

(Youth Bible School 2007) Christ Is the Believer's Mind

by John D. Martin

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Christ as the believer's mind, highlighting joy, unity, and the purpose of living for God's kingdom.

Duration: 58:33

Scripture: Romans 12:2-3, Ephesians 4:3-6, Philippians 1:27-29, Philippians 2:2

Topics: "Christian Unity", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of unity among believers and the evidence of spiritual transformation. He emphasizes that the focus should be on Christ rather than theology. The speaker references Ephesians chapter 4, which lists seven things that should promote unity among believers, such as one baptism, one faith, and one God and Father over all. Despite these factors, the speaker questions why believers struggle to come together and encourages listeners to seek deeper intimacy with God.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. I knew yesterday that I was misleading you with the soprano on this song, on the third note, but I couldn't get my act together.

I was singing a high so, and it's a law. Well, let's get the right pitch here. So, so deeper and deeper.

That's how it should be. Don't be so low. Don't be so low.

Deeper and deeper. All right, let's sing it. Deeper and deeper.

Before thee I bow. Cower thy abundance of grace on me now. Master in meekness before thee I fall.

Lord in my life thou shalt be all in all. Deeper and deeper. Deeper in thee.

Nought of this world shall satisfy me. Down at thy feet I do cast myself, Lord. Christ be my life and my full reward.

Deeper and deeper. With thee may I go. Putting aside all this life and this woe.

I am unworthy of calling to thee. And yet I know thou wilt answer my plea. Deeper and deeper.

Deeper in thee. Nought of this world shall satisfy me. Down at thy feet I do cast myself, Lord.

Christ be my life and my full reward. Deeper and deeper. Then higher above.

Seek I'm the Loius for thy gracious love. Only the way of the cross will be crowned. Only in meekness true joy will be found.

Deeper and deeper. Deeper in thee. Nought of this world shall satisfy me.

Down at thy feet I do cast myself, Lord. Christ be my life and my full reward. Good afternoon.

I'm blessed looking out over this group. I've been impressed by the seriousness of purpose here. I've been impressed by just sort of a unity and assent and consent and confirmation of what is being taught.

That's been a blessing to me. You know, it doesn't take a lot of people to make a great change in the world. I think of John Amos Comenius.

That's probably a name that you aren't familiar with. John Amos Comenius was the last bishop of the old Hussite Moravian church. And in severe persecution and difficulties of all sorts, his church kept getting smaller and smaller.

And finally, he had to flee up across the mountains, northern Moravia, up over the mountains for his own life. But he stood on top of the mountain as he was fleeing. And he said, my work that I did in Moravia.

I'm paraphrasing. I don't know his exact words. I believe was the work of God.

And I believe that it is a hidden seed. And someday we'll bring forth a great fruit for God's kingdom. Now, I have to tell you a little bit.

I want to finish the story. But I want to tell you a little bit about this man. This man had a tremendous vision.

He had a vision for education. He was an educator. When I went to Shippensburg University, he was considered, in my classes that I took, I heard it in various classes, the father of modern education.

Because he was one of the first people to believe that curriculum should be put down on the level of the children with pictures and things they could understand. Up until that time, they basically memorized adult material. And that's how they learned.

But he had this idea of teaching children. But that wasn't his main emphasis. And of course, they never told us this in a secular university.

But his reasons for developing his ideas about education was he had this great idea of sending teachers out all over the world to teach children and adults in a great teaching ministry and evangelism. But anyway, he did all that work in Moravian. Then he had to flee.

Well, he was the man who sowed the seed that eventually came forth in the fruit of what you know as the Moravian movement. A hundred years later. Well, it wasn't quite that long.

But anyway, some years later, that Moravian movement that you've heard about was a result of the work of this man. He just would not quit. He put his whole life into the kingdom of God and trusted God for the results.

And of course, Jesus did it with 12 people. And D.L. Moody said, if we could find one person who hates, who loves nothing more than God and hates nothing more than the devil, that person would change the world. He couldn't find that person, decided he would try to be that himself.

And, you know, some of the rest of the story. So go out and do what you heard the brothers talk about this morning. You have no idea what God will do with your life.

Shall we bow our heads for prayer? Father, we thank you this afternoon for your love to us. And Lord, we thank you that one with you as a majority in any situation. We thank you, Lord, that you have promised to back up all of our responses to you with all of your divine attributes, which we call your grace.

