



Influence from the Dark Side: Stop Operation Overthink & Start Thinking Objectively in Terms of Sanity, Rom 12:3

ὑπερφρονέω, *hyperphroneō* - “stop thinking in terms of arrogance”

present: Progressive of duration: these believers have developed a mental attitude of arrogance that has begun in the past and continues to the present time. They are ordered to stop this and begin a transformation of thought through inculcation of doctrine.

active: They produce the action by putting a stop to this mental attitude arrogance.

infinitive: With the negative *mē* it becomes an imperative of prohibition.

The prefix **ὑπέρ, *hyper*** means “over,” “above,” or “beyond” and implies excess above a certain measure or standard. It means to exalt oneself, to think too highly of oneself, or Operation Overthink.

The obsolete English word *overthink* carries the perfect definition for *hyperphroneō*:

Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.:

Overthink, 3. To think too highly of, over-estimate. *Obsolete.*

- (5) We all have self-consciousness. There is obviously a place for personal and spiritual self-esteem. This kind of self-awareness is normal and healthy. It is the abnormal kind that is prohibited and, as with all attitudes, arrogance is the product of erroneous thought that stresses an over-emphasis on self.
- (6) Therefore, Paul clarifies his mandate with the phrase: **παρ’ ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν, *par’ ho dei phronein***: “beyond what you ought to think.”
- (7) The verb “to think”: *phronein*, is the present active infinitive of:

φρονέω, *phroneō* - “objective thought”

present: Tendential: represents the idea of that which is intended or inclined to occur; that which tends toward realization. The idea is to form an opinion based on input from the conscience that results in a mindset. This is thinking that results from objectivity.

active: The believer should be producing this kind of thought.

infinitive: Intended result that blends purpose and result.

- (8) The tendential present connotes what has a tendency to occur but has not yet taken place. The infinitive of intended result indicates there is a purpose for eliminating arrogance from the soul and that is the rational self-awareness that results. This is objective thinking.
- (9) Therefore, the mandate instructs the Roman believers to stop thinking in terms of arrogance without sacrificing objectivity. What they are to do instead is introduced by the adversative conjunction:

ἀλλά, *alla* - “but” It sets up a contrast between what we should not and what we should be doing and is followed by the same verb we just noted, the present active infinitive of:

φρονέω, *phroneō* - “think objectively”



This time there is no negative particle so it is a direct command. In the present tense it has the force of commanding the action as an ongoing process.

- present: Perfective: emphasizes that the results of such an action are continuously binding on the hearers.
- active: The believer should produce the action of being objective about himself.
- infinitive: Again it is imperatival and thus a mandate to do this.

Romans 12:3 - I say through the grace that has been given to me to everyone who is among you, stop thinking of self in terms of arrogance beyond what you ought to think, but think objectively ...

- (1) How the believer is to think is now explained by the present active infinitive of the verb:

σωφρονέω, *sōphroneō* - “to be reasonable”; “in one’s right mind”; i.e., “in terms of sanity”

Translation: “in terms of sanity for the purpose of being rational without illusion”

- present: Customary: what is to habitually occur or is reasonably expected to occur. This is a system of thinking that is to be developed into wheel-tracks of righteousness.
- active: The believer is to produce an habitual system of thinking that is rational, reasonable, and sane.
- infinitive: Purpose: Indicates the purpose or goal of the controlling verb’s action. It looks ahead to the intended result. The believer’s thinking should proceed from a sound mind.

- (2) The implication from *sōphroneō* is that objective thinking is both sane and rational. Those who are mentally sound are able to anticipate and appraise the effect of their actions.
- (3) The question that arises is what constitutes a “sound mind”? We get help from Paul in his second letter to Timothy:

2 Timothy 1:7 - For God has not given to us (pastors) the mental weakness of cowardice [δειλία, *deilia*: always used in the negative sense as opposed to φόβος, *phobos* which can be positive (to fear God or duly appointed authority is positive while to fear life or circumstances is negative)] but inner power [δύναμις, *dunamis*: Bible doctrine resident in the soul], love [ἀγάπη, *agapē*: virtue love associated with the filling of the Holy Spirit], and of a sound mind [the noun form of *sōphroneō*, σωφρονισμός, *sōphronismos*: self-discipline through biblical wisdom].

- (4) The concept of a “sound mind” is essential for the believer to make rational decisions in the face of opposition, challenge, danger, or confrontation.

NOTE: To think with power, moderated by virtue love, and instructed by the absolutes of sound doctrine enables the believer to make rational decisions with true confidence and without fear.



(5) Cowardice is not a mental state that should ever define the life of a believer but instead the confidence that comes from the power of the Word of God in the soul, the unconditional love that proceeds from the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the sound mind that results from these assets.

(6) Therefore our passage reads:

Romans 12:3 - I say through the grace that has been given to me to everyone who is among you, stop thinking of self in terms of arrogance beyond what you ought to think, but think objectively in terms of sanity for the purpose of being rational without illusion [*σωφρονέω, sōphroneō*] ...