

PORTRAIT OF A CHRISTIAN (4)

Thinking what Christ thinks

A. Introduction¹

1. What kind of people ought we to be? What kind of people are we called to be like?

These are questions that are explicitly and implicitly asked in the New Testament, and the answers given generally focus on our character rather than our conduct.

God is more concerned about who we are (what our hearts are like) than what we say or do.

Because right conduct will come from having a right character, in the same way wrong conduct comes from having a wrong character.

Because right conduct can deceive others into thinking we have a right character.

2. Those whom Jesus saves, He promises will be changed by His Holy Spirit, as they are given new hearts and are transformed into His likeness.

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Romans 8:29)

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

3. So, what kind of people ought those who have experienced this work of the Holy Spirit be?

What character traits will be found in them?

"Christian character is an internal nature conformed to Christ in five different areas, resulting in a variety of virtues." (Andrew Davis)

What are these five areas?

- a) Affection – what you love and what you hate.
- b) Desire – what you seek.
- c) Will – what you choose and what you reject.
- d) Thought – what you think.
- e) Emotions – what you feel.

Followers of Jesus love what Christ loves and hate what Christ hates.

They seek what Christ seeks.

They choose what Christ chooses.

And they think what Christ would think.

4. We haven't always been able to think as Christ would think.

¹ This series is based upon Chapters 11-16 of *An Infinite Journey* by Andrew Davis

Before Christ saved us, our thoughts were inclined towards sin.

“The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.” (Genesis 6:5)

Our minds were filled with the evil thoughts Satan puts into our minds, the appetites of the flesh, and the wisdom and wickedness of the world.

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.” (Romans 8:5-9)

“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.” (Ephesians 4:17-18)

5. Now we can think as Christ would think.

We have been given by God, the mind of Christ.

This happened at conversion.

“But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16)

We are now able to think what Christ would think in all circumstances and situations we find ourselves in.

But how do we do that?

Because often we find ourselves still thinking as we thought before Christ saved us.

6. To think what Christ would think needs our minds to be renewed.

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2)

How does that happen?

By doing with the help of the Holy Spirit, three things.

B. Our minds are renewed as we regularly repent

1. Repentance is a genuine change of mind.

Before we followed Christ, we thought a certain way – wrong thoughts.

Now we are following Christ, we are to think a different way – right thoughts.

“From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” (Matthew 4:17)

2. This change to thinking rightly doesn’t happen instantly the moment we become a Christian.

It comes as we discover where we have been thinking wrongly and we repent of this, by changing our minds.

How do we know when we’ve been thinking thoughts that are wrong?

When we are confronted by the truth found in Scripture.

When we experience the pain of God's discipline.

"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent." (Revelation 3:19)

C. Our minds are renewed as we regularly reckon

1. Reckoning is to consider things to be a certain way even though they may not appear that way.

It is to trust what God says is true even when this goes against what we would naturally think is true.

2. What are we to reckon as being true?

We are righteous in God's sight.

"Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." (Romans 4:20-24)

We are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:11)

Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with future glory.

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." (2 Corinthians 4:17)

For the cause of Christ, we are sheep for the slaughter.

"As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." (Romans 8:36)

Our lives and possessions belong to God and are to be used for the advance of the gospel.

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No-one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had." (Acts 4:32)

"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." (Acts 20:24)

Anything we have in this life as more than we deserve.

"For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Corinthians 15:9-10)

Weakness as strength because it causes us to depend on Christ.

"But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Others as better than ourselves.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)

D. Our minds are renewed as we regularly reflect

1. Reflect by meditating upon Christ as we think about His world.

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things." (Philippians 4:8)

Christ has created a world full of His glory.

Because this world was made through Him and sustained by Him, everything that is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy, should direct our thoughts back to Him.

2. Reflect by meditating upon Christ as we read His word.

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." (Psalm 1:2-3)

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (Luke 24:27)

As we dwell upon the Scriptures, not only are we being like Christ, we are also learning about Christ who is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

3. If we are to meditate upon Christ, we will need make sure that we do not allow that which isn't true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy to take root in our minds.

E. Summary

1. One aspect of the portrait of a Christian is that they think what Christ thinks.

They show they have been given the mind of Christ.

This happens as our minds are renewed by taking every thought captive and repenting of those which are not set on the things of the Spirit.

It happens as we reckon things to be true even when it feels like they are not.

And it happens as we reflect on Christ as we think about everything that is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy in His world and in His word.

2. How then do we grow in repentance, reckoning, and reflection?

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42)

By using the 'means of grace': Word, Prayer, and Fellowship.