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**Let This
Mind Be
In You**

#1301-A

Series: The Mind of Christ

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Johnny Smith was the most visible force in his local church. He sang in the choir, served on the deacon nominating committee, was president of his Sunday School class, and his success in his career made him the topic of conversation at all the socials. “He’s a real Christian witness in the community,” was the kind of comment you so often would hear. He was rumored to be a future city council candidate, and who knows what would lie beyond that?

Johnny was available to share his testimony for the local Christian men’s groups, and was active in the PTA at his kids’ school. If there was a shining star in the evangelical community, he was it. And if you were to take a vote in Bedford Church as to who would be the most likely to succeed as a Christian leader in the next generation, Johnny would win in a landslide. He was articulate, self-confident, knowledgeable, and likable.

Robert Jones was, in many ways, the opposite of John. He was shy, somewhat hesitant to speak in public, resisted committee appointments, and seemed to prefer staying in the background. He worked hard at his job at the post office, but no one seemed to notice. There was a seemingly indefinable quality about him that no one could put their finger on, and yet his absence of charisma and public-speaking skills caused him to be passed over when it came to positions of responsibility. He was respected, but not in demand.

Let’s fast-forward twenty-five years. Let’s look in at Bedford a quarter century later. Our first task is to look for Johnny. By now, we assume, he must be chairman of the board, on most of the denominational committees, and probably has been national layman of the year, as well. We’ll ask this young man. “Pardon me, sir, but I’m looking for Johnny Smith.”

“You’ve never heard of him? Oh, I guess he must have moved away. Maybe he’s moved to Washington. Here’s a man a little older. We’ll ask him.”

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This man puts his head down. “Oh, yes, I remember Johnny. He had quite a potential for the Lord, Johnny did.” We’re stunned. “Potential? What do you mean?”

“Oh, I guess you didn’t hear,” he responds. With that his voice trails off, and he turns and walks away.

What happened, it seems, was that Johnny became enamored with himself. So spiritually recognized was he that he became convinced that he was invincible. He spent less and less time in God’s presence and in God’s Word, and more and more time in the limelight. He spent so much time “serving” in the church that his time with his family diminished, too. Outwardly, he continued in the forefront, but inwardly he died, spiritually. And one day it came to light that he had been having an affair. He left his family, moved away, and no one has heard from him since. Christians all over the city were crushed and disillusioned. Some were not sure that the gospel was really what it was cracked up to be. Others who had been influenced by Johnny seemed to lose interest and disappear.

Robert Jones is still around, though. We saw him last week taking food to a family who needed help. He leads a discipleship group in his home every week and meets daily with young men in the church who want to grow. He’s been a deacon for fifteen years now, and the Bible Study he started at the post office has grown from about five guys to over twenty. Nothing spectacular. He’s still not recognized nationally, to be sure. But there’s a kind of glow about him, a kind of power in his life that you cannot help but notice. He has a quality of discernment that is almost supernatural. Why did Johnny fall, and why is Robert quietly continuing to walk the walk and live the life? What’s the difference? Wouldn’t you like to know? Wouldn’t you like to avoid whatever cost Johnny his power?

I’m going to simplify it for you, at least for the moment. The difference, beloved, is the “Mind of Christ”. I know, you’re probably thinking another cliché, the Mind of Christ. Doesn’t every Christian have the Mind of Christ? No. The Mind of Christ is a choice. A tough choice. A personal choice. And if I could *over-simplify* it for you I think you could boil it down to one little word—are you ready? I believe the Mind of Christ, though it spans a thousand aspects of the believer’s life, can be boiled down to one: *humility*.

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You say, “But Johnny got out of the Word and out of fellowship and into moral compromise.” Yes, yes, and yes. But in his case, what started it all was an independent spirit, born of success. (And it’s not an uncommon one.) He lost his concept of who God is, because he had an inflated concept of who *he* was. A fellow named Satan had the identical problem. A lady named Eve had the identical problem. Instead of becoming increasingly humble, Johnny began to trust in the flesh *just a little*, then just a little more. His pilgrimage took the opposite turn from Jesus’. And so did his life.

