

The Mind of Christ

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon emphasizes the necessity of embodying the mind of Christ to achieve unity and effectiveness in the church.

Duration: 42:05

Scripture: Genesis 28:10-22, Matthew 22:37-39, Philippians 2:1-5

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the wonders of God's love and the worthlessness of man. He emphasizes that although man is at the bottom, God did not leave him there. The preacher highlights the humility of Jesus, who did not exalt himself but was highly exalted by God. He uses the example of Gideon to illustrate God's principle of reducing a man to a minimum in order for God to work through him to the maximum. The sermon encourages the audience to have the same mindset as Christ and to humbly submit to God's will.

Transcript

I don't know that you'll enjoy what's going to be said tonight. I haven't enjoyed praying about it, thinking about it, getting my own heart right with God today. Don't think it's easy to come and speak to you.

It isn't. But the messages which we've heard and the whole atmosphere of this meeting helps so much, and I'm sure that your hearts are wide open to the Lord Jesus. I want you to turn to the Word of God first of all, that I may read to you a short passage.

Philippians chapter 2. I'm reading this from a version which I rarely use in public, but which I would like to use this evening because of its rather meaningful translation of some words in this portion. I'm reading from the New English Bible, Philippians chapter 2. If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart, any loving consolation, any sharing of the Spirit, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill up my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind and a common care for unity. There must be no room for rivalry and personal vanity among you, but you must humbly reckon others better than yourselves.

Look to each other's interest and not merely to your own. Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus. For the divine nature was his from the first, yet he did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the nature of a slave.

Bearing the human likeness revealed in human shape, he humbled himself and in obedience accepted even death and death on a cross. Therefore, God raised him to the heights and bestowed on him the name above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, on earth and in the depths, and every tongue confess, Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So you too, my friends, must be obedient as always, even more now that I am away than when I was with you.

You must work out your own salvation in fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, inspiring both the will and the deed for his own chosen purpose. This letter to the Philippian Church I would describe as Paul's love letter. It's so full of joy, full of rejoicing, written of course from imprisonment in Rome, and yet the Lord has given him songs in the night, that's where he got them first of all at Philippi, and writing to these wonderful Philippian Christians, he is just thankful for them and rejoicing in them.

And this is a love letter from Paul to them. There's no rebuke in it, but the great yearning passion in it and a deep, deep loving concern. You see, while it was a church so full of happiness and joy, there was a cloud on the horizon.

Two women, and to be fair, let me say they might equally have been men, two women called Iodius and Syntyche. You've probably heard them referred to as Odius and Syntyche. Those two women were having a fight.

And of course, they weren't just ladies who were occupying pews on Sunday and doing nothing more about it. They were those among those who were, as Paul describes them in his letter, laborers together with me in the gospel. They were always at the prayer meeting.

They were always concerned. They were right at the heart of this fellowship. When Satan attacks a church, he never bothers about people who are merely pew occupiers on a Sunday.

But he always attacks the very heart of the fellowship. He's concerned about that. To destroy its oneness.

And Paul has a great concern for this church, lest this should happen. And therefore, he, in this chapter, which we've read together, makes a passionate appeal for unity in Christ. Of course he does, because this was the thing that should distinguish every New Testament church.

And it would be the only thing that would make the church not merely survive, but make it to be more than conquerors. Conquerors with something to spare if the whole fellowship was mastered. By what? Well, what do you think it was that an Old Testament times was lacking and was the cause of breakdown in the people of God? Just one thing.

Do you remember it was described by a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, who came to Jesus one day and said, what's the greatest commandment of all? And Jesus turned to him and said, you shall love the all your soul and your neighbour as yourself. Love. And there was their failure.

But listen to the language of the New Testament and listen to it for a moment as we go on holy ground and listen to the Lord's prayer. Not the family prayer, but the Lord's prayer. Father, Father, may they all be one as you and I are one, as you are in them and I in them.

