

353 FF3: How to think – the mind of Christ

This very much follows Fake or Fortune,^[351,2] where I take Tom Wright's line that, for centuries, we've wrongly framed our thinking of the gospel as 'How I get to heaven'. And I ended last time with Tom saying that Paul's writings don't just tell us *what* to think, but also *how* to think. I was intrigued.

I asked Tom if he could suggest a book that expands on this idea – meaning one of *his* books – but his gracious one-word email reply was, 'Philippians'.

By chapter 2, I had some answers (Tom's translation): 'Bring your thinking into line with one another.' Does this mean that we have to agree about everything? Presumably not, so what if we disagree? 'Regard everybody else as superior' – not 'I know I'm right; you are wrong.' Also, 'look after each other's best interests, not your own.' Does insisting on my view hurt others? If so, I need to exercise real caution, maybe recheck my thinking, especially so if 'my' thinking is simply what I was taught, and never actually questioned. If Christians had not been willing to rethink, there would have been no Reformation!

Then we have that glorious picture of Jesus,^[2:6-11] introduced by, 'This is how you should think among yourselves...' – so where we disagree, I need to go back and look at Jesus, and then do my thinking 'with the mind you have because you belong to the Messiah, Jesus.'

As I've mentioned several times, I have spent decades deciding what is right (*what* to think) and persuading others (first fellow Christians, then non-Christians) of 'the truth'. I shudder to think how much damage I've done in my life by my persuasive writing.

But aren't I just doing the same again, trying to persuade you that my way of interpreting Scripture – albeit following Tom Wright – is right? I hope not. I hope I'm urging us to be more humble.

Now I hope this won't come as a shock to you, but the apostle Paul was actually wrong in some of the things he thought and wrote. For example, I'm guessing he thought the sun revolved around the earth! And reading Tom's biography of Paul (where this thinking started), it seems he thought Jesus' final return would be soon, maybe within his lifetime, but his later writings suggest that he became less convinced he was right.

While Paul's writing does seem incredibly prescient today, he was writing 2000 years ago, so the idea of instant global communication, advances in modern medicine and the abilities of AI would have totally blown his mind.

Amazingly, God (I think) inspired Paul to write things that would help people, for twenty centuries, to work out what to think about issues he couldn't even conceive of. And Paul did so by insisting that we decide *what* to think by ensuring we think in the right way – with the mind of Christ – with humility – and that we disagree lovingly.