

"It's All In Your Mind"

Philippians 2:1-11

Titus 3:1-7

Mark 10:35-45

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Have you ever known someone who you thought was a hypochondriac? All you have to do was mention some symptoms of some disease and boom, they have it. Of course, with them it's all in their mind.

Or have you ever watched on TV some of the training that soldiers go through in special forces? Or better yet, have you ever listened to one of the soldiers tell you about their experience? I remember what my son, Zack, I had told me about some of the training he went through as a Green Beret. For example, in survival training, they dump you in the middle of nowhere, with no food, water or weapons. And not only do you have to survive, but you have to carry out your assigned mission. Well, Zach spoke of eating those grubs and worms that you find under rocks, and trapping squirrels and eating them. And he said it was such a great treat to find wild onions.

He also spoke of the training he went through and being a prisoner of war. They were physically beaten. They were deprived of sleep. They were stripped naked. Zach even spoke of the hot box; a small box where you can't sit or lie down. You just kind of sit there in a curled up position. He told me that he was so exhausted and he fell asleep in that hot box, which of course, he was punished for. But you know, even as a child that kid could sleep anywhere.

Well, after listening to these and many other stories, I asked, "Why in the world would anyone in their right mind go through all that torture and torment?" Well, he replied that it all has to do with strengthening their mind. They were testing him and preparing him, so, even in the worst case scenario, he would be able to handle it physically, emotionally, and mentally.

You see, it all has to do with the mind. Well, I believe the same is true for all of us who belong to Christ, all who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. In fact, Paul is referring to this in that passage from Philippians that we read earlier. He writes, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:5) Now, in the original Greek, it would be translated slightly different as, "Let this mind (mindset) be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." So, basically, we are to think with our minds as Christ thought with his.

Now, I know there are those who would say that we just can't do that. Christ is perfect, with a perfect mind. We are not. OK, but understand this, our soul has been re-generated in Christ's image. In that passage from Titus that we read today, it says, "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of work done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that by being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the Hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:4-7)

My point is, the Holy Spirit has worked in our life, bringing us to faith in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. Through this act of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus has truly been revealed to us through scripture. So, now through God's word we can actually know the Lord closely, intimately;

including his mind, his will, what he wants, what is deep within him. And so, knowing his mind, we are to set our mind on those things.

Alright, so what is this mindset of Jesus? Well, Paul continues with a pretty good description of it. He writes, "Who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the father." (Philippians 2:5-11) (A liturgical form used in the early church as a statement of faith.)

This speaks very clearly of the mindset of Christ. It describes the mindset of a servant, a mindset of humility, a mindset of obedience. And this is the kind of mindset we are to have.

Now earlier, Paul wrote, "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3-4) Here Paul describes this mindset in a way that we can understand. This is having the mind of Christ.

I mean, look at Jesus, he lived a life of self-denial. What he did, he did for others. What he said, he said for the benefit of others. And when it came to the end, he didn't fight back and try to save his own life. Rather, he subjected himself to the cruelest form of the capital punishment ever invented, and he suffered and died on the cross in order to redeem you and me from our sin. As Paul put it, "He became obedient to death, even death on the cross." (V8b)

So, to have this mindset of Christ means to let go of our self-interest and put others first. It is to seek what's best for all concerned in every situation. It's to lose ourselves in pursuit of God's kingdom and in doing so, experience the fullness of God's presence, knowing his love, his peace, his joy. And yes, we can actually live our life like this, being obedient and living sacrificially, when we are in our right mind, that is, when we share the mind of Christ. Let me try to explain this.

When I was going through college I used to spend my summers working in a paper factory. I had a boss, my foreman, who fought in the Pacific during World War II. His name was Charlie. Well, one evening we were eating dinner, because I worked the second shift, and Charlie started sharing stories with me about when he was in the first wave that landed on Iwo Jima. Actually, Charley was in the five first waves during the island hopping that they did in the war. But it was on Iwo Jima that he was wounded.

He said that the island was ugly. With all that volcanic ash, it looks like the moon. And boy did it stink, like rotten eggs. He told me that he thought, this was what hell looks like. Nobody wanted to be there, but it was an enemy stronghold and they needed the airstrip for our planes to land in returning from their bombing runs over Japan. So, they took that island at the cost of 21,000 American casualties, including Charley. The point is, none of the soldiers wanted anything to do with that island. But they landed and they took it, because they were told to do so. They obeyed that commander, not out of fear that they would be punished if they didn't obey. Charley and all the rest of them obey because of the men around them, because they depended on each other. And they obeyed for everyone back home who were depending on them to end this madness. I know this may sound strange with all of the killing that went on there but those men obeyed out of love.

Well, it was pretty much the same for Jesus. In his mind out of love, he considered others, you and me, more significant than himself. That is why, he made himself nothing, and, humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. He did this, because of his mind, he knew we depended on him, and we were worth dying for. We were worth loving, and forgiving, and making us his own for all eternity.

Well, this is the mind that we are to have. We see this again in Mark's gospel today where Jesus says, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you would be slaves of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:43b-45) So, I am talking about having the mindset of a servant, the mindset of humility, and the mindset of obedience. And yes this is the mindset we can have through the Holy Spirit working in our life, regenerating our mind, and revealing in God's word, our Lord Jesus and all that we have in him. When our God takes hold of us like this, that is when we are in our right mind, the mind of Christ, the mind where love rules, the mind of an obedient servant. And so, my prayer today is that his spirit would work powerfully in my life and in yours and keep us all in our right mind, the mind of Christ. Amen.