May they be one that the world might believe. And at Pentecost there was launched on this little planet the most amazing society that history has ever seen. It hadn't any clever people in it.

It hadn't any organisation in it. It hadn't even any committees. Blessed release.

But it was a little fellowship of burning, flaming hearts in love with Jesus. And it just swept through civilisation, a powerful civilisation, like a prairie fire. And nothing could stand against it.

And of course nothing can stand against the church today that is filled with the same fire. But how hopelessly it crumbles when the fire goes out. And all that's left is a few smouldering ashes.

And what a tragic thing today in this decade, of all decades in history, in a world in which there are more than half of the population who don't know a thing about Jesus, that here in western civilisation we have so many people who stumble over each other and who quarrel with each other and who fight with each other and train their guns on one another instead of training them on the enemy. And the whole church is absolutely divided. You can be sound in your doctrine.

You can be orthodox in your belief. But if you're divided in heart, your whole doctrinal position has collapsed and is worthless in society today. That's why church unity is the hardest thing to achieve.

For it's the most effective. For then the Holy Spirit is let loose. And that's what Satan is afraid of.

Of course church unity is not skin deep. It's not an unbroken skin. It's really a broken heart.

It's not a question of oneness of label. It's a question of oneness of mind and heart. It's not a unity of a few people who unite together in resentment against others who disagree with them and hive off from the church and form another little independent bible-believing church.

Believe me, my dear friend, we need one of those like we need a hole in the head. It isn't a question that we Christians have always to agree with each other. What an uninteresting situation that would be.

But it is that we have to learn to agree, to disagree, to disagree agreeably and not to break fellowship. Now this was the thing on which Paul was concerned in this church. How, he says to himself, I think, how am I going to cope with this cloud on the horizon, this danger that threatens? How am I going to deal with it? Oh, I can only do it if they get a clear view of Jesus.

Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Let your bearing, as the English bible puts it, let your bearing to one another arise out of your sharing of a life in Christ. Let the mind that was in you be in Christ Jesus.

And so he gives them what I believe is the most wonderful picture in the word of God of the mind of the Lord Jesus. I tell you it leaves me without a leg to stand on. It leaves me almost afraid to speak and come to a pulpit.

I'd much rather be alone with the Lord as I just think of the mind that is in Christ Jesus. You remember at the dawn of human history as Jacob fled from his angry brother he came to Bethel. And at Bethel he had a sleep and he had a dream.

You usually dream when you're afraid or worried. And in his dream he saw a ladder reaching down to the ground and going out up to heaven and angels ascending and descending upon it, going up with Jacob's need, coming down with heaven's supply. And you remember that in the gospel of John in the first chapter the Lord Jesus used that as an illustration of himself when he said to Nathanael, henceforth very soon you shall see the angels, a ladder and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

Jacob's ladder, the ladder of communication where in picture Jesus or the Holy Spirit goes right up with all our needs to heaven and comes right down with all the fullness of God to meet them. In Philippians 2 it's a different ladder. It's the ladder of the consecration of my precious Lord Jesus that brought him right down to the bottom and took him right up to the top.

The Spirit of God could meet the need of my poor weak sinful heart. Will you then for a few moments tonight look at this ladder, this great passage of the Bible and let's try to start at the top. See him before he came down.

Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus who being in the form of God. I don't like that. That's the authorised version.

I don't like that translation so much. I like this one in the New English Bible. The divine nature was his from the first.

It wasn't simply that he was like God. Not merely that there was a resemblance to God. Rather he shared the divine nature of God.

His was the essential being of deity. He always had been and he always would be God. And whatever were the conditions and circumstances of his appearances in the Old Testament, he was always God.

He came in the form of an angel at the bush in Exodus chapter 3 to Moses but he was God. He was a soldier with the drawn sword at Jericho who faced Joshua but he was God. Angel, soldier but always God.

And when he came as a tiny little baby at his incarnation, he brought his deity with him. He never used the title when he was here. He called himself the son of man but that essential deity could never leave him.