And we thank you, Lord, that that is absolutely dependable. We thank you for that verse that says you're able to make all grace abound toward us so that we always having all sufficiency in all things may abound unto every good work. Oh, God, help us to be faithful to such a trust and open up your word to us and open up our hearts to your word.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Turn to the book of Philippians.

Yesterday we were talking about joy. I need to make a comment. I received an email from a dear brother that probably was as helpful as anything anybody told me last spring when our family was going through its sorrow and trial.

He said sorrow, you might want to copy this down. This is a rather profound statement. He said sorrow is, I'm sorry, let me back up.

Sorrow defines the difference between happiness and joy. And I looked at that for a long time. And I finally said that is quite a statement.

Sorrow defines the difference between happiness and joy. What's it mean? Well, I don't know how much you've taken a look at this word happiness. Does anybody know what the word hap means? That's an English word.

It's in the dictionary. Somebody just tell us. A little up.

What happens? Yes. Hap means chance. He happened to do something.

I think it's in the book of Ruth. It was her hap to be in the field of Boaz. That's how the Bible states it.

Of course, we know it was providence. But hap means the circumstances just panned out that way. That's what hap means.

Well, happiness then is dependent on good circumstances. If your hap is good, you have happiness. If it isn't good, you're not happy.

Joy, on the other hand, does not depend on circumstances. And you can have the most difficult circumstances. And that's why that saying says sorrow defines the difference between happiness and joy.

If sorrow makes you lose whatever that was that you felt was positive going on in your life, then what you had was only happiness. That's all you had. If sorrow increases your sense of well-being, then that was joy.

And sorrow will increase your well-being because with sorrow, God gives you added grace. And what did we learn yesterday about grace? That grace and joy are from the same word family, and they always go together, and you receive a corresponding amount of joy for the amount of grace you receive. So when you receive more grace, you receive more joy.

That is a tremendous concept. And as I pondered this, I began to realize why the martyrs stood and sang at the stake. Now, I look into a wood fire, and I try to imagine standing in that fire.

I can't imagine that experience. But can you imagine the grace you would receive if God called you or allowed that circumstance to come into your life? It would take an awful lot of grace to stand in a fire. And if it's true that you receive a corresponding amount of joy for the amount of grace you received, then you're going to get a lot of joy because you're going to get a lot of grace.

How many understand what I said? This is sort of a logical thing here. Now, I understand, and I have the faith to believe, that if I ever were called to go through such a circumstance, I would receive a tremendous amount of grace with a corresponding amount of joy. And that is sort of summarizing a little bit what Paul is trying to say here.

And so yesterday, we were talking about elements of this joy, and the first thing we talked about was fellowship. And there was one thing I did not realize when Denny brought it up this morning. I did not stress like I should have.

Paul says at the beginning of this little section on fellowship, and I want to call your attention to it. It's in what? Verse 6. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. Now, God is not only an author, he is a finisher.

God is a finisher. But I want you to be aware of the fact that this statement is in the context of fellowship. Paul says, I know this is true because I have you in my heart and you have me in your heart.

I think there are a lot of people that never finish because they do not remain a member of the team. You need me and I need you to finish. And the devil would have us all get it in our minds that God and I can do this.

No, God and I and my brother. That's what this is saying. And so I don't have any reason to have any confidence that anybody is going to finish successfully if they disconnect themselves from the team.

It would be like trying to win a baseball game without the team. It's not going to happen. And so I just want you, when you read this verse, I want you to remember that it's in this context.

Paul's tremendous confidence in these people is the relationship that they have with him and he has with them and with each other. He says they are a team. And when teams work together, they win.

Alright? So I did want to make that comment. We were talking about the furtherance of the gospel. Paul says he is set, providentially placed, in this incredibly abysmal circumstance that's exactly where God knew he needed to be to make a pioneer advance for the gospel.

And that's why he could respond in such a positive and joyful way because he knew he was exactly where God wanted him to be. You know, somebody said already that the safest place to be is in the center of God's will. No matter how dangerous the circumstance.

That's the safest place to be. And that's what Paul is saying here. I'm set for the defense of the gospel.

And so he was rejoicing because he saw that he was making a pioneer advance. And he was. There were people in Caesar's household that were won and a whole lot of good things were happening.

Well, we must move on. We're ready for verse 20. Let's take a look here and begin reading with verse 20.

It says, According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. Now, when there's a pioneer advance, when an army marches, there are casualties. People die.

