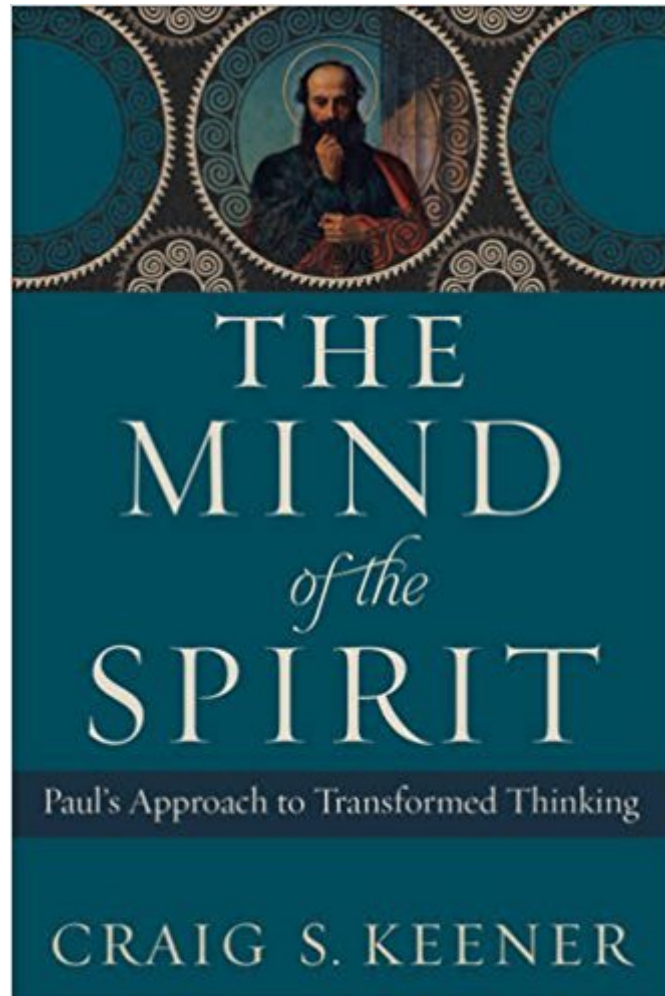




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# **The Mind Of The Spirit: Paul's Approach To Transformed Thinking**



## 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this insightful volume Keener deals with a neglected aspect of Paul's theology: how faith in Christ and the Spirit of God empower the mind to think and understand in a new way. Drawing on his vast knowledge of Greco-Roman literature, Keener shows us how Paul is both similar to and different from his contemporaries. In doing so, he suggests how Christians today must be similar to and different from their contemporaries."--Frank J. Matera, Catholic University of America

Embodied holiness, or conformity to the image of the Son, means having disordered desires reordered to Christ through minds renewed by the Spirit. With a comprehensive biblical and contextual lens and

a holistic view of renewed humanity, Keener reminds us of this nonnegotiable reality. He invigorates our understanding of the mind of the Spirit (and thus of Christ) and offers a New Testament view of Spirit-enabled, holy reason that orders the passions of God's children individually and communally. A valuable contribution indeed."--Cherith Nordling, Northern Seminary

"Craig Keener's *The Mind of the Spirit* is a welcome contribution to a largely neglected area of research. While careful to locate Paul's writings within the range of relevant contexts and to read them with both historical-critical rigor and remarkable erudition, Keener never loses sight of the continuing theological vitality of the question. In his analysis, the transformation of the mind that is here explored is never separable from the reality of the Spirit or from the community united by that Spirit to Christ himself. The result is a work of both scholarly and pastoral significance."--Grant Macaskill, University of Aberdeen

"Keener exegetes key passages on the mind in Paul with both his trademark attention to detail and expansive knowledge of ancient sources. As a Pentecostal, I appreciate the academic finesse of his work; but beyond intellectual appreciation, I am deeply grateful. My gratitude stems from feeling understood; Keener has also lived in a world where the tension between the Spirit and the mind is very real, and he insists upon envisioning a new world where the Spirit calls to human spirits and minds, and human minds and spirits respond."--Holly Beers, Westmont College

"What an enormous gift this book is to Christians in psychology and counseling, with its learned and thorough yet readable organization of what we might call the apostle Paul's 'applied cognitive psychology,' based on a redemptive-historical anthropology. Those working on a distinctly Christian version of contemporary psychology really need this kind of work if the project is to advance, so I'm filled with appreciation and gratitude."--Eric L. Johnson, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

"*The Mind of the Spirit* is a comprehensive, thorough, biblical, and helpful book. It will be of great benefit not only to theologians, integrators of psychology and theology, pastors, and seminary students but also to counselors, therapists, and lay church leaders and teachers. I highly recommend it!"--Siang-Yang Tan, Fuller Theological Seminary; author of *Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective*

