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**Let God  
Be God!**

**# 971-A**

**Series: Let God Be God**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# Let God Be God!

Please don't let the occasion be quickly erased from your memory. It must, in fact, never be erased from your memory, if you are going to move on in the Christian experience as God intends each of us to do.

We traveled recently to that hillside by the sea where a mob of followers of Jesus Christ had gathered together to see Him heal the sick and hear Him preach of a Kingdom that would deliver men from the evils of this world. The crowds, you remember, had grown to incredible proportions, and Jesus' popularity had risen like a meteor in the eastern sky. He was the talk of the town, the hit of the season, the shining success story in a generation of Jews that had longed for a hero for far too many years.

There He was at the very peak of His popularity, having demonstrated the power of God in ways the people were frantic to experience. He had fed them when they were hungry and healed them when they were sick. He had made their lot in life easier, and that was what they were looking for. Then Jesus outlined for them just what the gospel was and what He described was not at all what they were looking for. They were disgusted, confused, angry, and frustrated. They departed in droves crying, "This is too hard, this is too difficult, this is impossible." You remember the Master's response. He turned to the twelve and said, "How about you? You want to go with them? The bus is leaving; just make up your mind".

I trust you'll remember Peter's response, as well. He cried,

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life".

(John 6:68b NKJV)

At that point we concluded our look at what turned out to be the turning point in Jesus' ministry. In that study we majored on the decision Jesus was forcing man to make. We will briefly return to that event to take a closer look at why they needed to make a decision. The title of today's lesson: "Let God Be God". Our outline will look like this:

- I- The Ultimatum
- II- The Issue
- III- The Explanation

IV- The Question

V- The Answer

I- THE ULTIMATUM

Jesus had given man an ultimatum. He had taken a stick and drawn a line in the dirt on that Judean hillside and said, "I'd love to have you aboard, but these are the terms. If any man will come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me. He who would save his life, must be willing to lose it. It's 'all or nothing' if you want to be my disciple." That's the ultimatum that caused the disillusioned masses to retreat in disbelief as though God had just given them a prescription to take for greatness, and they, reading the prescription, interpreted it as poison. No matter how they interpreted it, there was no doubt that it was final. God wasn't going to revise the game plan to attract more players. The word was out, and the word was...flee!

II- THE ISSUE

I believe the issue, however, that caused them to erupt in disgust and head for the hills is often overlooked or understated in today's theological circles. The problem was not really the intensity of the commitment Jesus was calling for, though that was a part of it. The issue was the nature of what He was asking them to do. He was asking them to admit that they were nothing and that God was everything. He was asking them to admit that they could do nothing and that God could do everything; in fact, that God had done everything already. He was telling them that no man could come to the Father except by the Son; that no one could come to the Son except the Father draw him; that God did not need man, but rather that man needed God; that the Son could do nothing without the Father, and the Christian could do nothing without the Son.

That, of course, was the straw that broke the camel's back, and it ultimately became the foundation upon which was constructed a Gospel of Grace so foreign to man's natural way of thinking that for 2,000 years now, man has been unsuccessfully trying to restructure Christianity into something more palatable to the flesh. It was all wrapped up in that one dagger-like phrase that was tucked into the context of Jesus' scathing rebuke. He said it this way, "the flesh profiteth nothing". That literally means that you can take all of the accomplishments of man from the beginning of time to the end of the age, all of man's "good works", all of man's

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“good deeds”, all of man’s “strides toward moral greatness”, and all of man’s charitable efforts, add them together, divide them by God, and you will have absolutely nothing. And that also literally means that everything man has placed his confidence in apart from God is of no value at all.

So that is the issue. It is what divides all of the religions of the world from true Christianity. And it is what caused the multitudes to turn their backs on the Living Son of God and walk away, dejected and confused. In simple terms, it boils down to *who* lives your life, you or God. If you live it, and are simply accountable to live it a certain way, then Christianity becomes no different than any other religion; it is sinful man trying to please a Holy God by what he does. (And that is impossible.) If, however, the Living Son of God lives in you, and *He it is that does the works*, then everything about your relationship with God changes. It is not an interesting sidelight to your theology; it is the cornerstone of your faith. Either God lives your life or you do, and whichever one of you does, deserves the glory.

### III- THE EXPLANATION

Jesus explained it again and again. In John 8, He uttered these immortal words:

...When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself,...