And Paul is facing that reality. He said, My joy in this pioneer advance is not because I have the absolute certainty that I'm not going to face death. That's a very great possibility.

But he says, My concept of this is, If I die, it gives a chance for Christ to be magnified. And if I live, it gives a chance for Christ to be magnified. And whether I live or whether I die is beside the point.

For to me to live is Christ, which is the most fulfilling experience I could ever have, and the most meaningful experience. And to die is gain. But either way, Christ is going to be magnified.

And we should be excited about that. Do you know, most of the world have no concept of Christ. They only have the dimmest concept that he was some historical figure that died on a cross, and somehow people have certain beliefs about that.

But they have no idea of the beauty of the person of Jesus. And they see it, whether we live or whether we die, but especially if we die. The strongest witness that the Anabaptists and the early Christians had was their deaths.

People didn't know what to do with them because they died so wonderfully. In fact, they had to execute them privately often or cut out their tongues or something because these people died so fabulously and so many people were attracted by the unusual joy and grace that they saw in the deaths of these people. And so Paul says, I want Christ to be magnified.

In fact, I think that's one of the reasons why the martyrs were so joyful in their death experiences because they knew that in the breaking of their vessel, the light would shine forth, just like it did with Gideon's lamp. And they had that concept that this was going to be the most powerful testimony that they were ever going

to give in their entire lives to show the grace of God in the face of death. Alright, so let's continue reading.

Christ shall be magnified, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor.

Yet what I shall choose I want not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Christ Jesus for me by my coming to you again. To depart is far better, he says. The word depart has the idea of taking down a tent and moving on.

Or setting the prisoner free from this body so he can praise God without the limitations of his flesh. To loosen the moorings or set sail. You know, the New Testament Christians, you go look this up.

I didn't do a thorough research on this. And I'd be interested to see if anybody can disprove this. I don't know if anywhere in the New Testament they ever talked about going to heaven.

Now, I believe in heaven. Don't go away here and say I didn't believe in heaven. But I don't think that's how they looked at death.

Do you notice what he says? He says to depart is to go and to be with Christ. Wherever he is. And that's what they look forward to.

They love the king. And they just, the idea of going and being with him, whether it was heaven or whatever, to be with him was what they wanted. That's tremendous.

Alright, far better. Paul is preparing the Philippians, whether he lives or whether he dies, to be joyful about whatever news they receive. Alright? For to me to live is Christ.

Now, I want to give the opposite. For to me to live, if it's money, pleasure, fame or whatever, then to die is irreparable loss. Irreparable loss.

Perdition. Hopeless obliteration of everything that's good and right. And so, I plead with you to choose Christ and to be able to say for to me to live is Christ.

Now, we're down to the third point on our outline. The faith of the gospel. What are we talking about? The faith of the gospel.

Well, it's obvious in this whole chapter, but especially in these verses, Paul's not talking about a gospel that is for your own personal salvation. Now, Danny touched on this this morning, and I want to confirm what he said, and I want to say a little bit more about it. The Bible never says repent.

It does say one place, repent or you shall perish. But when Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God, He said repent. Why? Come on, say it.

For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The gospel is the gospel of the kingdom. Your personal salvation is not an end in itself.

I think a lot of times we get ends and means mixed up in our minds. A lot of people living today are living a concept of salvation that is basically for me. The gospel is not that.

Jesus said repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. You were saved because God is building a kingdom on this earth. A new order, if you please.

A society of the redeemed. A counter-cultural society that challenges every tenet of that society, as Brother Dean has been telling you, in the most beautiful way so that the world can clearly see a contrast and say that is what I want. I know that's what family relationships are supposed to be.

I know that's what personal experience is supposed to be. I know that that's what life is supposed to be. Somewhere down in my heart where God put eternity there, the truth about life, I know that what I'm seeing there is the real thing.

I want the real thing. And that's the kingdom of God. Charles Finney said any person whose primary reason for being a Christian is to escape hell shall surely go there.

He that shall save his life, come on, say it, shall lose it. But whosoever shall, how does the rest of it go? Lose his life for my sake and the gospel, the same shall. So you have to lose your life for his sake and the gospel.

There is no such thing as a personal salvation for someone who's really not interested in this kingdom that Brother Dean's been talking about. There is no such thing. Your salvation is a means to that end.

Christ is building his kingdom and he can only build it with redeemed people and he saves you for that purpose and that purpose alone. And we need to get that straight. And so that's why the Apostle Paul says, let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.