He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. That is to say he wasn't taking to himself something that didn't belong to him when he claimed to be equal. Nor did he feel he had to cling to it lest he lose it.

New English Bible. He did not, did not think to snatch at equality with God. Living Bible.

Though he was God he did not demand or cling to his rights as God. And I sum it up in the wonderful words, the familiar words that opened John's Gospel. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

There he is at the top of the ladder, Jesus sovereign Lord. Now watch him take one step down. And what a mighty step.

He made himself of no reputation. He made himself nothing. Can you imagine a king of a country desiring to travel abroad and to travel incognito? Divesting himself of everything that would give him away.

He would still be king but he would have emptied himself of his royal apparel. That's a very, very, very faint reflection of Philippians chapter 2. He emptied himself, that would be the literal translation of the Greek. Not of his deity but of his glory.

Stripping himself of every sign of his majesty. He never used his deity for his own benefit. For he came, came to be truly man.

I think of that amazing face-to-face encounter when God's perfect man confronted face-to-face the greatest rebel in the universe. In the wilderness 2,000 years ago, heaven had opened upon him. His father had said, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

And the spirit, the spirit drove him into the wilderness. He wasn't defending himself against the devil, this was heaven's counter-attack. Launching an attack and Satan, Satan confronted him.

And forty days and forty nights he hungered and was weak and starving and Satan said to him, since you're the son of God, command these stones to be made bread. Jesus brushed him aside and said, man shall not live by bread alone. Satan, oh Lord, just don't let me be irreverent, forgive the paraphrase but it may help you to understand Satan, I'm not here to deal with you as God.

One day I'll do that. One day I'll throw you into a bottomless pit. But now I'm here to deal with you as man on behalf of fellow men.

I'm not interested in going back to heaven alone and I can only beat you by my obedience to the death of the cross. Man shall not live by bread alone. I'm not pretending to be man, but I'm really man.

Yes, I know flashes of that deity flamed out now and again on the Mount of Transfiguration and in Gethsemane when the soldiers fell on the ground as he used his sacred name. I am the Lord who thought it not robbery to claim equality with God, thought it not forgery to use his signature when he said, I am. So he emptied himself.

Suffered himself to be limited in a human body. And Luke tells us in the second chapter of his Gospel, verse 52, that he grew in wisdom. Yet I don't think at school he ever made any mistakes, do you? And all that heard him were astonished at his answers.

At his bench in the carpenter's shop, I'm everything was perfect. He was the carpenter of Nazareth, the carpenter among many, many of them. He made himself nothing.

He took upon him, the next step, he took upon him the form of a servant, a bondsman. To whom? Well, to God. Behold my servant, in whom my soul delights, Isaiah 42, verse 1. I delight to do thy will, O God, Hebrews 10, verse 7. At the moment he took off the royal apparel of the sun, he put on an apron of a servant to God and to us.

For the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life for ransom for many. And one occasion, you remember, he took a towel and wiped the feet of his disciples. The custom was, of course, for guests walking into a room from a dusty row to hold their feet over a basin, while a slave rinsed them.

There wasn't any slave. The disciples hadn't learned to humble themselves to do it, so the Lord did it for them. Just at the moment when he was so conscious of his deity, knowing that he came from God and that he went to God, says John 13, and Peter said, Never! You never wash my feet.

I wonder what Peter thought. I wonder, I wonder what he looked like when Jesus, with a towel in his hands, looked into his eyes and said, If I wash you not, you've no part in me. What an illustration of these two rungs of the ladder.

He laid aside his garments and took a towel and good himself. He counted not a thing to be grasped after to be equal of God, but he made himself nothing and took upon him the form of a serpent. Come down another rung of the ladder with me.

See him coming down? Gone. Made himself nothing. Made himself a serpent.

Step lower. Made in the likeness of men. Not merely of a man as an individual, but in the likeness of all men, our representative.

