomed to be passive in our thinking, ...to let *others* feed our minds with content. **We are to take responsibility for our own mental focus. God wants us to follow Jesus, even in our thoughts.**