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He Thought It Not Robbery

1301-B

Series: The Mind of Christ

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Most of us cannot possibly identify. It would be as though someone were to walk into Donald Trump's office, ask him to give up all of his bank accounts, all of his investments, all of his claim to fame, all of his cars, all of his houses, and all of his other possessions and come to live in the darkest ghetto of New York. The reason? There were some people there who hated him; people who would ridicule him, spit on him as he walked down the sidewalk, and if they have their way, mercilessly execute him. But they needed him.

It's true: he doesn't have to. He can continue to live in the luxury of his penthouse and has every right to do that. He can clutch at his stocks and bonds, his Rolls-Royce and his airplanes. He has every right to do that, as well. It's a choice. Does he keep what is rightfully his, or does he give it all up for the sake of a group of ungrateful, hostile, potential murderers? We know what he would do. In fact, we know *what we would do*.

If you don't think you would, ask yourself how many times you've been willing to give up *anything* you own that you really love in order to benefit your greatest enemies. No, there is no one, I suppose, who has ever lived who would even consider such a trade. No one, that is, but Jesus.

He had more than anyone who has ever lived. Therefore, He had to give up more than anyone who ever lived. He owned the cattle on a thousand hills. He owned the title to the stars and the sun. Every flower that ever grew, did so at His command. Every rain drop that ever fell, did so with His permission. He had never tasted sin, never been defiled by its presence, never been touched by its venom. He had never tasted pain or suffering or disease. He had never been weary or tired or sleepy. He had never been subjected to another's authority, let alone unjust authority. He simply spoke, and legions of angels did His bidding. Worship, adoration, praise and submission were the hallmarks of those who surrounded Him.

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And no one who ever lived deserved their glory like He did. He was the Creator, the Sustainer, the Deliverer. Anyone who has ever lived and achieved greatness has done so, at least to some degree, undeservedly. No one has become a millionaire without help. No one has become a star without some “breaks”. Left to ourselves with our sinful natures, none of us deserves anything, let alone fame and fortune.

Not so with Jesus. His is the name before which one day every knee will bow. He is the only one worthy to receive glory. He is the great I AM. He is the Alpha and Omega. He is the fairest of ten thousand. He is The Rock. He deserves only praise. He is God.

Be sure to consider those facts when you read the passage in question today. Be sure to remember what Jesus had and what Jesus gave up, and why. Then remember that chilling phrase that initiates this description of a godly life. It says:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
(Philippians 2:5 NKJV)

That’s what it says. The Greek words are φρονεω τουτο “phroneo touto”. The literal rendering is “have the identical mindset”. It means, that in the same exact situation, you ought to have the same exact response. Naturally, of course, that isn’t possible. But supernaturally, it is not only possible, it is expected. Christ lives in you. The power to have His mindset exists supernaturally in your sinful human body. Even the power to choose to do that exists supernaturally in your sinful human body. Paul reminded us of that in this very passage. He said,

for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His
good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13 NKJV)

So the commandment is for us to have the Mind of Christ. The first description of that mindset is a kind of humility that is so unselfish that it will give up everything for those who deserve nothing, so those who deserve nothing can have everything at our expense. That’s humility. That’s the Mind of Christ.

We are embarking on an excursion into the real world of the Christ-controlled life. We are not going to base our conclusions

on experience. We are not going to develop our expectations on what we see in others, *even committed Christians*. Our decisions as to what God wants to do with us and through us must be based solely on what Jesus said and what Jesus did.

We may be *surprised* at what we find. We may even be *shocked* at what we find. But, by God's grace, I pray that we may be *motivated* by what we find to explore and inquire of God until the mindset God desires of us begins to appear in us consistently overflowing into the lives of others. The Christian life is viewed by most of us today through the lens of the world's perspective of that life. Thus, any kind of charity, any kind of unselfishness, *yea, any kind of humility* is so decidedly unnatural that it is construed to be intense spirituality, even if it is but a mere shadow of what Christ expects.

If we were ever to achieve the kind of humility that God expects of us, the lost world about us would stand in awe, even as they did 2,000 years ago. Anything *that* different, anything *that* at odds with the natural man must have supernatural roots. And it will draw many to the Cross today, even as it did then. But the price we will have to pay, though it will be nothing compared to what it cost Jesus, will be incredibly expensive by man's standards. Whether or not we will be willing to pay that price remains to be seen. But then whether or not Christ will be seen in us may remain to be seen as well.