He went to the cross, not merely as a man, but as all men. He died for all. Isaiah 53, 6, All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. I don't make that comparison.

Only God can make it. I can understand God referring to him as a shepherd. I refer to him as that.

The Lord is my shepherd. But listen, all we like sheep. He was led as a sheep.

Yes, at Calvary. He didn't only take away my sins, but he stood there in awful isolation as a rebel to accept the guilt of my rebellion. He didn't play at being a man.

Think of the evidence of it. He was hungry. He was tempted.

He was tired. Truly, man. Many of you come from the north of England.

That's why I think perhaps I find myself especially at home in Fiery. Because I come from the, excuse me saying so, but the finest town in Britain, Newcastle. You may not agree with me on that point.

But I'm very fond of another town in the north of England called Darlington. Why I'm fond of it doesn't really matter to you, but I am. Those of you who are from Darlington will know that on Darlington station, British Rail have put a model, not a model, the actual first steam engine that ever went on rails.

And the designer and inventor was George Stephenson. And we're told that at his funeral at Darlington, a procession of workmen carried a banner. And that banner said, he was one of us.

He rose from our ranks. My dear friend, I'm so thankful to say Jesus was one of us. And he came down to our rank.

One of us. Come on down with me. Still further.

He humbled himself. The highest place that heaven affords is his by sovereign right. But he chose a poor lot, a humble cottage, a lowly mother, a poor trade.

At birth, he borrowed a cradle. In his life, he had nowhere to lay his head. In death, he borrowed a tomb.

And you know, that always seems to have been his principle of choice for his service. For Paul says in 1 Corinthians, not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But God hath chosen the foolish things, and the weak things, and the things that are base, and the things that despise, things which are not for no flesh shall glory in his presence.

My friend, he doesn't put up with us. He chooses us. He chooses us.

For the praise must never go to a human instrument, but to the Lord. You know, that's a shattering reversal of Christian form. Today, our methods are to achieve something for God? Well, think up a big idea.

Bigger the better. Get hundreds of people interested, and form masses of committees, and get people with plenty of money behind it, and let's have a vast, big show, and my, we'll simply placard the town, and then mix it with a little prayer, and wait for the explosion. And God's method? Gideon? Gideon? 30,000 men? Far too many.

Send 20,000 home. They're frightened. I've still got too many, Gideon.

Send 9,700 more home. They're undisciplined. Lord, I've only got 300 left.

Yep. And then, a very ordinary man did a very ordinary thing, with extraordinary results. He blew a trumpet.

The enemy was absolutely shattered. Listen, it's always God's principle to reduce a man to a minimum, that God might do through that man his maximum. No flesh shall glory in his presence.

He humbled himself. Come on, still further down. He became obedient unto death.

Oh, what depth for God. Don't you think he could have been raptured like Enoch, or Elijah, or as every living Christian will be, when Jesus comes again? No, he couldn't. By his suffering of death, he showed obedience to the hilt.

And as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall the many be made righteous. He was obedient unto death. At the top.

One, two, three, four, obedient unto death. He's at the bottom. No, he isn't.

Listen, even the death of a, not a lovely crucifix, not a golden cross on some cathedral altar, but a Roman gibbet on common crucifixion ground. There were three of them at the time. Two of them were for thieves, and one of them was for a murderer.

And Jesus occupied that one. In Psalm 22 and verse 6, which begins, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? Says, I am a worm, and no man. A reproach of men, and despised by the people.

God, man, worm. And he's at the bottom. As I think of that, do I echo in your heart two wonders I confess? The wonder of his glorious love, and my own worthlessness.

But God didn't leave him there. Top to the bottom. Ooh, but watch him grasp that ladder again, and up to the top, with three mighty steps, and leaps his back.

Watch his journey to the skies. Let it fill your soul. Wherefore, wherefore, God hath highly exalted him.

