

THE MIND OF CHRIST

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October 8, 2008

The Mind of the Natural Man.—Daniel tells how, just before Nebuchadnezzar was stricken and humbled, the proud king walked up the terraces of his palace, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?”

Memorials of Vanity.—He not only spoke it, but engraved like sentiments in his inscriptions upon the royal tablets, now dug up and read. One of them says: “For the astonishment of men I built this house; all of the power of my majesty encompasses its walls. . . . In Babylon alone I raise the seat of my dominion.” This vanity is the common frailty of the human mind.

The Mind of Christ.—Contrast with this Christ’s attitude as he came into the world to show men how to live for man. He had not built a pile of bricks and mortar, but the very earth and all living things upon it and the heavens were the work of His hands. Yet He said, “I can of Mine own self do nothing.” “I came not to do Mine own will.” “I have glorified Thee on the earth.” Nebuchadnezzar glorified himself as the builder of a great city now buried in the sands. Jesus, in whom all things consist, glorified God. “Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who. . . emptied Himself.” Phil. 2:5, 6, R. V.

Christian Striving.—The Apostle Paul desired to be able to hear that the Philippians were standing fast in one spirit, “with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.” Phil. 1:27.

THAT “striving together” which is done “with one mind,” is certainly not contention and quarrelling. The text, therefore, does not teach that they were to strive with one another, but that together they were unitedly to strive for a common object. The marginal reading in the Revised Version makes it “striving together with the faith of the Gospel.”

IN harmony with the desire expressed by Paul to the Philippians, the Apostle Jude exhorts us to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” Jude 3. Therefore many think that while Christians must be at peace among themselves, they should lose no opportunity to get into a controversy with unbelievers, in regard to the Gospel.

BUT again we read: "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth." 2 Tim. 2:24, 25. Not to controvert but to convert is the aim of the teacher of truth. The Apostle Peter says: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Peter 3:15.

THIS gives us the correct idea of the strife. It is to be conducted with God in the heart. Therefore the "one mind" with which we are exhorted to strive, is the mind of God, "which was also in Christ Jesus." Phil. 2:5. We are to strive in the strength of God, and clothed with the Divine armor; "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Eph. 6:12.

WE are not to contend with men, but wicked spirits, evil angels; not with weapons of carnality, but with those which are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor 10:4, 5.

THE striving, therefore, is to be wholly with ourselves, with the evil thoughts and imaginations that Satan seeks to inspire us with. Those are the only things that can destroy the faith of anyone, and therefore they are the things to be fought against in contending for the faith. One man's unbelief cannot destroy another's faith. The Apostle Paul could keep the faith in Nero's court in Rome as well as with his brethren in Antioch; because God was with him. If we strive and contend with men, we do not thereby increase their faith, but we run the risk of losing our own. So "the faith" is never helped, but hindered, by laws professedly in its favor, which necessarily depend on force. The Gospel is a mystery, entirely different from things of earth. And so while it is a warfare, it is a strife of peace, and the Captain of the host is the Prince of peace.

A Sound Mind.—The prodigal son had wasted all his substance in riotous living in a far country, "seeing life" and "having a good time," as so many say. So he doubtless thought, until his money was gone, and he began to starve to that extent that he envied the hogs their

miserable food. But when he came to himself, he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and, I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father." The expression, "to come to one's self" is a familiar one, and is used to indicate that one has recovered his consciousness after a period of unconsciousness or mental aberration. The young man had been insane, crazed by appetite and passion and the glitter of the world; but at last he had come to his senses, and he saw things just as they were.

His case is given as a representative one. No sinner is in his right mind. There is a common notion in the world, that when a man becomes a Christian in earnest, so much so that he makes an abrupt and radical change in his life, he is "out of his head;" but that notion is on the principle that every insane or intoxicated person thinks that others are in his condition, and that he himself is sound in mind. The truth is that the true Christian is the only perfectly sane person. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Tim. 1:7. He gives us His own mind, which is the highest wisdom, even though the world may call it foolishness. No person on earth ever went insane through accepting the Gospel of Christ. Such a thing is impossible. The Lord casts out evil and unclean spirits, and leaves the afflicted soul that was wild and uncontrollable, "clothed and in his right mind." Peace and quietness come by the Gospel. So whenever you hear of one who has "religious mania" know that it is through failure to lay hold on the eternal life which is the sum of Christianity.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory, Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Col. 3:1-5.