Let's zero in for a moment on a special conversation. Let's try to imagine the background surrounding the choice God is calling us to make. The setting takes place in Heaven. God the Father is speaking to God the Son. It is an imaginary conversation, but for us to understand the circumstances surrounding this moment of Truth, we must use our imaginations at least for a second or two. Now remember who God the Son is; it is explained in John, chapter one. It says this:

In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word [Jesus] was with God, and the Word [Jesus] was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through Him [Jesus], and without Him [Jesus] nothing was made that was made.

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In Him [Jesus] was life, and the life was the light of men.
(John 1:1-4 NKJV)

From this passage, these truths emerge:

1- Jesus was present from the very beginning, and from the very beginning, He was of one mind with the Father. In reality, His deity was equivalent to the deity of the Father. Whatever supernatural attributes the Father had, Jesus had. In other words, to whatever degree the Father was God, so was Jesus. Though they were separate in function, they were inseparable in nature.

2- Nothing that was ever created was created apart from Jesus. As the Word that went forth from the Father's lips, it was Christ who went forth when the Father spoke. And so when God said, "Let there be light", it was Jesus who went forth and made light. When the Father said, "let us make man in our image", He spoke to the Son and the Spirit and the Son went forth and made man in the image of God.

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:3 NKJV)

3- As the Creator God, everything belongs to Him. The Scripture says of Jesus,

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen (Romans 11:36 NKJV)

So the title to all of that which has been created rests in the hands of God the Son.

4- Eternal life exists only through Him. God the Father made God the Son the author of spiritual life and the exclusive channel through which life could be imparted.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
(John 1:4 NKJV)

Jesus then said of Himself,

I am the only way, the only truth and the only source of life. No one can even come to the Father unless they come by way of Me. (John 14:6 paraphrase)

So He was the creator of all things, the owner of all things, and the possessor of the only source of life that exists. Nothing

was made without Him, nothing exists without His permission, and nothing can have life, give life, or maintain life except by His divine will.

5- As God, He possessed all of the attributes of the Godhead. He was omnipotent. There was nothing He could not do. He was omniscient. There was nothing He did not know. He was omnipresent. There was no place He was not. Legions of angels were at His command. All of nature responded to His every thought.

6- As God, Jesus never tasted of sin, of degradation, of impurity, of hostility. He witnessed it, yet He witnessed it as God, and was, therefore, without the capacity to be harmed by it.

Now, back to our imaginary conversation. God the Father, speaking to God the Son, says something like this:

“Jesus, I know that you are all power, all wisdom, all sufficient. Everything there is to have, you have. Everything there is to know, you know. I know you are the object of a constant chorus of angelic worship, and that nothing can even be made without you. You are God and very God.”

“But Son, we have a problem. The world is filled with wicked, sinful, ungrateful men and women. They have separated themselves from our holiness through deliberate, willful rebellion. They have ‘all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one’.”

“Is there anything we can do?” the Son might have asked. (Though we know in His omniscience, He knew). “Yes, Son, but there is only one option. Because sin must be atoned for, only a perfect Lamb, one without spot or blemish, can be sacrificed for the sins of the world. There is only one who is perfect, my Son, only one. That one is You.”

“What must I do?” Jesus, in our hypothetical conversation, must have asked, “What must I do?”

The Father’s reply: “Son, you must humble yourself. That means that you must leave all of this: all of the joys of Heaven,

all of the benefits of Heaven, all of the praise of Heaven. You must lay aside your deity, and take upon Yourself their humanity. You, who have never experienced rejection must become despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. You who have never tasted of weariness, must walk dusty roads, climb rocky mountains, trod through blistering heat, spend your days teaching seemingly unteachable men, developing a seemingly impossible plan, the building of a church...a body of men and women through whom your Spirit will actually live. You must leave behind the benefits of your deity, the awesomeness of your glory, and the protective shield of Heaven, experiencing pain, suffering, anguish, and grief through the eyes and heart of man. In order to do this, you will have to be willing to give up everything that you know in your heart belongs to you.”