(John 8:28 NKJV)

In John chapter 5 He added:

...Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself,...

(John 5:19 NKJV)

Then in John 15 Jesus builds the bridge from futility to victory. He says:

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

(John 15:5 NKJV)

Now either Jesus was telling the truth or He wasn't. If He was telling the truth, then He was the Truth, and there was no truth apart from Him. If apart from Him there was no truth, then apart from Him there could be no life. If there was no life, there was no way to God. So either He was *the way, the truth, and the life*, or He was the greatest imposter ever to walk on planet earth. But if He was *who* He said He was, then you and I, simply by receiving Him,

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actually have the capacity to have God resident within us, living His life in our bodies.

In John, chapter 14, Jesus finishes the story. He says,

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;

Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

(John 14:10,16,17)

Now the circle is complete. The Father lives through the Son. The Son lives through the Spirit. The Spirit lives in the Believer to testify of the Son who gives all the glory to the Father. So by sending His Spirit to live *in us*, Jesus now makes it possible for *God to live in us, even as God lived in Him* for those 33 incredible years.

That is the mystery revealed! That God can live in a man, thus allowing God to live even as He did in His own Son. Does that mean a life free from suffering? It didn't for Jesus. Does that mean a life of prosperity? It didn't for Jesus. Does that mean a life free of persecution? It didn't for Jesus. Does that mean a life of acceptance? It didn't for Jesus. No, it means a life of Spirit-controlled joy in the midst of persecution, a life of Spirit-controlled peace in the midst of suffering, a life of Spirit-controlled love in the midst of rejection. It means a life of *perfect responses to imperfect situations*. That's what it means.

It means Christ in you will take the burden off of you and carry it for you *even while you are passing through storms that seem to have no end*. On occasion, He may speak to the storms, and they will cease. It is even more likely, however, that He will speak to your heart instead, and it will be at peace even while the thunder rolls and the earth trembles. It means you can relax, and just let God be God.

Paul finally came to understand that, and when he did, it was almost as though his excitement was fueled by his surprise at the utter simplicity of it. He wrote about it in Galatians, chapter two. Remember? There he uttered those amazing words,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh

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I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

It is as though Paul awakened one morning, laden with burdens he could not carry, troubled by conflicts he could not solve, only to have his eyes suddenly opened as though he had died and gone to heaven...but he was still on earth. Suddenly there bursts forth from his lips this anthem of excitement, “Hey, guys, guess what? I’m dead!” When Jesus died, I died. Yippee! This world can’t hurt a dead man. The Pharisees can’t hurt a dead man. The Sanhedrin can’t hurt a dead man. I’m dead! Praise God! Then suddenly he turns and says, “Hey, wait a minute; I just pinched myself and it hurt. So I’m not *really* dead. I’m still alive. But it can’t be me. I get it; Jesus now lives in me, and *He’s alive*, so the life I now live in this frail body, I live moment by moment by simply acknowledging His life and letting God be God in me.”

So Paul was beaten, maligned, tortured, rebuked, imprisoned, denied his rights, denied his reputation, and denied his resources; yet still he was able to shout “I can do all things through Christ who living in me gives me the strength.” He wrote of his earthly sojourn, not as a series of pleasant experiences, but as a treasure of spiritual victories that actually were the result of horrible physical abuse. In II Corinthians 4, he described the Spirit-filled life. Listen:

We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. (II Corinthians 4:8 NKJV)

His circumstances were horrible, but his life was wonderful, *because he had learned the secret*. What was the secret? The secret was that he was dead. Christ was now inhabiting that moth-eaten body of his, so crushed with abuse, so racked with pain; and Christ in him was living in triumph, living the life of God in the physical shell of a man named Paul. So he wrote of being “more than conqueror”, of being a “new creation”, of being “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things!” Paul had learned the secret! Have you?

The secret is: you have been crucified with Christ. You’re dead. Nothing this world does can hurt a dead man. Nothing. But though you are dead, someone else is now living in that body of yours who cannot die, and He is neither frightened nor discouraged by anything this world might throw His way. So you can relax and

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enjoy watching Him live.