With this text read also the following, so as to have both in mind at the same time: "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even while we were dead in sins, hath quickened as [made us alive] together with Christ (by grace are ye saved), and hath raised us up, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Eph. 2:4-6.

Here we have death and resurrection. If you read the first chapter of Ephesians, you will see that Christians are expected to have the same experience that Christ had. We are to know the exceeding greatness of the power of God in us who believe, “according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places;” and we know this power only by being made alive, and raised up with Christ, and made to all with Him in the heavenly places.

Note the exact parallel: Christ says “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore” (Rev. 1:18); we should say, “I am crucified [dead] with Christ, nevertheless I live” (Gal. 2:20) and since He is our life, and He says, “Because I live, ye shall live also” it follows that we also have “life for evermore.” That is the blessing that God commanded. Ps. 133:3.

Then if we are really in Christ, where are we?—Where He is, of course, in heaven. All the life the Christian has is there; “for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” So we are to live as being in heaven.

But someone will say, “I am on this earth, nevertheless.”

The Spirit of the Lord has anticipated this objection, by saying, “Mortify therefore your members which are on this earth.” That is, make them dead. Do not try to live in two places at once, to keep up two establishments, as it were. Why put the members on earth to death?—For the reason just given, because we are risen with Christ and have been seated with Him in the heavenly places. We are to have our individual life in heaven.

We have members on this earth, it is true, but they are to have no more voice in our control than if they were buried. “The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me,” and who spoke of Himself while on earth talking with Nicodemus as “the Son of man which is in heaven.” Even so it is to be with us. The body is flesh; but it is the Spirit that is to have supreme control. God will demonstrate with us, as He did in Christ, that the flesh cannot control Him, but that He has “power over all flesh.”

Who has not felt the flesh, the nature of his members which are on earth, to be a clog to him, a hindrance in the Christian life? We could not do the things that we would. Well, God’s purpose for us, which He is able to carry into effect, is that the flesh shall be so deadened that

it will have no more effect to hinder us from living as we ought, than it will when changed from corruption to incorruption. Thus He gets glory to Himself.

“The carnal mind”—“the mind of the flesh”—“is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Rom. 8:7. The carnal mind is the mind dominated by the flesh. It is enmity against God, because the flesh is opposed to the Spirit. And the flesh will control the mind as long as it has any power. The flesh cannot be converted, for “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Therefore it is that another mind, the mind of Christ, must take possession, able to subdue the flesh and put it to death. The dead members then become simply passive instruments of righteousness. The mind of Christ can do this, because it led Him to humble Himself unto death (Phil. 2:6-8), and He literally put Himself to death, that is, He laid down His own life. John 2:17, 18. When Christ is given unreserved right to dwell in us in His fullness, the power of His death and resurrection will crucify our flesh (Gal. 5:24) so that our members on the earth will be “dead indeed unto sin” yet alive unto righteousness as though already changed from corruption to incorruption. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!”

To mortal man is extended the honor of becoming acquainted with God. The highest being in the universe is willing to become acquainted with the weakest and most finite. He even desires that we should seek His acquaintance, and to this end has given us a revelation of Himself, adapted to our finite comprehension. Nor is this acquaintance to be like that of an earthly king with one of his subjects, or of some lord or great man with one who is poor and in humble station, who sees only his wealth and splendor and hears only his command; but it is to be the acquaintance of friends,—one which will reveal to us not only the majesty and greatness of God, but His love and mercy, and every attribute that He possesses. He is willing that we should know all that He is and all that He has. This is friendship in its highest and most intimate form.