“Will they appreciate it?” the Master responds? “No, Son, they will hate you for it. The religious leaders who are waiting for the redemption you will bring will not even recognize you when you get there. The ones who most ought to rejoice at your coming will scorn you, mock you, ridicule you, and finally in an effort to destroy the competition you represent, they will falsely accuse you, try you in a travesty of justice, and crucify you.”

“Son, you don’t have to do this. You’ll be giving up everything for men and women who deserve nothing. But unless you do, they will never taste the cup of life. Most will still reject your offer. But to as many as receive you, to them we will give the power to become children of God. By your taking on their human nature, they will become inheritors of the divine nature.”

“What do you say, My Son. What do you say?”

“I say, yes, Father. I say, yes. Father, if you so love the world, that you are willing to send Me to die for them, then it is an honor for Me to go. I gladly give up everything I have, everything I am, that they might receive all that we are. I understand that I AM very God. I was in the beginning with You. And Father, I think it not robbery to be equal with You. I know who I AM. But, Father, I would like the privilege of giving it all up for them.”

Now, I know this is an imaginary conversation. But this passage indicates that what Jesus did was to honestly weigh

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the alternatives and decidedly choose to lay aside the glories of Heaven for the scrap heap of earth. So this conversation is not really far-fetched at all. This really is the choice He made. And we are told that this same choice faces us, and that we are to make the same decision He made.

The phrase “thought it not robbery” (Philippians 2:6), literally means “did not clutch at”. It means that Jesus willingly relinquished, abandoned, turned loose of 100% of the benefits that accrued to Him as God. We cannot grasp what that meant, and making application to that sacrifice in our own lives may well escape us if we are not careful.

The issue is that Jesus decided to endure pain, suffering, rejection, and disappointment in the physical realm in order to accomplish spiritual objectives. In order for us to be redeemed, He laid aside the shield of Heaven; the protective enclosure of deity that surrounded Him, and entered into the slime pits of planet earth where degradation, disease, immorality, deceit, and arrogance were the norm. Everything He would encounter would be in conflict with His divine nature. And in order to take on Himself our sins, He would have to Himself be tempted, not just once or twice; He would have to be tempted in all points like as we are, and never once yield to those temptations. Had He only yielded once; had He batted 999, He could not have atoned for the sins of the world. So He had to encounter everything we face, and had to never (even once) succumb to the pull of the flesh.

So the choice was to walk into the torture chambers of planet earth and subject Himself to hunger, pain, rejection, and weariness, in order to bring about spiritual transformation in others, in particular, in others who were in absolute rebellion to all He stood for. That was His choice. And that is yours. And that is mine.

Unfortunately, we do not grasp that much of the time. And new believers are usually not informed when they trust Christ that the choice they need to make is no less critical than it was for Jesus. If the “Mind of Christ” is to permeate your life and mine, then we must:

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit,

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but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

(Philippians 2:3,4 NKJV)

This means that the spiritual welfare of every other person on planet earth is more important than our own physical well-being. It means that if by giving up anything or everything, one person might be saved, the Mind of Christ, willingly, excitedly, says “yes”.

Sometimes we can grasp this in terms of giving up “things”, but even then, though we grasp it, we can seldom apply it. But I believe the deeper truth here is more intense than that. I believe what God is saying is that life on planet earth for the believer who means business is going to be incredibly rough. And unless we are willing to lay aside the benefits of royalty and endure the humiliation of servanthood, the purpose of our being assigned to planet earth on our way to glory has been largely wasted.

By and large, our concepts of Christianity are self-centered. We want to “grow” so we can be more “spiritual”. We want to be more “spiritual” so we can be more “fruitful”. And our motives are not all bad. But the problem is, “self-centered” spirituality is not God-centered spirituality. And to the degree we are thinking of ourselves, even how spiritual we are becoming, we do not have the Mind of Christ.

Because our concepts are self-centered, so is our prayer life. We ask God for what we “want” so He can be “glorified”. We haven’t a clue most of the time what it will take for Him to be glorified. For His own Son, it took ridicule, blasphemy, persecution, and finally execution. He was misunderstood and He was abused. He was rejected and He was reviled. And what did He do?