That whether I come and see you or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. In nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation and that of God. For unto them it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, unto you it is given, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear to be in me.

All right? This is a very important passage of Scripture. Because the Bible said, Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world. We are in an army.

You've been hearing that all week so far. We are in an army. We are in a battle.

It's a clash of two kingdoms, if you please. And our conduct should clearly identify us as citizens of another kingdom. Philippi itself was an illustration of what we're talking about.

Philippi was a Roman colony in Macedonia, which was Greek. And if you were marching across Macedonia, you were marching through Greek culture. You heard the Greek language.

You saw Greek laws being carried out. You saw Greek customs, the way the people dressed. Everything was Greek until you entered the city of Philippi.

And the minute you stepped inside the gates, the language was Latin. The laws were Roman. The customs were Roman.

The dress was Roman. Everything was Roman. And there was a stark contrast between Philippi and the surrounding culture.

Did the people in Philippi say, Oh, we feel so self-conscious that we have to be Romans in the center of a Greek culture. No, they said we are Romans. Our laws are superior.

Our language is superior. Our customs are superior. We consider it a privilege to be Rome away from Rome.

Is that how you feel about the kingdom of God? I consider it a privilege to represent heaven away from heaven. Where Jesus said, we are sitting in heavenly places. We are already experiencing what we're going to experience in heaven.

The biggest change in your life is not when you became a Christian. I'm sorry. The biggest change in your life is not going to be when you die.

The biggest change in your life occurred when you became a Christian. Because that life is only going to be a continuation of what you're already experiencing without the limitations of your body. And the problem with most people who say, Oh, I can't wait to go to heaven is they can only stand about an hour of that per week.

They are bored singing. They're bored praying. They don't want the sermon to be very long.

They're already sitting in church planning what they're going to do once they leave. And that's what they're going to do in heaven for all eternity. They're going to worship.

They don't enjoy worshipping. And so the change that's already been made in your life is the biggest change that will ever take place. And when you leave this life, you'll just simply lose your limitations and learn to praise God in an unlimited way.

But you'll basically go on worshipping the same as we are here. And so he says, let your conversation show to the world what God's kingdom is all about, what heaven is all about, whatever. That should be a reality here and now.

And the only way it can be a reality is if you all stand fast in one mind and one spirit. Now, you see, Paul's coming back to this again. He realizes what any general knows, and that is an army is not going to win if it has one weak point.

And the Romans were so concerned about that they actually had the armor made so that the leg pieces fastened together. So when they marched, they were together. And when you were up against the Roman army, and this was the invention of the Romans that basically allowed them to conquer most of the world, when you got up against the first line, you could not penetrate it easily.

If you did penetrate it, you were up against the second line that was just as united. And if you penetrated that, you were up against the third line that was just as united. The secret of the Roman army was an impenetrable unity of its ranks.

And Paul saw it starting to happen here at Philippi. There are two women we're going to find in chapter 4 were somewhat at odds with each other. Maybe not real serious, but he saw it starting to happen.

In chapter 3, we're going to find that Judaizers had come in with another gospel, and that was starting to have its effect. And Paul was trying to head this off. He was trying to say, be sure that you are of like mind and one heart.

And this is the only place that Paul speaks about this. If you go back to 2 Thessalonians, he says, withdraw yourself from every brother who walketh disorderly and not according to the traditions which I have given unto you, and have no company with that man. And he's not talking about people that have been excommunicated because it goes on and says, and treat him as a brother.

Now, how do you do that? I'll tell you how you do it. If there's a schismatic little element somewhere in the church, the whole church should refuse to be a part of it. They don't have to necessarily put the person out.

That might come later if it can't be remedied. But the first step is to make sure that wherever that disorderly person goes with his disorderly ideas or conduct, he meets a phalanx that he cannot penetrate. The sad part is in many situations, he can go to this brother and find a little support.

And he can go over to this brother and find a little support. And pretty soon there's a faction. It says, don't company with them.

Don't be a partisan. Don't let any faction grow within the church. If there's somebody that starts to say something that's not according to the gospel as has been understood in practice, make sure that that person is up against absolute inability to talk with anybody about it with any sympathy.

Our church has been tested three times. If I may use our congregation for an example. Early in our congregation, we had a group, several people that tried this.

They're not there anymore. And their complaint was nobody would listen to them. We had it happen four years ago.

Again, nobody would converse with them on the issues. And they finally left. And we had it happen just recently again.

