

State of Mind

Romans 12:16

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A. Laser Focused (vs. 16a):

1. Mind – In the midst of relationship challenges and tremulous circumstances Christ teaches us, like it was for Him while He was on earth, we must make a mental decision to devote ourselves to trust the Word of God to be sufficient and obey it (2 Peter 1:2-11). This is our power and victory (Isaiah 55:11; Hebrews 4:12; Colossians 3:17). This is why Paul begins this chapter with verses 1-2.

2. Mind – This is the main object that makes everything work in this chapter. Our mental devotion leads to a sincere heart (the transformation process; Romans 12:2) that displays affections from the heart so that no matter what our past passions may have been, our transformed heart keeps us in times of trouble. (Romans 12:2-3, 9-10). Satan loves it when we use our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6) because this is what he uses to deceive us (the temptation of Christ models this for us; Luke 4:1-8).

a) Our mental devotion leads to a sincere heart (the transformation process; 12:2) that displays affections from the heart so that no matter what our past passions may have been our transformed heart keeps us committed to obeying whatever the Lord teaches (12:2-3, 9-10).

b) We must not base our opinions, affections on our own understanding or feelings. It must be a mind-set to be renewed by our commitment to the scriptures, which we continuously become devoted to practice (Romans 12:2; Hebrews 5:11-14). Satan loves it when we use our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6) because this is what he uses to deceive us (the temptation of Christ models this for us; Luke 4:1-8).

B. The Mindset that Sets the Tone for Healthy Relationships (vs. 16b; Philippians 2:1-8):

1. High minded, haughty – Our mindset when renewed is continuously committed to obeying the Lord. This creates the attitude that was displayed (Philippians 2:6-8) by Christ. It is this level of obedience that led Christ to humble Himself because of His Father's will and die like a thief on the cross even though He is the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords.

a) Our spiritual refined mind leads us away from being 'snobbish' - looking down on people because of our education, pronunciation of words, complexion, where we live or what our accomplishments may be or considered to be below us.

b) Our mental devotion and affections are so transformed by the Spirit of God, we purposefully set our will to love anyone, even an enemy (Romans 12:9-21).

c) An attitude of positioning oneself above another person is detestable to the Lord God:

· And He said to them, *"You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God."* (Luke 16:15-16; NASB)

· *"Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."* (1 Cor 10:12-13; NASB)

2. Associate with the lowly – We are in fellowship with the Spirit when we commit to renew our mind and practice His will (Romans 12:2; Hebrews 5:14). As a result, we like Christ become gentle in the manner by which we relate to others (not seeking to create strife; gentleness is strength under control; Romans 14-15).

a) When we live in the Lord's mindset our attitude like Christ is meek and mild, meaning our attitude expresses itself in a patient submissiveness to any offense, free from malice and desire for revenge. We are not a person who is rough, hard, violent, angry or aggressive when offended.

b) Whereas many writers emphasized knowing one's proper place, Christian literature goes beyond other ancient literature in suggesting that believers go out of their way to associate with the lowly.^[1]

c) Paul's teaching in places such as 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; and Ephesians 2:15–16, confirm the principles underlying all of Romans 12: all have been leveled by sin, and anyone who have been redeemed have been so by God's mercy. Therefore, anyone who would look upon another believer with contempt or conceit because of status or position in life has not grasped the enormous implications of having been redeemed solely by grace.^[2]

d) The unity of the community is threatened by arrogant thinking. The renewal of the mind calls for subversive thinking and behavior, choosing to give up power and status to become one with the lowly.^[3]

3. Paul practices this in his own ministry. He does not preach *with eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power* (1 Cor. 1:17); he surrenders all his rights in the gospel for the welfare of his churches (1 Cor. 9:15–18); he refuses to boast except in his weakness because "*when I am weak, then I am strong*" (2 Cor. 12:10); he willingly suffers the loss of all privilege for the sake of "*gaining Christ*" (Phil. 3:4–11). This was Paul's lifestyle because that is how Jesus lived. Jesus surrendered status for the weak and the lowly (2 Cor. 8:9).^[4]

4. When our mindset is set on loving others by first loving Christ (Matthew 22:36-40; 1 John 4:7-11) we would be selfless, not boastful, kind and patient (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a). We are therefore better for ourselves and everyone else around us.

C. A Renewed Mind Leads to a Productive Life (vs. 16c):

1. Wise in your own estimation – In order to accomplish what Paul is commanding us to do in this passage we must seek to allow the Spirit of God, through prayer (James 1:5-9) to provide to us His wisdom and understanding (Colossians 1:9-11). To depend on our own wisdom is to open ourselves to being influenced by demons (James 3:13-18; Proverbs 26:12; Acts 5:1-11) and based on Proverbs 3:5-6 not have productive results in our lives.

a) "*Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him*" (Prov. 26:12).

b) Seeking the Lord's wisdom is our continued desire to affectionately apply His Word practically each and every day so that we can have meaningful relationships with others (Mt. 7:24; 10:16; 24:45; 25:2,4,8,9; Lk. 12:42; 16:8; 1 Corinthians 10:15), or finds godly ways to relate to those who do not like us.

c) We remember the teaching of Jesus on the Mount, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44 // Luke 6:28). Stephen provided an example of this godly attitude when as he was being stoned, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60; cf. 1 Cor 4:12).^[5]

2. Cranfield writes, "It is always a sign of the worldliness of the Church when its 'leaders' no longer associate as readily and freely with humble people both inside and outside the Church as with those who are socially superior."^[6]

3. Paul can call for status reversal with integrity, because he practices it in his own ministry. He does not just preach it.

4. It is this mindset that causes us to experience the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, and it is this transformed life that allows our relationships to flourish and provides strength to deal with those who choose to be our enemies (Romans 8:37-39; 1 John 4:4).

5. We live blessed in His wisdom which is an outgrowth of our commitment to walk in Him (John 15:1-22; Ephesians 5:15-21).

^[1] Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Ro 12:16). InterVarsity Press.

^[2] Boa, K., & Kruidenier, W. (2000). *Romans* (Vol. 6, p. 376). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

^[3] Toews, J. E. (2004). *Romans* (p. 303). Herald Press.

^[4] Toews, J. E. (2004). *Romans* (p. 303). Herald Press.

^[5] Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, p. 239). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

^[6] Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, p. 240). Broadman & Holman Publishers.