He humbled Himself. He said, “Father, look what they said? If I were clutching at My reputation, I’d send fire down from Heaven. But Father, they need to know you. So instead, I’ll humble Myself and serve them.” We might even accept that, momentarily. But we expect some kind of evidence that God is pleased. We want Him to “bless” us in some way to let us know

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we have been “good boys and girls”. The reason? We would still be focusing on “us”.

Not Jesus! The more He humbled Himself, the more He suffered. The more He endured, the more the Father gave Him to endure. The closer He came to meeting the Father’s objectives, the more intense became the conflict between Satan and God. The more perfectly He obeyed, the more vicious the enemy became. It all heightened until on that momentous day in history, all of the forces of evil garnered their strength for one final thrust at the King of Glory. Once again, Jesus had to choose: to forsake everything for those who deserved nothing, or to cling to His rights and refuse to die undeservedly.

What did He do?

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
(Philippians 2:8 NKJV)

We will learn more about what that meant as we progress. But given the choice of clutching at his prerogatives as God or giving Himself away for the lowliest of men, He chose to die.

There you have the essence of the “exchanged” life. Man choosing, moment by moment, to become nothing so God in Him can do anything He chooses. And for God to bring about the spiritual transformation, He desires that a man must be willing to go to the Cross. You say, “But it’s worth it. Then God will change me so going through the fire is a blessing.” Don’t you see? You’re still thinking of “self”. You don’t willingly go through the fire so you can grow. You will grow. That’s a given. But you do it for the least of these. You do it for the benefit of the one who is initiating the hatred, fueling the fires of misunderstanding, throwing the stones, nailing the nails that bind you to that Cross. And as you do, you pray,

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”
(Luke 23:34 NKJV)

Only then do you have the Mind of Christ. Jesus did not die for what it could do for Him. He did it for what it could do for his accusers, His silent witnesses, even His murderers. The price God is calling on you to pay to be His disciple may not be

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repaid on planet earth. Your reward will come in the life that is to come; and should you grasp for that recognition or that applause or that appreciation here, you will have missed the entire purpose of your calling.

Your calling is spiritual. Your ministry is spiritual. Your rewards are spiritual. You can badger God long enough for physical blessings, but as you do, you are saying to Him, “Lord, keep the eternal rewards I might have had. I’d rather trade them for that which is immediately gratifying.”

The children of Israel had that problem in Numbers, chapter 11. God was teaching them some incredible lessons about dependence, humility, consistency, and contentment. His teaching tool was a seemingly insignificant wafer called “manna”. The word literally means, “What is this stuff?” To God, it represented an earthly picture of a heavenly truth. It was God’s way of saying to His children,

... “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

(Hebrews 13:5 NKJV)

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:19)

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

(Matthew 6:34b NKJV)

Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

(I Timothy 6:6 NKJV)

His method was to take away from them the exciting supermarkets of this life and replace them with a constant, boring, but sufficient product manufactured in His heavenly bakery.

They could only receive enough for one day. They had to live one day at a time. They couldn’t have anything else. It was the world’s first wafer diet, and it wouldn’t sell on today’s market, because there was no choice. Just manna, manna, manna, and more manna. Now the children of Israel thought they *deserved* more. They were God’s children, weren’t, they? God could do better than that, couldn’t He? So offended were they by the manner in which God was teaching them truth, they forgot the reason for the test. It wasn’t to set a new standard for group

catering. It was to teach God's children God's ways.

So they murmured. They complained. They called the head of food service and said, "Your choice of cuisine just won't do." God could easily remedy that. There's no food shortage with God. But the spiritual victory He wanted to win could not be won while they were feasting on the best this world had to offer. So God came up with an alternate plan. He decided to give them so much of it they would get sick.

Not for a meal. Not for a day. Not even for a week. God rained down quail from heaven for one month,

until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome
to you, (Numbers 11:20b NKJV)

And the Bible says:

But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it
was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the
people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great
plague. (Numbers 11:33 NKJV)

The truth of the manna incident may seem a bit removed from our text. But it's not. What God was asking the children of Israel to do was to lay aside the rights that were theirs as God's chosen in return for the privilege of knowing the Mind of God. But they thought God owed them more than He was giving them. So they "clutched" at it, and lost the truth God was trying to teach them.

