

The Mind of Christ

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9).

This is a plea for a searching self-examination of our lives, to see whether we are on the way of life.

I do not believe there is sufficient realization among us of the magnitude of the divine call -- of how deeply it should reach into and transform every aspect of our lives -- of the great changes it must bring about in our characters and the direction of all our activities -- of how we spend ALL our time and efforts and money.

The prize that we seek is infinitely beyond anything we can comprehend. For the devotion of a brief lifetime, God is offering us perfect joy for all eternity. The present is such an infinitesimal fraction of the future that it is the uttermost folly not to give up everything possible in the present in order to assure the future. This folly will be tragically apparent at the judgment seat.

What God asks -- and it is such a pitiful little compared to what He offers -- is complete devotion, complete dedication, complete putting away of the present, complete consecration of the whole life to the service of God.

Everything depends upon the COMPLETENESS of the dedication. One-half will not do; three-fourths will not do; nine tenths will not do. God requires ALL our life, ALL our interest, ALL our labor and activity.

The reason part time service will not do is that there is no such thing as part time service to God. We CANNOT serve two masters. If it does not involve the whole heart and life and strength and love, it is *no service to God at all*.

It is the few who perceive this who find the way of life. The many who do not, only follow the way of death.

Jesus expresses it most broadly and deeply when he says:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy strength, and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy mind."

This, he says, is the **first** commandment. He says it comprises ALL commandments.

The trouble is that we can read commandments like this, fully accept them, and yet never realize or comprehend the fulness and depth of their meaning -- the magnitude of **WHAT THEY REQUIRE OF US**.

If we could really and fully perceive the infinite greatness of the destiny offered us, it would completely transform our lives. Every thought and action would be affected. We would be

entirely different creatures from the common world around us, instead of being so sadly like them in so many ways.

The best this world offers -- its greatest riches, its fullest pleasures, its highest honors, its most distinguished powers and positions and opportunities -- are less than NOTHING, compared to the destiny that awaits the approved of God.

In the ebb and flow of this uncertain world, the presidency of the United States is at the moment the greatest power and prominence to which man can aspire. Its honors are great, its powers and prestige are great, its opportunities for affecting human history and advancing human welfare are great. But all these things are mere children's mud-pies compared to the position of the LEAST of those who attain to the Kingdom of God.

We know this theoretically. We fully accept it as a logical proposition. But do we FEEL it and LIVE IT IN OUR LIVES? Are our lives consistent with this tremendous conception? Or are we just a few more natural creatures thinly veneered over with a little religious sentiment?

Do we conduct our lives in harmony with what we profess to be -- THE HIGHEST ARISTOCRACY OF THE UNIVERSE -- the divine, eternal aristocracy of righteousness -- infinitely higher than all the kings and presidents of this poor little passing world of wickedness?

We say, quoting Scripture:

"The whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

-- and truly it does. Whatever is natural, whatever is human, whatever is not intelligent and purposeful godliness is wickedness.

But how different are WE? Just believing a few first principles of Bible truth and calling ourselves Christadelphians does not automatically make us saints. It could much more easily make us hypocrites.

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Paul says (Rom. 8:9), and this is the key passage of our subject:

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Here, then, is a clear test. **Do we have the spirit of Christ? This is the most important question anyone can ask himself.**

First of all, what does it mean to have the spirit of Christ? How would you define It? How would you test yourself to see whether you had it or not?

If we cannot define it, we can be reasonably sure we have not got it, because the spirit of Christ is only acquired by learning what it is in its various aspects of character, and consciously effortfully -- adopting it.

We can begin to define it from this same Romans 8:

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (v. 5).

This gets us a little closer, but is it really reaching us? Is this another of those statements that we accept without comprehending? What are the "things of the flesh" and what are the "things of the Spirit," and what does it mean to "mind" them?

The things of the flesh are the things of this present life food, raiment, shelter, entertainment - all human and natural activity -- the natural daily round of possessing and enjoying. The things of the flesh also include all natural thoughts, reactions, emotions, desires, affections, pleasures, etc.

Some of the things of the flesh are good and some are not. Those that are good are those necessary for the continuance of our life and maximum usefulness to God. Whatever does not contribute to this is a harmful detriment.

Where does the line of necessity come? Where does necessity end, and unfaithful stewardship and misusing our Master's goods begin?

It is not for us to say in individual cases, but we are sure that the Scriptures, frankly faced, leave no doubt that the line of duty cuts lower and deeper than most of us desire to live.

The Scriptural standard is:

"Having food and raiment, therewith be content."

And Paul's accompanying observation is:

"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can take nothing out."

The mind of Christ, and certainly the example that he gave us, is that we should be content with the bare necessities of life, and beyond that point should concentrate ALL our labor and time in the service of God. He gave us an example to follow, and he gently but very pointedly reminded us that:

"The servant is not above his Lord."

The apostles who followed him, and lived as he lived, call our attention to his example in this respect.

And even the bare necessities must not be our primary concern, for that is lack of faith:

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you."

We seem to be speaking more of restrictions -- what we should not do, rather than that we should do, but this is not really the case. The biggest harm in many things of the flesh simply lies in the fact that they fill the mind and take the time and effort and attention from spiritual things.

We are called upon to be *positively* spiritual, to be CONSTRUCTIVELY spiritual -- to "always abound in the work of the Lord." We are not called upon to be just negatively spiritual just to not do things forbidden -- we are here to work actively and to the fulness of our strength in the works of God.

