

(Radical Jesus) 7 Radical Standard

by Glenn Meldrum

To have meaningful fellowship with God, we must self-empty, laying aside our sinful nature and becoming like Jesus.

Duration: 26:05

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:6, Romans 12:2, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 2:5, Colossians 3:2, 2 Timothy 2:15

Topics: "Radical"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by revisiting a parable about a man caring for a colony of ants to illustrate the dissimilarity between humans and God. The passage being discussed is often misinterpreted by cults and world religions to argue against the divinity of Christ, but the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding and defending Christ's divinity through a proper understanding of Scripture. The sermon highlights the significance of the Scriptures as the faithful revelation of God and His incarnation, and the need to embrace it as the standard of our faith. It also emphasizes the need for believers to recognize their dissimilarity to Jesus and seek His grace and transformation to become more like Him. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the necessity of conforming to the standard of being a Christian in order to have fellowship with Christ and experience the fullness of His love.

Transcript

This message by Glenn Meldrum was originally produced by In His Presence Ministries for the Radical Truth Podcast. You can listen and subscribe to the Radical Truth Podcast by going to www.ihpministry.com You are welcome to reproduce this message for free distribution. This message is part of a series entitled, The Radical Jesus.

Thanks for joining this week's teaching on the Radical Truth Podcast. We are now in week seven of our continuing study on the Radical Jesus. Last week we looked at how dissimilar we are to God in our fallen condition.

Even though we are created in God's image so we could have authentic, meaningful relationship with Him, when sin entered the world, that fellowship was broken. Though a vestige of our image being made in God's image still remains in us, sin has so twisted and uglified us that we cannot fellowship with Him. We should be filled with immense gratitude for God because He offers us the only remedy to our self-inflicted uglification, and that remedy is the Christ of Calvary.

Jesus was crucified as the Lamb of God, an acceptable, ultimate, and final sin offering for mankind. Jesus willfully took upon Himself the consequences of mankind's sin that separates us from God so we could be forgiven of the horrendous evil we have willfully perpetuated through our practice and love of sin. The Lord offers us the phenomenal gift of repentance so that we can be forgiven of our crimes against heaven and enter into the transforming grace of God that comes by way of the Holy Spirit.

We who are sinners by nature and by choice can be delivered from the sin that makes us inwardly an ugly mess. The Lord possesses more than enough power to beautify us and make us more like Him so we can know Christ and the power of His resurrection. The subject of today's lesson will focus on how we become similar enough to God so we can have meaningful fellowship with Him.

The Lord is not only the great physician that superabounds with power to heal our sin-sick souls, but He is also the great beautician that can beautify us with the beauty of His holiness and character. Now I want to give credit where credit is due. The word uglify and uglification are not real words, nor did I invent them myself, but I gleaned these very descriptive words from the writings of C.S. Lewis.

I think the idea that sin uglifies us is very descriptive and accurate. I even have a personal story to help illustrate this. We were recently ministering at a church in the Detroit suburbs, and we parked our RV in their parking lot.

They had organized for that Saturday a work day to clean up the church property that had been in neglect. My wife and I jumped right in and helped the church to beautify its grounds. Unfortunately, where we were working, there was a lot of poison ivy that we did not recognize.

Lo and behold, a few days later, I was being uglified... Lo and behold, a few days later, my wife and I were being uglified by the poison ivy that broke... Lo and behold, a few days later, I was being uglified by the poison ivy that broke out all over my arms and face. And I was an ugly mess, not a pretty sight. Jessie also got a good dose of that itchy, uglifying plague and lasted on her longer than it did on me.

Well, that is what sin does to the inward life. It uglifies us. It is not fun.

Last week, I gave a parable that I would like to return to for a few minutes. It was an analogy of a man that lovingly cared for a colony of ants, yet the ants did not and could not know or understand their benevolent benefactor. They were so dissimilar to each other that they could not have any expression of meaningful, reciprocal love and fellowship.

The only way that there could be a genuine relationship between the man and his ants is that they must somehow become more like each other. How could such a thing be accomplished? And what would it cost both the man and his ants? We also looked at how the Lord is perfect and complete in who He is, which means that He cannot change and has absolutely no need for change. If God changed or had any need of change, then He would not be God because He would not be perfect and complete.

This would mean that God needed help from outside of Himself. He would not be free, but dependent upon something other than Himself for existence or purpose. Not just that, the only change that could take place in a perfect being would be for Him to become imperfect, and that would be impossible for God, and it would be a very terrible thing.

The Lord has done everything necessary so that we could have real mutual fellowship with Him. The simple, obvious fact is that we are the ones that need to change if we are to have any substantive

fellowship with God. Left to our sinful condition, we cannot have fellowship with Him, just like the man could not have a legitimate relationship with his ants.