The Psalms tell us what happened:

They soon forgot His works; They did not wait for His
counsel,

But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tested God
in the desert.

And He gave them their request, But sent leanness to their
souls. (Psalm 106:13-15 NKJV)

He gave them what they asked for, but they lost what they were there for. Pity. They wanted something tangible at the cost of something eternal. Not Jesus. He did not clutch at what was rightfully His. He willingly laid it aside so that we could have the very things He had given up. Oh, God, may this mind be is us.

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Every circumstance that comes into your life has spiritual significance for someone else, and that makes it significant for you. When the washing machine breaks, God is sending you an opportunity to have a right response to benefit a watching world: your children, your mate, your neighbors, your washing machine repairman. Every time you or someone you love gets sick, God is offering to exchange physical well-being for spiritual blessing to those who are watching your life. You can “clutch” at what you construe your rights to be: the right to good health and the right to maintain your bank account, or you can gladly give them up and thank God for the opportunity to lay aside that which is temporal in exchange for that which is spiritual. If you praise Him and rest, those who are watching will be transformed; and as a free bonus, you will be changed as well.

But you have to humble yourself to do that. You have to agree with God that you don't have the right to a car that always runs, or to an air conditioner that always works, or to a job with no pressures, or to a relationship with no conflicts. The only right you have is for God to be seen in you. So the only responsibility you have is to lay aside your “right” in favor of God's “light”.

The world won't understand. Many of your Christian friends won't understand. They'll try to get you to pray and command God to give you your rights as a child of God and take away that illness or that pain or that inconvenience. What they'll be asking you to do is to ask God to take away the very thing He sent Air-Mail Special Delivery from Heaven to make you usable. Don't do that! Instead, humble yourself. Bow before an omniscient God and ask for the Mind of Christ. Then contemplate what Jesus would have done. Better still, contemplate what Jesus did. “He decided His privileges as God were nothing to be clutched at, but rather laid them aside in favor of all of the inconveniences, dangers, and rejection this world had to offer Him.” Bad trade? Not hardly. When you get to the end the passage, you'll find a “wherefore”. It says,

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him
the name which is above every name,

(Philippians 2:9 NKJV)

Why? Because He humbled Himself and gave up that which

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was rightfully His so those who deserved nothing could see who His Father is.

Until we assume that mindset, the world will not see Jesus in us. We want to live in both worlds at the same time. We want spiritual prosperity, but never at the expense of temporal prosperity. We want spiritual health, but not if it means losing the well-being of these rapidly-decaying, soon to be destroyed bodies of ours. We want the acceptance of God, but not if it means losing the plaudits of men. We think God owes us both. Some churches teach that. God didn't.

Think about that. When pressures come or unpleasant circumstances surround you, stop and think about what spiritual truth you can learn and what spiritual ministry you can have by responding joyfully to those circumstances. If it means giving up something yea; if it means giving up everything, so what? In a trillion years, you could not give up a fraction of what Jesus forsook to come and die for you.

Instead, humble yourself. That's what Jesus did. And what Jesus told you to do is to "let this mind be in you."

By God's grace, may nothing less suffice.

HE THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY

He thought it not robbery,
For God's dear Son
Knew that He
And the Father were one.

All of the power,
All of the love,
All of the wisdom,
That flowed from above,

Were resident in
His precious heart,
And from His hand
All of life had its start.

Like the Father His qualities
Could never fade,
And without Him...
Nothing was made that was made.

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Ne'er had He tasted
The cup of pain,
Ne'er had any sin
Left its ugly stain.

Ne'er had He labored
Till out of breath,
Ne'er had He tasted
The cup of death.

These things belong
To God's precious Son
Because He and the Father,
In essence, are one.

But one day in heaven
Our Lord made a choice,
Even yet you can hear
His wonderful voice.

As He whispers,
"All of heaven's joys I do wave,
I give it all up
That they might be saved."

He thought it not robbery
He gave it away,
That you and I could be
Transformed one day.

Oh, what humility
Can you not see?
He gave it all up
For you and for me.

And all that He asks
That in His dear name,
Empowered by grace
That we do the same.

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