And Chippensburg is not a perfect congregation, but I told the brotherhood, we have been tested three times and have been found able to stand as a phalanx against divisive intentions. And whatever deficiencies we have as a congregation, that blesses me. That gives me great confidence that we can march as an army and can succeed.

You know, the church is a little bit like, or the enemy is a little bit like a dog. Did you ever have a mad dog? You were walking along and this dog came rushing out at you. Come on, somebody tell me, what's the best thing to do? Come on.

You're all talking at once. Raise your hand. Yes.

Back there. The end of the last row on the far right. Well, don't do that to the enemy.

But a dog senses when you have fear. You understand me? The best thing to do is to go walking along no matter how you feel without any fear. That's the best thing you can do.

If that dog senses that you fear him, you're going to be in trouble. And that's pretty much what Paul is saying here. If we can stand together with a phalanx in nothing terrified by our adversary, it will become a witness to them that they are wrong and we have the strength.

And God, of course, is going to give it to us if we're determined to walk together. Alright. So, the single mind is to walk together in fellowship, making a pioneer advance, and to make sure that we can say, for to live, for me to live, is Christ.

Let's move into chapter 2. And we've got to move quickly in chapter 2. Now we deal with this whole thing of people. You know, most of the problems in the church are relational. They're not doctrinal.

They're relational problems. People who can't get along, who hide behind all kinds of doctrinal differences they try to bring up. That's where most of the problems are.

I'm not saying there's never a situation where we have to have a doctrinal controversy and work things out. But most of the problems in life are relational. I don't know how many of you ever heard of Leo Tolstoy.

But Leo Tolstoy wanted to live in community. He became a Christian. He was a wealthy nobleman.

He finally became a Christian. And he wanted to live in full community. A little bit like the Hutterites.

But the man died in 1910 in a little train station running away from his family. The Mennonites in Russia were a horrible example of the opposite of what we're going to read about here. About fewer than 10% of people owned all of that colonial land in Russia.

And the poor had to finally appeal to St. Petersburg for a little garden plot of that land. In St. Petersburg, the government said a certain ring around each of those colonies had to be public land so the poor would have place for their gardens. This thing of relations has been a serious problem.

In fact, in that situation, the best thing that could have happened would have been when the communists came, they would have found a group of people who in a Christian manner with all the power of the Holy Spirit were living their very motto, which was from each according to his means and to each according to his needs. That was the Marxist motto. And if anybody should have been able to demonstrate that, these colonies should have been able to do it.

But that's not what they found. They found the exact opposite. The comic says, I love mankind.

It's the people I can't stand. There's a little saying that goes, to live above with those we love, that will be glory. To live below with those we know, that's a different story.

The greatest enemy of the kingdom of God is rivalry and disunity. And Paul isn't ready to let this go. I want you to remember when you study Philippians that he's hammering away at this during the first half of the book because he considers this a very important aspect of Christian success and joy.

And so now we really get the nuts and bolts of what he's talking about. Somebody says, if you have two rabbis or two teachers, you will have three opinions. And the focus is often on theology rather than on Christ.

Now Paul says the evidence of spiritual transformation, if you look here in the first part of this, we're not going to take time to read it because we are running out of time. He says if you know anything about Christ's consolation, if you know anything about the comfort of love, if you've had any experience with that and know how valuable it is, if there's any fellowship of the Spirit driving everybody in the same direction, you know in Ephesians chapter 4 we have seven things there that should be absolutely productive of

unity. One baptism, one faith, one I can't give them all.

And one God and Father over all. And that's how he prefaces his whole chapter there in Ephesians chapter 4. And when I read that I think, well with all of that going for us, why can't we get it together? If we have all those things in common, and that's what Paul is saying here, if you've all experienced His consolation, and you've all experienced the comfort of love, and if you all are driven by the Holy Spirit, and you all have vows of mercy, tenderness toward each other, if there's any of that happening at all, which should be happening if you're Christians, then he says, fulfill my joy that you be like-minded. This should produce like-mindedness.

The transformed mind does not think of self more highly than it ought to think. Romans chapter 12. You all know the verse that says, be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Does anybody know what the very next verse says? Let's turn to it. I want you to see it. I want you to always remember this is specifically what it's talking about.

Romans chapter 12. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. We all know that verse, but it's like many verses, we don't know the verse that follows it.

For, I say, connecting it with the verse we just read, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, see, renewed mind. The first evidence of a renewed mind is that you have God's view of yourself. There are a lot of people walking around who claim to be super Christians that don't have that evidence.