The whole of the Mind of Christ is painted on the canvas of Philippians, chapter two. With delicate strokes of the Holy Spirit’s pen, God has taken the Savior’s toughest choice of all, and used it to define the Christian life. If someone asks you, incidentally, to summarize the successful Christian life, take them to Philippians. It is God’s success story, and *it is 180 degrees from man’s*. Let’s begin by reading just two verses from the first chapter. Paul has been sharing with the Philippian Christians his excitement at being in prison, because his imprisonment was *actually benefiting the spread of the gospel*. Then he begins to examine the benefits of living and dying. He says,

according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

(Philippians 1:20,21 NKJV)

Paul was saying that either way the believer cannot lose. His life was no longer his to live. He had died. Christ had come alive in him. So to keep on living, was just to keep on letting...Christ live through him. And to die, well, what could be better? To die would mean perfect, unbroken fellowship with his Lord. He then concludes that while dying would be better for him, living would be better for the kingdom, *because God simply wasn’t finished with him yet*. Now most of us do not have Paul’s concept of dying. We’re not excited about it.

But more important, most of us do not have Paul’s concept of *living*. Paul knew that would be a problem. So, in chapter two, he begins with a plea for unity in the body, and then he unfolds the *secret of the successful Christian life*. And it is not what you might think it is. It is certainly not what others often pretend it

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to be. Listen,

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me. (Philippians 1:29,30 NKJV)

Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, 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.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

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.

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

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:1-13 NKJV)

For the next few weeks we are going to take that passage apart, verse by verse, word by word. For today, we are going to look at an overview of the passage, and try to see a panoramic view of what Paul was driving at. He has urged this band of

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believers at Philippi (and us) to reassess what Christianity is all about, not based on *his concepts, but based on Christ's life*. It was as though he was saying, this is the *second reason Christ came to earth*. The first was to die for the sins of the world. The second was to place the Mind of Christ inside each and every born-again one. And each and every born-again one would then have the option, moment by moment, to let the actual Mind of Christ flow through them, making their decisions, giving them wisdom, giving them power. Paul did not say, "For me to live is to live for Christ." He said, "For me to live *is Christ*." There is an incredible difference. And in this passage, he gave us the *long-term solution to life's assaults on the Christian walk*. It is what, from man's perspective, appears to be a seven-step spiral downward. It is, from God's perspective, the only sure way to attain God's Mind, and thus God's victorious life.

Many of you are at a crossroads in your Christian experience. You may be past the first-bloom excitement of being born again. You may have entered that stage of life where doubts and questions are plaguing you, and the inner power you thought you would progressively come to attain has eluded you. Paul says, "*I have good news for you*." But it's not what you think it is. It is a prescription for dying. And the pill is called Humility.

Look at the seven things Jesus did in Philippians 2: It could change your life.

1- Jesus made a deliberate choice. He examined the alternatives, and by an act of His will, chose to take the lower road to the top of the mountain. His choices were these:

- a) He could, in his own energy, set out to set up a kingdom for His Father, and He had everything He needed to do that. Or
- b) He could submit to His Father's plan, humble Himself, come into planet earth in a manger meant for animals, be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

He could proclaim Himself King and start a revolution, or He could do the Father's will, and end up on a Roman Cross, with a mock crown on His head, being spit on, laughed at, and ultimately murdered. Those were His choices. The high road was quick, painless, and relatively free from reproach. The low road was filled with pain, suffering, misunderstanding,

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and humiliation, but it would glorify the Father. *Jesus made a deliberate choice*, according to this passage, *to take the low road*. Paul is saying, *you have to make that same choice*.

Oh, you can be a successful Christian from the world's perspective and even from the church's perspective, either way. In fact, in the eyes of many, the high road is so much like the world's way, man can much more easily identify with it, and churches and pastors have, through the years, made *it* the pattern to follow. But too many Johnny Smiths come out of it. And it doesn't seem to last. Before we finish this series, I'm going to ask you to consider which choice you want to make. But first you must understand, what those choices entail.