Since God is changeless because He is perfect and complete in and of Himself, and since we are sinners by nature and by choice, for there to be any fellowship between God and man, we must somehow become enough like each other so that there could be some form of mutual fellowship. There are two ways that God and man can become enough like each other so that there can be meaningful fellowship. On God's part, He has to change in a way that keeps with His perfect and changeless nature.

On man's part, we must have a radical transformation because if we remain in our fallen, uglified, sinful condition, we most certainly will never know sweet fellowship with God. Now let's look at those two points in turn. How can God change in a way that is not contrary to who He is or that does not do violence to His very person and nature? He changed only by becoming human, and this did not alter His divinity in any way, shape, or form.

Though Jesus was and is 100% divine, He became fully and truly human at a point in human history. This is way too radical for our little minds to fully comprehend, but we should strive to understand it as much as we can. In substance and nature, God did not change, for that would be impossible.

The unapproachable God became approachable when He was veiled in human flesh. This is like the man who loved his aunt so much that he became an aunt to help them. Salvation is a gift of God's grace from beginning to end for time and eternity.

We cannot save ourselves from the just wrath that our sins and selfish nature deserves. Salvation is found exclusively in Jesus. There is absolutely no other way to heaven.

This fact is obvious in Christ's teaching and is powerfully presented throughout the rest of the New Testament. The exclusive claims of salvation are also clearly presented in the Old Testament. Yet a vast number of people are angered over this absolute non-negotiable tenet of the Christian faith.

Well, there's nothing we can do about that. It's true no matter what people do or what people say or how they respond. Whether people believe or even like that exclusive claim is in one sense irrelevant, because there's nothing they can do to alter that eternally fixed truth.

So how can mankind become similar enough with God so that they can have authentic fellowship with Him? The answer is simple to state, but challenging to live. And it is found in the simple compound word, self-emptying. This subject is of such importance that it was a common theme that Jesus taught upon.

It will take a little time for me to explain what self-emptying means from a biblical perspective. But as we get into it, I do not think it will be hard to understand. So listen very closely.

Remember the parable I gave a few weeks ago on the deformed man? The deformed man was a representation of Jesus in the village people of the human race. The deformed man was actually perfect, but the village people thought he was deformed because he was radically not like them. It was the village people that were deformed, but they never recognized this until the perfections of the deformed man exposed the truth of their real condition.

When the truth that they were twisted came bursting into their minds, they hated the deformed man for this. We are the village people, and the perfections of Christ uncovered the fact that we are a twisted,

uglified mess of rebellion and sin. Our uglification by sin has inflicted upon us the worst of all judgments.

We have been separated from fellowship with God. The only way that such sin-bent, hell-deserving souls can enter into fellowship with God is through self-emptying. Before I go any further trying to explain what self-emptying means, I need to make a couple of disclaimers.

First, the doctrine of Christ's self-emptying and of ours has suffered terrible abuse. The abuse ranges from stripping Christ of His divinity to the outlandish and ridiculous efforts by some to mingle Christianity with Buddhism. There has also been an onslaught of erroneous theologies that have twisted the Word of God concerning the self-emptying of Christ and the believer.

One example of this kind of theological abuse and heresy is found in what is called process theology. This is where God is reduced to a temporal, changeable deity that is affected and altered by the actions of mankind. Second, it is very important that we understand that errors in doctrine will never nullify the truth.

The truth will always remain the same no matter what people do with it. Because people abuse the doctrine of self-emptying does not mean it is not a biblical truth. Our responsibility is to correctly understand the doctrine and then faithfully teach it to others.

Now let's look at one important passage in Scripture that directly addresses the doctrine of Christ's self-emptying which is found in Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 through 11. Let me read this whole section of Scripture. God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being found in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Time will only permit us to make some important points on this section of Scripture so we can focus on the topic at hand.

This passage gives us a synopsis of how the Eternal Son became fully human. Cults and world religions commonly use this passage to argue against the divinity of Christ but to do so they must do great violence to the Scriptures. Here is one of the grave dangers of not being well versed in God's Word.

If professing Christians do not understand that this passage is powerfully defending Christ's divinity then we will not be able to stand against cunningly devised lies that pervert this passage for evil purposes. We need to listen to what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2.15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who rightly handles the word of truth. When we faithfully and correctly handle God's Word we will never have to be ashamed when we stand in his presence to give an account of our lives.

Here is a very challenging question. How can God become human? To help us understand this I must reiterate a thought I have recently presented. God is immutable which means that he cannot change.

