

BEING SPIRITUALLY MINDED - THINKING AS CHRIST THOUGHT

The greatest threat to the modern church of today is not necessarily the bitter conflict raging between the forces of darkness and the forces of light, but rather the escalating acceptance of carnality. The fleshly tabloid morality that the world system is serving up, should not be tolerated by God's people. Yet, this weakness was also very evident within the early church, and the apostle Paul spent much of his time having to deal with similar human frailties. Carnal Christians produce the same fruit as unbelievers and in this respect they become indistinguishable. To the onlooker, carnal Christians and sinners look exactly the same!

Read Colossians 2:23 to 3:3.....

Here we see one of the most powerful spiritual principles defined in near simplicity. ***"...To overcome the indulgences of the flesh,"*** we must ***"seek those things which are above"*** and ***"set our minds on things above, not on earthly matters."***

Romans 8:5,6 tells us that ***"those who live according to the flesh*** [those who indulge the flesh] ***set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit,*** [set their minds on] ***the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."***

Note, Paul clearly lays out two directions of life and reveals their ultimate consequences. He implies that believers have the ability to chose to do what is uncharacteristic of a Christian, namely to ***"live according to the flesh."*** But remember, indulging the flesh [gratifying the sinful nature], is merely setting your mind on earthly matters - on the things of the flesh!

What's also very interesting, is the repeated use of the ancient Greek word '*phronema*' or '*phroneo*' which has to do with thought life. Literally, it's *what one has in the mind* [what one is busy reflecting on].

Therefore, if you are reflecting on [or paying attention to] things which are above, you will overcome the indulgences of the flesh, and God promises abundant life and peace!

Jesus illustrates this principle in **Matthew 6:22,23** - ***"The lamp of the body is the eye."*** Metaphorically, one might say, *"the eye is what we are reflecting on; looking at; paying attention to."* ***"...If therefore, your eye*** [what you are reflecting on, looking at; paying attention to] ***is good, your whole body will be full of light*** [your whole life will be full of meaning and purpose]. ***"...But if your eye*** [what you are reflecting on; looking at; paying attention to] ***is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness*** [your life will be deprived of meaning and purpose]."

Now, turn with me to **Philippians 2** and let's read **verse 1 to 5** together....

"...Therefore, if in any way I have given you encouragement in Christ, if in any way my love has consoled you, if in any way you have enjoyed the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit, if in any way you have experienced the tenderness and compassion of God in Christ, then make my joy complete: Think alike. Love alike. Be of one soul. Be of one mind. Do not act out of a spirit of rivalry, nor out of empty conceit.

Act rather with humility and consider others better than yourselves. Each of you must look to the interests of others as well as to the interests of yourselves."

What seems evident from Paul's tone and rhetoric is that the Philippians had been acting in a spirit of carnal ambition, thinking themselves better than others, believing that they were above serving their fellow man, and seeking ways to promote themselves and get ahead without giving adequate attention to the welfare of their neighbour. So Paul uses the example of Christ to enforce an appeal for unselfishness, and in so doing, he hopes to counteract the carnality what is giving the church a bad name. Paul puts the Philippians on the spot!

Verse 5.... "This way of thinking must be adopted by you, which also was the way of thinking adopted by Christ" [literal].

This verse means that the Philippians were obliged to act in accordance with this attitude toward one another if they wish to imitate Christ [and think as He thought]. Jesus is the supreme example of humble, self-sacrificing, self-denying, self-giving service to others, and He is the ultimate model for moral action. Note, this is not focusing us on Christ's divine attributes but rather on His human thought process.

And, this scripture sits comfortably within a much a wider meaning, namely... *"Let this thought life [which reflects and keeps our attention on heavenly matters] be evident in us, just as it was conspicuous in Christ."* Or, *"Let this way of thinking [which does no indulge the flesh] be adopted by us, just as Christ also adopted that way of thinking."*

The attitude of mind and heart that Jesus adopted was always in complete agreement with the divine life which permeated His very existence.

1 John 2:6 states, ***"He who says he abides in Him [Christ] ought himself also to walk [and conduct himself] just as He walked [and conducted Himself]."*** This includes the human thought life!

A true relationship with the Lord must therefore be evidenced by attitudes of heart and mind what glorify God. Any thought which gratifies the sinful nature is not pleasing to God [**Romans 8:8**]. However, every thought that is held captive and made obedient to Christ [adopting the same mental attitude and way of thinking as Him], will put to death the indulgences of the flesh and give birth to LIFE and PEACE!