2- Jesus thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself nothing. He laid aside the exemptions that accompanied His Deity. He submitted willingly to the effects of a world inhabited by sin, came out from behind the shield of Heaven, and entered a world, *by choice*, that was infested with degradation. He chose to expose Himself to the pain and suffering of a sin-laden world in order to be a vessel to save others out of that world. And that, too, is a choice God is asking you to make.

In the case of Jesus, He knew who He was...God. And He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. As God, He was untouched by sin. As God, He was untouched by the ravages of planet earth: pain, sickness, poverty, misunderstandings, hunger, and rejection. He could have stayed in Heaven, *justifiably*, and never exposed Himself to all that evil. *But then you and I would still be lost*. So He humbled Himself. The God of Heaven came to earth so we on earth could come to Heaven. The God of peace came into a world of turmoil, so we who live in that turmoil, could find real peace.

So often today's Christian publications and Christian broadcasters advertise a gospel of protection from the ravages of planet earth. They promote a gospel of prosperity, health and wealth. They say God owes it to you to shield you from all the hurts of this world because you are a child of the King. That's not the Mind of Christ. The Mind of Christ willingly lays aside those "rights", knowing that in the Kingdom which is to come, those benefits will all be reality. But for now, Beloved, we are called to humble ourselves and submit to a life in which strength is found in weakness, joy is found in suffering, and growth is

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accomplished by pain—a life through which others come to Christ by watching Christ alive in us amidst circumstances we would eliminate from our lives if we had the chance.

In the process, meaning is given to pain, to sorrow, to mishaps, to misunderstandings, and to loss. The comfort we receive is comforting others, and we are being equipped, according to II Corinthians 2, to have a ministry. But we must humble ourselves and *actually desire that kind of life to have it*. It's not the easy road. But it's the only road that leads to the Mind of Christ.

3- Jesus made Himself of no reputation. He laid aside whatever honor the world or the church wanted to bestow upon Him, in favor of a Cross. He laid aside the honor of His name, that His Name might be imparted to us. It no longer mattered what people thought. Ultimately, God would be exalted. But for that to happen, the one who was King of kings would have to become less than nothing. He chose to do that. Are you willing to do the same? He will empower you. But the choice is yours; and it's a tough choice.

It may mean forfeiting the acclaim of success. It may mean not being known as Mr. Spiritual. In fact, *it may mean not being known at all*. It may mean not making it to the top of your profession, if God, who knows your heart, knows you might lose even an ounce of spiritual power in your climb to the top. It may mean never being in the limelight. It may mean washing dirty feet. It did for Jesus. If you are not willing to lay aside *every claim you have to success, even the claim to your reputation*, you'll never really know the Mind of Christ. He didn't just ask *you* to do that. *He did it Himself*. And now He lives in you. He will continue to live a life characterized by *that kind of humility* if you'll let Him. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: He made Himself of no reputation.

4- He took upon Himself the form of a servant. He chose the role of a servant over the role of a king. He deliberately behaved before men as men were to behave before God. He worked in a carpenter's shop, walked dirty roads, washed dirty feet, healed hurting people, dried tears of grief, touched eyes that were diseased. He loved lepers and He lost followers in the process. He could have headed the greatest religious empire in history, but chose instead to be a waiter, a janitor, a cook, a butler, a teacher, a tour guide, a baby sitter, and a friend of publicans and sinners. His was not a lofty message preached from a pulpit

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surrounded by saints. His was a lowly message lived out on the dirty streets of the real world where real needs had to be met or no one would listen to the message.

Many of today's churches are missing the point. It's easy to build modern-day cathedrals and retreat into those palaces of religious self-righteousness and invite the world to come in. But the world isn't comfortable there. Unless we humble ourselves and go out where they are, not as pious judges, but as lowly servants, they will never hear our message.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
taking the form of a bondservant,

(Philippians 2:5,7b NKJV)

5- He was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient. He put on his "earth suit" and became subjected to pain, sorrow, sin, and death, and as He was exposed to all those ills, *He humbled Himself and became obedient.*

though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. (Hebrews 5:8 NKJV)

Just what is obedience? Obedience, Beloved, is *humility under authority*. It is joyful compliance with the demands that come from not being your own boss. Jesus, as man, laid aside every claim to His own life, and said of Himself,

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

(John 5:30 NKJV)

And so it is that those who willingly submit to the Mind of Christ often find themselves under seemingly "unjust" authority.