You say, so much for the theory; practically speaking, what does it mean? It means when you awaken tomorrow morning and you have a splitting headache, and you are facing a week that seems impossible, a mountain that seems immovable, and a fear inside of you that seems incurable, you don't have to panic. You don't have to do anything but get down on your knees and say, "Lord, am I glad I'm dead. If I had to live this day, I'd be scared to death. I couldn't face the problems. I couldn't handle the pain; and, anyway, I couldn't see around what's staring me in the face. I would probably give up, if I were alive. But I'm dead! Hallelujah! Here, Lord, you take over. You live in me and live through me that fabulous, glorious, Spirit-filled life of absolute victory. I hereby set you free to be yourself."

"Lord, You may choose to move that mountain. You may not. If you don't, you'll just have to go around it or climb over it. I'll be anxious to see just what you decide to do. I'm glad it isn't up to me, Lord, I'd cut and run. If we have to climb it, thank you for the strength. If we have to go around it, thank you for the direction. If we have to wait for it to move, thank you for the patience. I can't live this day, but praise God I don't have to. Dear Lord, here, take my life and just be yourself in me today. I don't ask you to take away the hurts; I ask you to take the hurts and turn them into choruses of praise. Here's my body, Lord, I don't know why you chose the likes of it to live in, but I praise you that you did. Amen."

Then get up off your knees and begin singing. It's your job to sing; remember II Chronicles 20? You sing, and it becomes God's job to put ambushments about the enemy and defeat him. The battle is not yours; *it's His*. He'll fight for you; let Him. You go down to breakfast, and the kids are having a fit. Quietly pray, "Lord, your kids are crying. Thank you that you have so much patience and love. Lord, love them through me." He will. You look, and God's refrigerator is almost empty. Isn't it great that He can feed an army with the rations of a private? Let Him make what you have last or take what you have if He chooses. Just sing and be thankful for what you have. Uh-oh, God's car won't start. Pray, "Lord, demonstrate your patience through me." He will. You make it to work, and the boss is irritable. Quietly pray, "Lord, I wonder what wonderful lesson you want to teach me today through that irritable boss, or what beautiful testimony you want to give through me to that irritable boss?" Just ask God to be Himself, and then relax



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and let Him. He'll speak through you words you never thought you could say. You'll think thoughts of peace and not of evil. You'll turn the other cheek gladly, not by legalistic obedience. You won't—you're dead; Christ will—He's alive. So you live minute-by-minute in the sheer excitement of one who is a spectator in the battle of life as you watch the living God live His amazing life using your body, your personality, your experiences, and your mind as His golden reflector of radiant truth. The battle's intense, but the burdens are gone. The warfare rages, but the joy goes on. The mountains crumble, but so what? They're God's mountains, and He can do with them whatever He chooses. All He need do, remember, is speak, and all of life becomes totally still again. Beloved, you will have begun to live. No, you will have begun to let Christ live as you experience the sheer joy of being dead.

But it will be a moment-by-moment choice, not a once-for-all experience. Suppose, for example, you have begun this miraculous excursion of letting God be God in you and a crisis arrives, and fear begins to well up within you, and suddenly *you are afraid*. You unconsciously take the reins of control from the hands of a capable God and begin to worry. You say, in essence, to God, "Here, Lord, let a dead man handle this. Guess what, He'll let you. The moment you *stop resting and start fretting*, He will back away and let that horrendous corpse that used to live in your body take over again. It will smell, and nothing it will do will last. Nothing. You'll spin your wheels and waste your time eternally. Oh, you may do fine for a while, from the world's perspective; but the peace will leave, the joy will leave, and the victory will cease. The circumstances may even improve; but be careful, circumstances are no barometer of God's control. When God was being God in Jesus, he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was hated, ridiculed, spit upon, and murdered. Hardly your idea or mine of a good time. *But never at any time was God not being God in Jesus.*

### IV- THE QUESTION

That brings us then to the question of questions. If the Christ-life is so tremendous, and yet we cannot determine at any moment whether or not God is being God based on circumstances, then how can we know? We want God to be God in us, but how can we tell when He is, and when He isn't? That's a good question, one that has baffled believers since the first day the Spirit came at Pentecost. Man has tried various inventions to determine when

