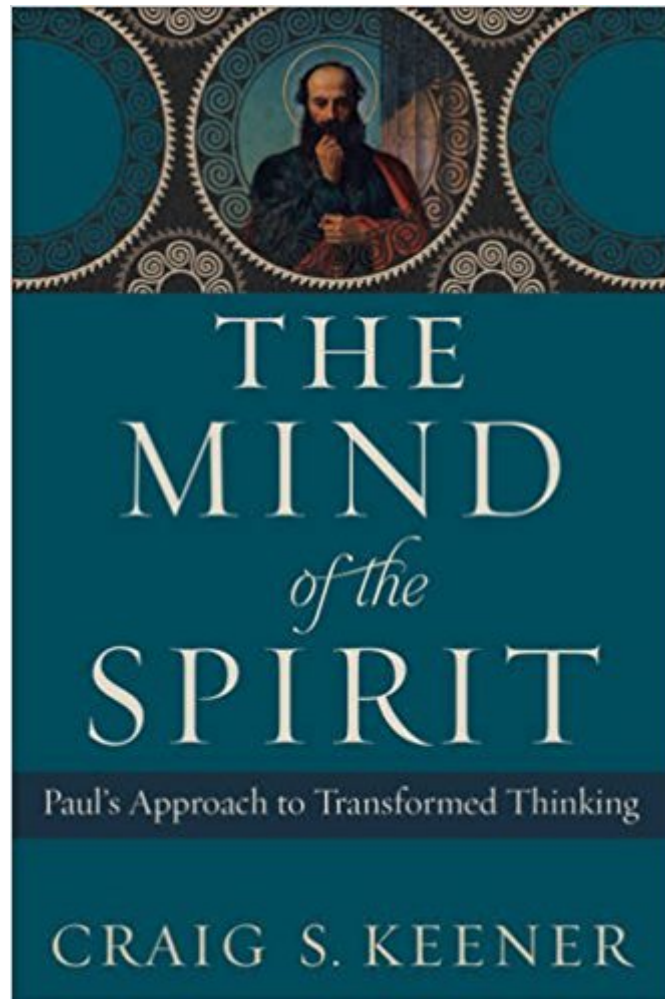


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The Mind Of The Spirit: Paul's Approach To Transformed Thinking



Synopsis

Leading Scholar Explores Paul's Teaching on the Mind This major work by a leading New Testament scholar explores an important but neglected area of Pauline theology, Paul's teaching about the mind. In discussing matters such as the corrupted mind, the mind of Christ, and the renewal of the mind, Paul adapts language from popular intellectual thought in his day, but he does so in a way distinctively focused on Christ and Christ's role in the believer's transformation. Keener enables readers to understand this thought world so they can interpret Paul's language for contemporary Christian life. The book helps overcome a false separation between following the Spirit and using human judgment and provides a new foundation for relating biblical studies and Christian counseling.

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Customer Reviews

You can find many books on the thought of Paul, but how many books can you find on the thinking of Paul? We can say that we know what it is that he thought, but what about what he said about how to think? That is a topic that has been neglected largely, but thanks to the work of Craig Keener, we now have a dense scholarly work on the subject. Keener looks at passages mainly in the undisputed Pauline epistles, though there is a brief look at Colossians 3:1-2. In these passages, Keener examines the way the ancients saw thinking and how Paul would fit in with them. The goal is to walk away with a renewed interest in proper thinking and especially in this case, proper Christian

thinking. There are also numerous excursions throughout the book so you can see what is thought about a certain topic in the ancient world. There's also a look at what the ancients thought about the soul. In addition, you will find a section stating advice for counselors and others on how to use the material. Keener doesn't leave any stone unturned. He is incredibly thorough seeking to cover every minutiae of a subject that he writes about. You will find a long section on Romans 7 for instance and whether it describes Paul's own thoughts about a struggle against sin or something else. The advice given to counselors is also good. Keener wants this book to be able to help people with psychological problems. It could be used also to help all of us as we all need to have some renewed thinking. None of us thinks entirely the way we should. Keener also points out that it's too easy for people on one side to lower people on the other. In some circles in Christian thinking, it is thought that not having an education is in fact a virtue.

No light reading here! Keener explores an extremely important issue which is often overlooked, one which has long piqued my interest, i.e., what is "the mind of Christ" and how does it transform our thoughts and behaviors? The reader must be prepared to sift through an abundance of ancient cultural context to glean nuggets of spiritual insight. This study contrasts the corrupted mind and the mind of the flesh with the mind of faith, of the Spirit, and of Christ---which "do not offer us a long list of new rules but instead present various windows on a new reality" (253). It deals with the renewing of our minds by thinking as Jesus did and contemplating heavenly matters. But rather than merely living in the hope that we will go to heaven when we die, Keener points out that the new age has dawned in Christ, that we are able to understand our status as a new creation and to shape our beliefs and behaviors on the basis of this new reality in all aspects of life. This transformation, however, is the work of the Spirit and not merely human effort. "God . . . renews the minds of those devoted to him so that they can truly evaluate the good things that are his will" (143). With simple terms that need to be profoundly impressed upon people of faith, Keener says, "Because believers are new in Christ, they should act accordingly" (51). It is the example set by Jesus and the guidance provided by God's Spirit which enables this to happen, so that it is no longer self-will or self-indulgence which steers our course but the way of the cross (e.g., self-denial and sacrificial service). And be prepared, because "suffering may facilitate the process" (158).

The Mind of the Spirit: Paul's Approach to Transformed Thinking by Craig S. Keener is both dense with detail and saturated with a familiarity of the Greco-Roman world. This isn't a book for the faint of heart, but the payoff is well worth the journey. Keener seeks to provide a contrast

between the corrupted mind and the transformed mind, not by providing a long list of rules and regulations, but rather by presenting various windows into a new reality (p. 253). Transformed thinking (or the renewing of mind) is the result of embodying the mindset of Christ and contemplating the things of God. This reality, according to Keener, is a continual and daily undertaking for the believer. Keener explains, "Walking by the Spirit rather than by the flesh requires a continuing, deliberate rethinking and retuning, with many determined decisions to believe God's truth about our identity, until our brain is rewired enough that the new way becomes the more prevalent way" (p.263). Thus, the renewing of the mind is actualized by regular and predictable patterns of thought and reflection upon the things of Christ. While this is a necessary task for the believer, and one aided by the transforming power of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit, it is likewise an increasingly difficult task. There exists today a tension in this world (and churches) that seems to negate the need for a transformed mind in the life of the believer. Keener rightly reminds the reader that despite the overwhelming joy of a life governed by the transformed mind of the Spirit, such is by no means an escape from the realities of the tension and conflict in this life (p. 258). That is, for Keener, taking up the mind of the Spirit is a daily endeavor that takes discipline and determination despite the world around us.

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