That's the first and probably most important evidence that you're a transformed person. You have a proper estimate of yourself. There cannot be fullness of joy.

Verse 2. He says, fulfill ye my joy. There cannot be a fullness of joy without like-mindedness. I mean, there just simply cannot be the joy.

Did you know that you were not created to have negative attitudes? Physiologically, you were not created to have negative attitudes. You were created for what? Love. Your heart was created only to contain and express love.

And hatred is like putting sand into the machinery. Not only your heart, but the congregation. We were not physiologically made to do it.

And it'll break down. You'll either have mental problems or emotional problems and certainly you'll have relational problems and the church will have miserable problems because we were not made individually or corporately for this. We were made to love.

That's what we were made for. Our capacities are only to love. And when we do something else with our capacities, we're even going against how we were made physiologically.

We were not made for this. Joy is something larger than self because grace is larger than self. Ephesians says that if we're going to comprehend God, we're going to have to comprehend it how? With all the saints.

That ye may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the height and the breadth and the depth and the length and to know the love of God. That's how it's going to have to be. If we would complete our joy, we will have to complete our fellowship.

Please hear me. Alright? Number three. Verse three.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory. Strife is literally the word faction or intrigue. Vainglory means empty glory, ambitions that are out of proportion to reality.

Loneliness of mind, he says, which is humility, which was unknown in the ancient world. They didn't even have a Greek term or a Latin term for humility. It was a despised idea that you would serve.

The idea of the great guy was Alexander the Great who could conquer. And they placed him practically at the level of a god. And Augustus Caesar the same way.

That was their concept of greatness. And the word humility was coined actually by the Christians. Alright? The humble person does not think meanly about himself.

He simply does not think of himself at all. And so Paul, in order to help us understand what he's talking about, gives us the example of Christ. He says, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

And then he shows how Jesus thought about himself and how he responded. And it says you're to adapt the same mind. So as we go through this, you think about yourself.

Alright? Jesus took seven steps down. And every step was a voluntary step. Nobody forced him to do this.

It was a self-humbling. Now, I was with Dale Heisey one time and he got in a situation where he was extremely embarrassed. And I tried to encourage him and I said, Dale, God gives grace to the humble.

He said, that's true, but he never gives grace to the humiliated. So if you want this experience, you have to choose. It's not where you get in a situation where you have to.

It's you make the decision. Jesus did this voluntarily. And this is the most classic description of his incarnation.

It says in verse six, and I'll let you read this as we go down through. It says, He was unalterably God, but he did not insist on the privileges of that position. Now, most of us, if we gain a little bit of authority or something, we really hold on to our authority and position.

We don't very readily step down from any authority or position we have gained. But this says that Jesus did not see his position as God as something he had to hang on to or something he had to use for his advantage. I remember years ago the Virginia Conference way back when it was a very conservative conference, wanted to start a mission in West Virginia.

And they went to a man who had a master's degree in theology that they thought would be a good man for this mission back in the hills of West Virginia. And they asked him if he would go as a missionary. And he said, me, waste my master's degree on those dumb farmers in West Virginia.

Then they went and they asked another man who had two PhDs. Now, the man that they asked first had an MA. That's a degree.

But the man they asked had two PhDs. Now, I need to tell you a little bit more about him. He did not have those degrees conferred.

He had done all the study. He had written the paper and told them not to confer the degrees because he never wanted to be called doctor. And very few people knew he had two doctorates.

He was never called Dr. Menebrunk. And they went and asked Dr. Menebrunk, who had more education than the other man had forgotten. And he went and spent the rest of his life in West Virginia.

This is what we're talking about. All right. He was God, no question.

But that wasn't something he had to hang on to. So he chose to let that go. Now, he didn't cease being God.

In fact, I want to say something before we get very far into this. This is not Christ walking away from being God. This passage describes how God himself is.

This is how God acts. Jesus was showing us how God thought about himself as well. Then it says, he stripped himself of all his privileges and dignities of deity.

He emptied himself. OK. And he next, the third step in verse 7a, it says he became a servant.

Now, this was before he ever left heaven. That means he became God's servant before they had, you know, they had worked together somewhat on an equal level. And now he decides, I'm going to step down and I'm going to take orders.

I'm going to strip myself of my privileges. I don't have to have the prerogatives of God. I'm going to step down and I'm going to become a servant.