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God is doing the living and when man is; but most of them at some point send out false signals. The most widely accepted and most consistently deceptive is the one called *experience*. So, often our initial realization that we are inadequate apart from Christ is accompanied by some kind of feeling or emotional experience, followed by a kind of euphoria. Lordship has been accompanied by an emotional confirmation, so man takes that confirmation and tries to use it as a barometer of whether or not Jesus is in control of his or her life. So when the feelings subside, or the experience vanishes, the startled believer either tries to artificially reproduce that experience, or he becomes totally discouraged and assumes that it wasn't real after all. Satan, incidentally, will cooperate to the fullest with both lies. No, your feelings are no barometer of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Is there a valid measuring stick to determine who's in charge of the throne room of your heart? *Can you know when God is being God in you?*

### V- THE ANSWER

The answer is "yes", In John, chapter one, I believe the Holy Spirit lovingly presented to us the yardstick we long to have for determining when God is being God. John 1:

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:10-14)

And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

(John 1:16-18)

John has unveiled the answer. He tells us that no man has seen the Father at any time. And yet man needed to see God, not to see *how He looks*, but to see *how He acts*. To see how the nature of God responds to the situations that man has to encounter on

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planet earth. So God decided to spend thirty-three years in the body of a man, so man could see for the rest of the age how God behaves. So the only begotten Son which was in the bosom of the Father declared Him, demonstrated Him, revealed Him in human form. The Word (God Himself) became flesh (was born into the body of a man) and dwelt among us (lived the same life we live) and we beheld His Glory (we actually were given an opportunity to behold Him, John visibly, and we through the Word) and *of His fullness* we have received, and grace for grace. The life God lived in Jesus, He now wants to live in us, and *we can know when it is God doing the living, because we have seen Jesus in the very same situations of life.* When we are not behaving as He behaved, no matter how acceptable that behavior is to the world, it is not Jesus doing the good works.

Now we have a barometer that works. When God is being God in us, He will respond to life *exactly as He did 2,000 years ago.* Peter told us:

Who, when He was reviled, He reviled not again; ...but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

(I Peter 2:23)

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps.

(I Peter 2:21)

Not by imitating Him, but by letting Him be Himself in us, we will know it is God, because we know how Jesus behaved. *Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.* He will continue to respond to life in our generation, as He did then.

We can see how God acts when Satan throws the book at Him. Then we'll know how God will act in us in the same situation. We can see how God acts when His vacation is interrupted by a disaster. We can see how God behaves when His friends start arguing; how God behaves when a prostitute wants to join the church; when the kitchen committee can't handle the load; when the doorbell rings, and it's somebody nobody wants. We can look at God in man responding to total rejection, to unparalleled acclaim, to unnecessary conflict, and to unreasonable demands.

We can see God respond to the dinner invitation of an unbeliever, to the task of training seemingly untrainable men. We can watch God pray, watch God fish, and watch God cook breakfast. And by God's grace, as we do, we not only see the principles unfold, *we see*

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*how the Spirit of God lives the Christian life in the real world, so we can know when God is being God in us.*

Our textbook, of course, must be the Word of God, It alone can lovingly wrap into a single package the four-fold account of God being God in every situation.

In closing, may I remind both you and myself one more time, however, that we are not endeavoring to see *how God behaves*, so we can attempt to please Him by behaving the same way. He who died for us now lives in us. We now simply want to free Him to be Himself, and we want to know for sure when God is being God as He was intended to be.

Remember, you cannot live the Christian life. Jesus couldn't. He had to minute by minute depend on the Father; of His own self He could do nothing. And as Ian Thomas words it so beautifully, Jesus simply told us, "apart from me, you can do just exactly as much as I can do without the Father, which is nothing." Beloved, have you ever surrendered your life to the Lordship of Christ? Has there ever been a time when you stopped trying to resurrect that corpse of self and in utter abandonment cried out to God,

I am crucified with Christ [I am dead, I no longer live]: yet not I, but Christ liveth His life in me: and the life I now live...[He lives...to whatever degree I will...let Him].

(Galatians 2:20 paraphrase)

This would be a good time to cease the struggle. You may have been a Christian for years or only for a day. It doesn't matter. At some point, and why not today, you need to release your grip on the Christian life, and quietly yield all you have, all you are, and all you own into the hands of the only one capable of living the Christian life—Jesus Christ Himself. Ask Him right now as you pray just to take over total control of the reigns of your life. Stop struggling. Stop trying so hard. Yield up your anxieties, your fears, and your ambitions. Literally, in your spirit, take your hands off the steering wheel of your life, and lovingly ask your God to take over from here. Then consciously take a deep breath, and relax.

Just let God be God; that's all He's asking you to do.

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