The prophet of olden time evidently understood this truth when he spoke the words, “Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace.” Job 22:21. But how can we become acquainted with Him? How can moral beings, shut out from His presence with capabilities infinitely lower than His, know Him who reigns in the heavens? To human wisdom this would seem impossible; but not so to the wisdom of God. By one of the most wonderful provisions of His grace, He has brought

to us the knowledge of Himself. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians inquires, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?" But he adds, "We have the mind of Christ." 1 Cor. 2:16. And this revelation comes to us through the agency of the Spirit.

How wonderful is the truth here brought to our view! We, who cannot know (as perhaps we would often like to know) the minds of one another, can know the mind of God! We do not need to know the minds of one another; it would be a great injury to us if we could, for we should lose all confidence in humanity. But knowing the mind of God, we know all that is good and pure and holy, all that is for our strength and hope and comfort. And so God has given us this wonderful insight into Himself. The apostle writes, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." 1 Cor. 2:9-12.

Jesus has said, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Rev. 21:7. And these things God has revealed to us by His Spirit, which "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." It is not merely houses and lands and silver and gold that the saints are to inherit in the world to come. They will inherit also that which pertains to God Himself,—His mind and His nature; for the Spirit searcheth the deep things of God that it may reveal them unto us as among the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

The revelation of God is Christ. Christ gave Himself to us, and in accepting Him, we receive His mind and His Spirit. He is the express image of His Father. Heb. 1:3. His mind is the mind of God. He is one with His Father. John 10:30. God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and Christ is in the heart of the believer. 2 Cor. 3:19; John 17:21, 23. Thus the same mind and the same spirit are in all three, and the individual no longer sees all things within the narrow realm and through the cloudy atmosphere of his own mind, but has rich glimpses into deep and glorious mysteries in the realms beyond.

In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Col. 2:3. To these treasures, therefore, we have access by having the mind of Christ. A limitless field is open before us, which we can never fully explore. There are no treasures of wisdom and knowledge outside of Him. Whether we look in the realm of nature or of human

thought and life, we cannot grasp the truth concerning the things that we see, except as we view them in the light of the knowledge of Him who made all things, and by whose hand they are controlled and upheld. The atheist, as he looks into the heavens, sees only the operations and results of the law of nature working through a “nebular hypothesis;” but the devout astronomer explains, “O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee.” To those who become acquainted with Him, God gives His thoughts. He withholds “no good thing from them that walk uprightly.” Ps. 84:11.

In becoming acquainted with God, we become also acquainted with our self; and though the knowledge may not be pleasant to us, it is exceedingly profitable. While we compare ourselves with others around us, we are not wise, or at most are wise in our own conceits; but when we come to know God, we can view ourselves in the light of the true standard of perfection. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;” and God has said that only He can search and know it. And only as we see with the mind of Christ can we know the evil that is lurking there, waiting to accomplish our ruin.

Acquaintance with God is beneficial in every way. The prophet understood this when he uttered the words which we have quoted, “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace.” The knowledge of what He is to us and will do for us brings us perfect peace; for we know that He is for us, and “if God be for us, who can be against us?” “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.” Isa. 26:3.

Acquaintance with God is also our salvation. For said Jesus, “this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” John 17:3. For the knowledge of God comes by Christ dwelling in us, “Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

Who will fail to avail themselves of the privilege of becoming acquainted with God? Who will prefer their own mind to His mind, their own wisdom to His wisdom? Who will not esteem it a high honor to be able to say, I know the God of Heaven? Let earthly potentates and great men seclude themselves and refuse their friendship and there acquaintance; we know One who is infinitely the superior of any man. We enjoy fellowship and communion with Him, and are on terms of the closest intimacy, even that of sons and daughters with their father. We do not care for the honor that comes from men. “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,

neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Jer. 9:23, 24.

Let it be our aim to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" that in the day of His appearing, we may meet Him not as a stranger, but as a friend, as One whom we well know, and have earnestly longed to behold.