And in seven chapters of John, chapters four through, I think, eleven, in every chapter, it says Jesus said, I do nothing but what the father tells me. I don't say anything, but what he tells me to say, I always do his will. I have no will of my own.

I'm doing only what the father says. He became a servant willing to take orders. Number four.

Now that all happened before he came here. Now it says he became a man. He was made in the likeness of men.

By the way, this is not play acting. This is real. He became a real man.

And I don't think you and I can even begin to imagine the gap between being what he was and being a man. I mean, I can't imagine you can maybe imagine a little bit this way. Let's suppose you had a little family of mice in your home and you became friends.

Most of you never do this, of course, but you became friends with that little family of mice and they got into major problems, fighting and carrying on. And then you saw how to solve the problem, but you couldn't communicate. And so you decided, well, maybe I'll just become a mouse and then I can help them.

That wouldn't be as big of a step down as what he took. That wouldn't be nearly as big a step down. And, you know, a buddy might do that if he knew there wasn't a cat around somewhere.

But there was a cat. There was a cat. He took a risk to come here.

If you don't think he did, I want to refer you to a Scripture that I think is commonly misunderstood. Would you turn to Hebrews 5. Verse 7. Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him from death and was heard in that He feared. And we know from 1 John 5.15 that if our prayers are heard, they are answered.

So this was not a prayer that He would be saved from the cross because He wasn't saved from the cross. And this clearly says that this prayer that He offered up sweating drops of blood, I'm going to tell you what very clearly to me happened there in the garden. He was begging God to save Him from the grave.

Not from the cross. Because Jesus knew if there was any time in His life where He would be tempted to have an unforgiving thought, to have a negative response, to say something or think something or feel something or do something that would be wrong, it was going to be through this meat grinder called the crucifixion. And He knew if that had happened, He would stay in the grave.

And He begged God to deliver Him from the grave. That was the intent amount of asking God to make sure that He had all the grace that He needed to come through this horrendous experience totally victoriously. And God heard that prayer and He was delivered from the grave.

But that is the risk that He took when He came here. I can't imagine. It boggles my mind that God would take that kind of a risk to save you and me.

And if that doesn't cause you to love Him, then I don't think I can do anything to cause you to love Him. He became a man. And He didn't become a king.

See, He's still going down. He could have come to this earth with trumpets blaring and flags waving as a king riding in a chariot. No, He didn't.

In fact, He's the only human being that was ever born on this earth that chose the place of His birth and His parentage. And He chose to be born in a poor family, in poor circumstances, without any position. Not only did He relinquish His position as God and all the privileges that represented, He relinquished all His privileges as man.

In fact, what was the accusation that followed Him all through His life? By what authority do you do this? You're not a king. You're not a priest. You're not a ruler of the synagogue.

You are a nobody. You have no right to say what you're saying or do what you're doing. So He humbled Himself to become a man and then He humbled Himself in the human situation to the bottom.

And then it says in verse 8 that He allowed His creation to kill Him. That's incredible. Death is the ultimate human tragedy.

And He went to that and allowed the very creation that He had created to kill Him. And that maybe wouldn't have been the most terrible, that could have been maybe some glory because some martyrs die with triumphant martyrs. But it says He became obedient and it says specifically what kind of death.

It wasn't a death by a sword. It wasn't some kind of honorable death. It was the bottom of the death sentences.

The cross. The execution reserved by the Romans to tell everybody who looked this person is the dregs of society. This is the most despicable humanity that there is.

Now that is going the whole way from the absolute top to the absolute bottom. And He says that is the mind that you are to have. Those are the kinds of choices you are to make.

He didn't just say the humble shall be exalted in His teaching. He modeled this. But I want to encourage you.

You can afford to do this. Because look what it says next. Wherefore, this excites me.

Wherefore God, because of this, God exalted Him. You can afford to step down, down, down and serve even your enemies. You can afford to do that because that is not the last of the story.

The final part of the story is when you do that you can be sure that because of that God will see to it that you are I don't even want to use the word exalted. We don't want to be exalted. But He will make sure that the whole situation turns like Paul says and it will be victory in the end.

So just go ahead. Just go step down. When you are in a situation where somebody else wants the upper hand go serve that person.

And do it gladly. Knowing that there is a wherefore in it. There is a wherefore.

And He goes on to tell us that. Well let's finish this. Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him given Him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of the things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

So God knows how to take care of your exaltation if I may use that word. And I want to tell you something. If God exalts you then you will be exalted.