What this means in relation to Christ is that even though he became fully human he never ceased being fully divine. No matter how theological or philosophical we get not one of God's creatures will ever fully understand the mystery of Christ's incarnation. How Jesus can be 100% God while being 100% man can only be accomplished and understood by God himself.

For the immutable God to become human means that in no way did Jesus empty himself of certain divine attributes for that would cause God to cease to be God which is not even possible. Now here I need to make a confession. In my book *The Radical Jesus* I made an incorrect statement that reads Jesus emptied himself of certain divine attributes so that he could be authentically human while remaining entirely God.

This is how many theologians and preachers understand Christ's incarnation and I for a time was among them. The problem really comes out of our finite minds and inability to comprehend the great mysteries of God one of which is how God became man. Since I wrote that book *The Radical Jesus* I have come to see Christ's self emptying a little bit differently.

It is not biblical or logical for a changeless God to lay aside certain attributes because then he would cease being God. I will correct this error in the next printing of my book. If Jesus did not empty himself of certain divine attributes what did Jesus empty himself of? He did not empty himself of divinity or any of his divine attributes.

What he did empty himself of was his right to operate in his divine rights as God. Jesus did not cease being all-powerful but he relinquished his right to operate through his own will that unlimited power he possesses as God. Everything Jesus said and did was in total submission to the Father.

When you look at all the miracles he performed he did not do them through the Father but through his own infinite power. The use of that power was fully surrendered to the Father's will so that he only performed miracles according to the Father's will. Christ's self emptying basically means that Jesus who is fully God did not operate in his divine rights as God so that he could live out a truly human life.

Through this self emptying Jesus became the Savior the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. It also allowed Jesus to be the perfect faultless example of what it means to be human and Christian. This is what Paul taught in *Philippians* chapter 2. The phrase who being in the very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness is all about the self emptying of Jesus just as I have stated.

Without Christ's self emptying mankind could not be saved. As we read in *Philippians* 2 and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross. Jesus lived in perfect obedience to the Father so he could accomplish the mission he came to earth to fulfill.

Peter said it this way in his first epistle chapter 2 verse 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. In Christ's self emptying we see the beauty of divine condescension which is an act of God whereby he stooped down in deep humility to become human.

Another way of saying this is that he laid aside the operation of his infinite rank as God so he could assume equality with those that are inferior referring to the human race. This is how Jesus became our atoning sacrifice and made the way for us to be reconciled to God through Christ's work on the cross and his shed blood. This is so radical that the only way we will ever understand this truth is through faith.

It is through Christ's self emptying that mankind was given the tremendous privilege and opportunity to have intimate fellowship with him. At this point we need to start investigating how our self emptying comes into play. Jesus finished the work of salvation when he died upon the cross and opened that way for us to

make heaven our home through the power of his resurrection.

This tells us that salvation is entirely the work of God but this does not address our responsibility in the saving of our souls. Remember I have just a few minutes ago clearly stated that salvation is a free gift from God that is solely by grace. Listen to how Paul stated in Ephesians 2.8 For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by work so that no one can boast.

Paul boldly and clearly informs us that salvation is by grace which is a gift from God and that it cannot be obtained through human endeavor. Make sure you don't miss Paul's important point that salvation comes through faith though. If the self emptying was only on God's part then there still could not be genuine fellowship between God and man.

Though Jesus is 100% human he was also 100% God. As to his humanity we do share similarities but as to his divinity he is infinitely above us. When we add to this equation that we are sinners by nature and by choice we find that though Jesus made the way that we could be saved we are still in our sins and so cannot have fellowship with a holy God.

This presents to us the fact that God requires something from mankind because he created us with an authentic free will. Now please don't misunderstand me here. I'm not advocating salvation by works.

I have said enough in these podcasts that firmly establish that fact. Jesus died so we could be saved but we cannot be saved without faith. Everyone that ends up in hell is there because they refuse God's gift of salvation that comes by grace through faith.

When Jesus walked this planet he was fully God so his moral perfections never changed. He was just as holy on earth as he was in heaven. He was just as loving, good, kind and patient on earth as he was in heaven.

It is his moral perfections that were so offensive to the people and religious leaders of his day. This is what caused them to crucify him. Why were his moral perfections extremely offensive to mankind? Because they were a constant reproof to their sin-laden souls.

And it is no different today than it was back then. We are still offended and reproved by his moral perfections and people are still trying to silence his voice. But just as they failed 2,000 years ago they will totally fail in our day and age.

In my parable of the deformed man we see that the village people were thoroughly offended by the perfections of the deformed man. His perfections exposed just how twisted and ugly they were on the inside. And they hated him for this.