Maybe you prayed for a godly countenance and a godly perspective. And you married a man you just knew would be kind and generous and understanding. But he turned out to be insensitive, inconsiderate, maybe even verbally abusive. There's no excuse for that, on his part. But is it possible that God *allowed that*, knowing that you had asked for the Mind of Christ? Did He, in His infinite wisdom, know that rightly responding as in I Peter, chapter 3, to unjust married authority teaches humility, and generates the nature of God? Of course He did.

Maybe you prayed for patience, and later you prayed for a job. And maybe God gave you a job with a boss that is so mean,

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so overbearing, so unfair that you are thinking of running for your life. Be careful. *That job may be an answer to your prayer.* The Master had to learn obedience by things which He suffered. He added, “The servant is not above the Master”.

Authority is God’s way of teaching you obedience. And obedience is God’s tool to make you humble. The proud man will not obey. He sees no need for someone to rule over him, particularly someone unjust. He forgets that “the powers that be are ordained of God.” He forgets that “God sets up one and puts down another”.

6- Jesus was obedient unto death. This is the greatest statement of all. Not only did the King of Glory don the cloak of a slave and take upon Himself the nature of a slave; not only did He humble Himself and become obedient under authority, His obedience was stretched to its limits. He was asked to die. So He humbled Himself even further and said, “Yes, Sir”.

Death is the ultimate act of obedience. To be asked to die for your country is the most awesome thing a nation can ask of its young men. It’s one thing to ask a soldier if he would be willing to dig ditches for his country. It’s one thing to ask a pilot if he would be willing to fly to a foreign country. It’s one thing to ask a sailor to leave his family and man a ship out in the ocean. But, Beloved, when those same men are asked to enter a battlefield, where almost certain death awaits, it begins to become clear that the cost of being in the military is higher than they had realized.

Humility, in a very real sense, is death: death to self, death to dreams, death to ambition. It is the act of placing yourself under another’s control, joyfully, knowing that your rights are no longer *your* rights.

And the reason more believers are not enjoying the sheer freedom that is theirs in Christ, is that they have not yet become willing to die. “Take up your Cross” is not a reality for them. They are willing to give up some of their time, some of their talents, some of their possessions, so long as they can still hold on to the title to the rest. When Jesus says, “Here, give it all up to Me; you no longer will own anything”, we begin to squirm.

You say, “Die? Lord, you need me alive. You need my influence. You need my talents. You need my spirituality.” Jesus, lovingly responds, “No, my child, I only need a body to flow through. And

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to whatever degree that body is inhabited by and controlled by the flesh, *to that degree, I cannot reveal Myself through you.*” It takes humility to be willing to die. You have to believe that you are expendable; that someone else can do better what you were commissioned to do. That somebody is Jesus. He can live your life for the Father’s glory. Let Him. *He was obedient unto death. Let this Mind be in you.*

7- He was obedient to death, even the death of the Cross.

There is the ultimate form of humility.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners [worthless], Christ died for us.

(Romans 5:7,8 NKJV)

He humbled Himself and died for men and women who had spit on Him, laughed at Him, scorned Him, and rejected Him. The Cross was death in its lowest form. It is one thing to die a hero. It is another to die seemingly in vain. It is one thing to die in the thick of the battle. It is another to be nailed to a Cross for crimes committed by the ones nailing you there.