"An important book for anyone interested in the relationship of Pauline theology to its cultural context""In this richly documented study, Craig Keener shows Paul's affinities with ancient philosophers while recognizing that Jewish apocalyptic expectations also framed the apostle's thinking about the human mind. Like the philosophers, Paul held that fundamental convictions shaped character and behavior. And as an heir of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, he believed that convictions should be shaped by God's action in Christ. In respectful but critical dialogue with an array of Pauline scholars, Keener applies his fundamental insight to illuminate individual arguments

and Paul's overall theology. This will be an important book for anyone interested in the relationship of Pauline theology to its cultural context."--Harold Attridge, Yale Divinity School"Keener has filled a significant gap in Pauline studies as only he could do: with thousands of references to ancient sources to help us understand Paul's perspectives in context. The result is a work full of exegetical, theological, and even pastoral insight into the human mind according to Paul--especially the mind transformed in Christ."--Michael J. Gorman, St. Mary's Seminary and University, Baltimore"In Romans, Paul interacts more fully with the thought world of his day than in any of his other letters. Only someone who is wholly familiar with the richness of Jewish scripture and tradition; with the ancient philosophies of Stoics, Platonists, Epicureans, and others; and with the reality of human experience can fully appreciate why Paul argues as he does and the effectiveness of his argument. Keener is one such scholar, and his rich exposition of key passages in Romans--as well as in 1-2 Corinthians, Philippians, and Colossians--brings out the point and force of Paul's argument for his own time again and again, and in a way that reinvigorates Paul's argument for a very different time."--James D. G. Dunn, Durham University"Only a scholar with Keener's nous could write the most authoritative work to date on Paul's belief in the transformation of a person's mind from godless reasoning to possessing the mind of Christ. Keener describes the Pauline vision of the believing mind as one immersed in the Jesus story, freed by the Spirit's power, bathed in divine wisdom, and oriented toward heaven. This book will, quite literally, open your mind to Paul's theology of the mind."--Michael Bird, Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia

This is a excellent book that took the history and thoughts of the great thinkers of the day and put scriptures side by side to see how the truth of God's Word brought it together in our Sturggle with the residual effect sin has on us in our renewing of the mind.

Excellent, clear, sound, inspirational treatment on the importance of developing our minds to conform to the Gospel and living out the Bible's covenantal words in the realm of the Spirit.

Keener has a lot of insights to share in the body of the book and even more for those who read his footnotes - always a good idea. Plus there are numerous excursuses. Rationale for all this useful and detailed information is the declaration that Paul's Letter to the Romans contains Paul's most detailed interaction with the mindset of the period. Out of that setting will come an understanding of Paul's injunction: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (the mind of the Holy Spirit). Who but Craig S. Keener could do justice to

this topic in this fashion?

Excellent description of the biblical understanding of the mind. I found it to be an encouraging, faith strengthening resource that I will enjoy and benefit rereading.

One of my favorite books! It's rare for me to read a book with such theological depth, without quitting halfway through it.

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 excursuses 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. That means you're more prone to just believe what the Bible says without man's ideas getting in the way. On the other end, it's easy for those on the more intellectual side to look at the behavior of more emotional people and reduce it to emotionalism. The more emotional thinking can be in danger of a religion based on impulses without content. The more logical thinker can be in danger of a religion with content, but no passion. The truth is, we need both. That's one reason I'm happy to be married to a woman who is more emotional than I am. We can better balance each other out that way and frankly, sometimes, her way of looking at something is much simpler and can see a small detail I've overlooked. In

recommending changes I would have liked to have seen, Keener does end with a section on advice to counselors and pastors and such, but I think it would have been good to end each section with a little statement on application. Many times, I was getting a lot of content, but no application. Something on each section I think could have further helped the process along. While the excursions were also interesting, they could be seen as distracting too. Does it matter to a counselor to know about dying and rising gods? For me as an apologist, it definitely matters, but I wonder if that could have made a counselor more hesitant. Still, I did enjoy the reading and I think Keener would definitely agree with me on one aspect of all the work he's done. Easier said than done. We can know a lot more about how to think better, but the school of hard knocks can make it hard to pass the exam. Hopefully we'll all learn to improve more. In Christ, Nick Peters

Deeper Waters  
Christian Ministries

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). Since the world cannot understand Jesus' identity or sacrifice because of its values, it also cannot make sense of the "Spirit-moved behavior and eschatologically motivated choices" (185) by those who live according to the mind of the Spirit. This lack of understanding often leads to tension and sometimes open hostility. The peace which believers enjoy "does not provide an easy escape from the realities

of tension and conflict in this life" (258). In words that profoundly reflect my own writings on the book of Revelation, Keener says that "Jesus's followers must live each day as if their lives are forfeit for his cause, showing the same commitment as martyrs not only by how they die but by how they live" (150). "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" (263). Well said, Dr. Keener!

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