Genuinely exalted. If you try to keep yourself up you are not going to do very well. It will fail.

But if you just simply say God this is your situation. I am going to imitate Christ. I am going to step down and be like Him.

I am going to have His mentality about this situation. You can be sure that God will make sure that there is salvation. And that is exactly what He says.

Now notice in verse 12 very seldom in fact never I never in any commentary saw this connected but it is connected. Wherefore see we are still talking about this Jesus stepping down and God exalting Him. Wherefore my beloved as ye have always obeyed now notice connect that with verse 8 He became obedient unto death.

Now He says you have when I am around you folks have been doing pretty good at this you obey this principle. Not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence. Work out your own salvaging.

See this verse is usually taken out of context and most of what is said about it is true and I don't disagree with the sermon. I am not sure it can be preached from this text because He is speaking specifically about humbling yourself and letting God lift you up. He says work out your own victory by humbling yourself as

Jesus did.

Isn't that beautiful? For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure and His good pleasure is to give your life a shining, radiant, victorious ending and experience. And you can trust Him to do that. Alright? Wherefore do it.

Alright. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling with awe and reverence. Don't trust yourself.

Look to Christ and model Him. Your impulses will all run the wrong direction in this. And the problem is we follow our fleshly impulses and we find our little ways to manipulate to get where we want to be.

By being Christian and making people believe we're being Christian we find all kinds of subtle ways to exalt ourselves. And He says do this with fear and trembling. You can't trust yourself.

You will exalt yourself if you're not careful. But humbling can turn to bitterness because you will face some tremendous injustices. Listen, I'm telling you from my own experience.

You will face some tremendous injustices in your life. And if you're not careful you will murmur against God and you will dispute with men out of your bitterness. But this is worldliness.

This is what the world does in its constantly jockeying and fighting to get on top. And He says you do all things like Jesus did. And don't murmur against God and don't dispute with men.

You are a colony of heaven. You're supposed to shine as lights in the world without rebuke and blameless. Listen, if you have these kinds of human relationships no one's going to blame you for much.

You're going to live a blameless life because everybody likes someone who acts this way. I shouldn't say everybody does but basically there won't be much cause for blame. China's lights in the world.

It's a crooked and a perverse generation who's always manipulating. Nothing's out front. I had an American government teacher who was a whip to a senator in Congress.

And this is the kind of stuff the world does to get their ends accomplished. He says and I won't mention the president because I'm not trying to put any president down but he said that president was a master of getting things done his way. And when I describe this you're going to see right away that there's too much of this goes on in our experience too many times.

Especially sometimes in leadership in churches unfortunately. He told of a situation where there was a bill up that they knew that was not going to pass the vote in Congress. It was going to be really close.

So the president said to my college professor he said is there anything in that bill he said who is against this bill? And he said well there's a senator from Pennsylvania that's against this bill. He said was there anything in the bill for Pennsylvania? Yeah he said there's a bridge they'd like to have built and it's tacked onto the bill. He said go take that out of the bill and post it without that on the congressional wherever they post it.

That sounds strange doesn't it? If he wants to vote from Pennsylvania you take the bridge out. And then after they posted it the second time without the bridge then he called the senator to his office the president. Now the senator gets to go straight to the president and the president said what is it about this bill that you're so unhappy with? And he said well there's a bridge we want to have.

Well the president said that's no problem we'll write that right in. Do you get it? That's the way the world does. That's the way the world does.

But we are to hold forth the word of life. That is life as it was intended to be. It's like you're in a city and there's a bunch of ugly buildings there and you're given the somebody gives you the responsibility to tear down a city block and rebuild.

And you decide you're going to make those buildings and that city block so beautiful that people and the rest of the city will say that's the way we want the rest of the city to look. There's a vision I see what the rest of the city could look like. And that's what God wants us to do.

He wants us to shine forth as light in the world. Alright? We're going to have to quit right here. I'll just simply make this comment we'll talk a little bit about it tomorrow.

You say well Jesus did that but my that's beyond any other human being. Well he concludes this chapter by saying Paul did it Timothy did it and Epaphroditus did it. And if they did it you can do it.

That's how this chapter is going to end. Shall we bow our heads for a word of prayer. Our Father we thank you today for the Lord Jesus.

We thank you that he showed us the way so we can enter with confidence and faith that it is a right way that it ends in victory because it did for him. And Lord I just pray help all of us to value our relationships with our brother and Father to work hard to make those relationships what they should be. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen.

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