Do you notice? Do you notice? He humbled himself, but he didn't exalt himself. Oh no. He could have done, by exercising his deity, but he didn't, in order that he might be my Saviour, and yours.

But for the sake of justice, for the evidence of salvation, God must give some indication that the one sacrifice of our Lord was a full and sufficient sacrifice for sins of the whole world. So God raised him from the dead, and declared him to be the Son of God, with power. And Peter said at Pentecost, this Jesus God raised up, being exalted thus at God's right hand, he received the Holy Spirit from the Father, as was promised.

And all that you see and hear flows from him, up from the tomb in mighty resurrection, up to the sky in glorious ascension, up to the throne of God, and Jesus shall reign, till every knee shall bow. Because, the next step is that God has given him a name that is above every name. And that name is Jesus.

Exalted to the highest station in the universe. And what does it mean? It means the character of Jesus which God has enthroned. The character which is a complete reversal of the world's standards today, God has exalted.

The life which stooped, and served, and loved, and forgave, and obeyed, God puts on the throne. Majestic meekness on the throne in heaven. How sweet the name of Jesus sounds.

So wrote a drunken sailor, John Newton, who before his conversion only used that name in blasphemy. The name, the character. And in exalting that character from the throne, God rejects every other.

It doesn't matter to him whether you are addicted to drugs, or you're an alcoholic, or whether you're the most self-righteous person in fire, and religious and orthodox. The character that he refuses all the time is anything that doesn't stoop to the cross. That he might exalt us to the throne.

And every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord. What a day. The atheist tongue.

Every tongue. Your tongue. My tongue.

Confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. What a day it was. Seems a long time ago now.

When at dear Lindsay Glegg's home, we watched together the coronation of our Queen on June the 2nd, 1953. I remember the date because it was our wedding anniversary. Had nothing to do with it, but still, that's why I remember it.

And as I sat there in that home, watching the TV set, what a moment, what a moment it was, what a moment, when the Archbishop of Canterbury said, I present to you your rightful sovereign, Queen Elizabeth. Are you prepared to pay her homage? And everybody in that abbey said, I? And then three times over the congregation stood and said, God save the Queen! And it echoed and thundered through the building. But I tell you, my friend, that's by a poor little faint whisper, compared with the thunder and the glory in heaven when they say, Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! And that's my Jesus, my Lord, my Sovereign, my Deliverer, who stooped to the bottom, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The way down, the way up. And for him, the way up was down. But that's very lovely, you say.

But what's it got to do with unity, oneness, fellowship in the Church, everything? Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. As for Jesus, as so for me, the way up to the throne is down. And you can't organize it.

But I'll tell you what'll happen at Philae this week, if God is really breaking through, one by one, we'll come back to Calvary. Down. Let this mind be in you which was in Christ.

Quietly, let me say, that means the mind that puts aside all ambition, all glory, the mind that is selfless. Let this mind be in you which was in Christ. What about taking your reputation to the cross? What about stopping exaggerated reports of blessing in your ministry that appear in the press, and if you know are lies? But you have to keep up your image.

What about your organization which reputedly is for the glory of God, but is to boost yourself? Do you think the Holy Spirit likes that? In Old Testament times, the priest used to take a flesh hook. Do you know what he used it for? He used it to bring the sacrifice back under the flame, until it was a heap of dust and ashes. Am I prepared to say to him, are you tonight, O Lord, O Lord, take the flesh hook to my life, and bring the sacrifice right back under the flame, till I am nothing, and Jesus is everything.

You want a Pentecost. God wants Calvary from you. Are you prepared for that? Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, not I, but you, be honored, loved, exalted. O Lord Jesus, in the hush of your presence, in the knowledge that you are here, and by your Spirit shown us afresh, the love, the steps you took, Lord, forgive us that we failed to go that way. We wanted to go up, but we haven't been prepared to go down.

Take us down to the cross tonight, one by one, but there together we may find oneness in Jesus. We ask it in your dear name. Amen.

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