Real humility is giving yourself away joyfully for the sake of those who hate you, despise you, persecute you, and take from you your dignity, your reputation, and your very right to live. Real humility is laying down your life for a wife who doesn’t appreciate you; for a husband who belittles you; for a boss who doesn’t notice you. It is akin to asking an American general to give his life for Saddam Hussein. That’s what Jesus did. That’s what He meant when He said to consider every other person more important than yourself. (Philippians 2:4)

Humility. It is the essence of surrender. Our world has so destroyed godly concepts of human nature that I’m not sure most of us would even recognize humility if we saw it. If ever there was a place the world should see humility, it’s in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But so often what they see are churches vying for each other’s members; advertising, “We’re the best; forget the rest”. So often what they see are denominations cutting each other to ribbons over their differences, rather than exalting God for the difference He can make in a life. So often what they see is Carl and Connie Christian condescendingly acting as though they

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will make room in their sanctuary for them if they can clean up their act, rather than humbling themselves in front of the unbelievers, admitting, that except for the grace of God, *they would be ten times the sinner as they*. Paul saw himself as the chiefest of sinners. We tend to see ourselves as bargains God got when He made a good trade in the Spiritual NFL draft. God forbid.

When God got us, He got the dregs. When Jesus died for us, we were without hope, without merit, without a trace of holiness. We were, according to the Scripture, *still in our sins*. We were as alienated from righteousness as we could get. In Christ, we are everything, have everything, can do everything. But Beloved, never forget that it is because of who Christ is...period.

We have a wrong concept of ourselves because we have an inadequate concept of God. There are solutions. But to become humble, *we have to make some choices*. Whether or not we need to be humbled is not a choice, it's a fact. It's an absolute. The Scripture says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). So the grace of God available for you to live the victorious Christian life is in direct proportion to the humility with which you approach God. *To whatever degree you exalt self, to that degree you quench the Spirit and deny the work of God in your life*. So the issue is not an alternative but an essential.

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

(I Peter 5:6 NKJV)

That's what He did for Jesus. That's what He'll do for you. You can live out the rest of your life seeking to be seen, heard, and recognized, or you can die and be buried in Christ, and begin to really live.

For the next few lessons together, we're going to sail the somewhat treacherous seas surrounding Philipppians, chapter two. We're going to look at the issue of humility from every facet of the diamond of Scripture. We're going to look at the relationship of humility to grace, the relationship of humility to rebuke, the relationship of humility to effective prayer. We'll see if there's any correlation between humility and how the Word affects us, between humility and holiness, between humility and our ability to get along with others. Is the "exchanged" life

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related to humility? Is there a link between the peace of God and a humble spirit?

These are some of the questions that are answered directly in Scripture. The answers may well surprise you. We may actually come to find that the “Mind of Christ” is total harmony through total humility, freeing that which is divine to exist in that which is temporal. We may well find that to whatever degree we exalt ourselves, even in our hearts, *to that degree we are preventing the Mind of Christ from controlling our lives.*

What we are looking for is a life that is completely submerged in Jesus Christ, a life in which He is so preeminent that we literally dissolve into His life, as He lives through us a kind of existence that is so supernatural that the flesh is not even evident, let alone exalted. Some might call it the exchanged life. Others might call it lordship living. I wonder if there is not a better phrase. I wonder if it might not better be called the normal Christian life.

I wonder if real humility is not the Mind of Christ that we are supposed to have, minute by minute, day by day, for the rest of our days. (And literally for the rest *in* our days.) I wonder.

By God’s grace, may we not wonder for long.

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LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU

“Let this mind be in you,” do we know what that means?
How often we quote it, how trite it seems
Could it be possible, could it be true
That we don’t understand what Jesus went through?

That we really don’t grasp, that we really can’t see,
That He gave it all up, for you and for me.
He humbled Himself, the Master, the King
Willingly chose to give up everything

And when He was asked, “Will You die for them Son?”
He said, “I will die for the most sinful one
There’s no price too high; I will pay any cost
Yea, Father, I even will go to that cross.”

And then, with His heart still breaking in two
He said, “Children of mine, let this mind be in you,
Whatever it takes, whatever the toll
Humble yourself, and let Me take control.”

Let this mind be in you and your heart will be free
If you humble yourself, then they will see” Me.
May we answer, ‘yea Lord, for them, and their sakes’
May this mind be in me, whatever it takes.

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