It is not just that our sin separates us from God but it is even worse than that. Our sinful nature is offensive to God. It caused us to be at war with him.

This is a truth we don't like hearing. For this reason man must also be a part of the self-emptying. In the passage of Scripture I read in Philippians 2 Paul makes a very radical statement in verse 5. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

This statement is extremely important and extremely radical. It is therefore imperative that we rightly grasp this truth. Let me ask a simple question here.

Who is Jesus? This is important. If he's just some prophet or some good teacher then the entire word of God falls apart. Because Jesus never offered that as an option.

He is God that took upon flesh and blood. So Paul is telling us to think like God when we walk this planet. Such a command is utterly impossible without Jesus and the only way it can be possible is through him.

In other words we cannot be Christian without Christ living in and through us. This is radical if we really take the time to try and understand it. Until there is some form of self-emptying on our part we cannot have intimate fellowship with this holy God.

To be like Jesus we must be empty of self. When we are full of self we are empty of Jesus. The breakdown and division that we have with God is caused by us.

All the hostility is of our making. Paul said it this way in Ephesians 2. As for you, you are dead in your transgressions and sin in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air. The spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us also lived among them at one time gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest we were by nature objects of wrath. Every person that is a true follower of Jesus was an object of wrath before their conversion.

Every person that has never surrendered their life to Christ or of backslidden is right now an object of God's wrath and that is a very, very dangerous place to be. The good news though is found in the very next verse where Paul said but because of his great love for us God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved.

Sin always brings death. Grace always gives life and transformation. The radical nature of God's love is seen that he is able to love us while hating our sin and he is able to change us when we repent.

So God is working in us to recreate some form of resemblance to himself so we can have genuine reciprocal fellowship. Our part in the equation is that we must willingly embrace his transforming grace or we will never know the sweet and awesome fellowship that he freely offers us. I just want to make this very clear.

If we want a deep relationship with our Savior then we must become more like him. This is biblical truth that cannot be overstated. What, you may ask, does the Christian self-emptying include? It begins with the daily crucifying of our sinful passions and lusts which is a non-negotiable condition of true discipleship.

Jesus established this fact in no uncertain terms when he declared in Matthew 16, 24 if anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. This sanctifying process that is interwoven with the crucified life will continue throughout our journey here on earth if we correctly live out the true faith. It works like this.

The more we die to self the more we will resemble Christ and the more we resemble Christ the more we will want to die to self and sin. When we taste and see that the Lord is indeed good then we will want more of that goodness in our lives. By experimentally and relationally learning that God is good we will see just how ugly sin makes us and will want to flee from it at all cost.

By becoming more like Jesus we can grow in richer fellowship with him which is what we are created to know. This kind of fellowship is a powerful motivator in our battle with self, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Most of the American church is extremely shallow in their faith.

At the root of their spiritual malady is the unwillingness of self-professing Christians that faithfully live the teaching of Scripture. Those that are striving to live out the truth of Scripture will have a holy fire burning in their hearts. Those that refuse to embrace Jesus as the standard of their life and faith have rejected his commands to crucify their sinful nature and desires.

It is their love of sin and self that will be their ruin. I want to close this podcast by summarizing what we have covered for the last couple of weeks. First, the Scriptures are the only faithful revelation of God and his incarnation.

If we do not embrace the standard of God's Word as a definer of our faith then all we have left is the worthless philosophy of relativism that leaves our feet firmly planted in nothing but air. Lies, illusions, and opinions will then be all we have to base our life in faith and eternity upon. Fortunately, the Lord has given us his Word so that we can walk before him in truth.

Second, Jesus came into the world to be our Savior and firmly established that he is the standard of what it means to be human and, more specifically, Christian. We must get our eyes fixed upon Christ's lovely face by setting our heart and mind on things above. Third, we have a very great problem.

We are naturally so dissimilar to Jesus that we cannot have fellowship with him. Until we see how much we are not like Jesus we will never cry out for the grace and strength to be more like him. Fourth, Jesus emptied himself so that he could be fully human and be our atoning sacrifice.

Through repentance and transforming grace we can receive the prize of salvation which is vibrant, loving fellowship with the living God. Fifth, the Word also reveals the fact that unless we willingly conform to the standard of what it means to be Christian we cannot have the prize of Christ's fellowship. Do not forsake this greatest of all gifts to know the height and depth of his love that surpasses human understanding so we can be filled to the measure of the fullness of Christ.

Finally, if we want fellowship with Christ then we must become more like him no matter what it costs. Jesus must be the consuming focus of our lives. This is very radical.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/27/SID27993.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/glenn-meldrum/radical-jesus-7-radical-standard/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net