In many things the positive will crowd out the negative if the positive gets big and strong enough.

We must not only "always abound in the work of the Lord" we must WANT to do so, we must be lovingly and gratefully anxious to do so. God insists upon, not just all our strength, but --far more important -- all our heart and soul.

If a brother or sister truly gets the spirit of Christ, truly IS Christ's, it will not be necessary to exhort them to "always abound in the work of the Lord."

It will not be necessary to exhort them to attend and support all the classes and meetings of the ecclesia. If they have the spirit of Christ, if they truly are Christ's -- in heart and not just in name -- they just could not stay away, if it were humanly possible to get there. Their whole heart and soul and mind would be with the brethren and sisters -- those few whom God has given us as companions in the glorious pathway to the Kingdom.

Paul agonizingly travailed in birth over many, long after they had passed through the waters of baptism, that Christ should be truly born in them.

A brother with the spirit of Christ would not dream of missing a meeting he could possibly attend, or of not supporting to the fulness of his means, yea, and beyond his means, every activity of the Truth and work of the Lord.

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"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh..."

Do we regard our real life and joy as the time we are able to give to God's work, keeping all other activity to a minimum so that we can give the fulness of our heart and strength in thankful service to God?

Or do we live like the rest of the world -- busy days, lazy evenings, pleasure-seeking weekends, minds full of worldly things -- wrapped up in houses, gardens, cars, boats, sports, food, raiment, personal adornment, and the pitifully childish decking out of these vile, perishing bodies -- interested in the world's activities -- excited about sports, stupified by television?

The call of the Gospel is a call to WORK -- lifelong work, and it does not mean just a poor little self-satisfied hour a week sending out lecture invitations.

It means continuous day-in and day-out labor and dedication, in season and out of season.

Consider a few passages:

"Who is a faithful and wise servant... blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh shall find so doing."

"Thou wicked and slothful servant! Take the pound from him and give it to him that hath ten pounds."

"Occupy till I come."

"Unto whom much is given, from him shall much be required."

"Depart from me: I was hungry and ye fed me not, thirsty and ye gave me no drink; naked and ye clothed me not, a stranger and ye took me not in."

"When ye have done ALL that is commanded you (who can ever feel they have?) say, We are unprofitable servants."

"ALWAYS ABOUNDING in the work of the Lord."

Are these discouraging? Not a bit of it! But they are challenging, they are thought-provoking; they are deeply searching and penetrating. Do we have the mind of Christ?

"I must be about my Father's business."

If we have the mind of Christ we shall eagerly desire, like Paul, to "spend and be spent" in the service of our beloved Master. We shall resolutely strip our life of all non-essentials that cater to the flesh, and devote all our time and strength and goods to the welfare of the Truth and the Brotherhood.

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is NONE OF HIS."

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The mind of Christ is more than eager labor for God. It is love, kindness, gentleness, patience, joyfulness, cheerfulness, rejoicing even in tribulation, eagerness to make peace, to forgive and seek forgiveness, to cover a multitude of sins. Let us frankly rate ourselves in these characteristics.

"If we would judge (diakrino-examine) ourselves, we should not be judged (krino--chastened, punished, condemned by God)."

Paul says in verse 8 (still in Rom. 8):

"To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Therefore, if we do not have peace -- inner peace -- peace of mind -- cheerful, joyful inner harmony -- we are not spiritually minded -- we have not the mind of Christ -- we are none of his.

Upon what does peace of mind depend? Upon two things:

1. Recognizing that "ALL things work together for good." That whatever happens is for the best and has a wise and loving divine purpose, and if fully accepted and properly used, will lead us forward on the way toward eternal joy.

Therefore Paul could say:

"I rejoice in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience godliness."

2. A consciousness of harmony with God, to the best of our ability, and ever striving for closer harmony.

We shall never be perfect. We shall never be able to do all we would, or as well as we would, but if our life as a whole is dedicated to God and to love, and we feel in ourselves we are each day getting just a little closer, we shall have peace of mind.

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The mind of Christ is unselfishness. We shall never be any good to God as long as we are wrapped up in ourselves, wrapped up in our own petty pleasures and problems.

There is nothing smaller than a self-centered mind. There is nothing larger than a spiritual mind. It comprehends eternity. It is free and untrammelled. It radiates power and goodness,

In the first eleven chapters of Romans Paul paints a broad and glorious picture of the purpose of God with mankind. It is tremendous and overwhelming, especially as compared with this petty, crawling existence, and Paul himself expresses the godly mind's awed and reverent reaction at the end of chapter 11:

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God..."

"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever!"

Then, beginning chapter 12, he brings the whole weight and force of this magnificent divine revelation to bear directly upon you and upon me:

"I beseech you THEREFORE, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice."

This word "beseech" is a strong one. In 2nd Corinthians 8:4 it is translated "with much entreaty." It carries the sense of great urgency -- intense pleading and persuasion. It expresses Paul's deep conviction that this is the only POSSIBLE way that gratitude can respond to such divine love and wisdom.

"I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God."

He does not command, by the judgment of God, but beseeches by His mercy. We, too, must maintain this approach. The deeper we go into the responsibilities and obligations of the Truth, the more we must present them as a beseeching because of mercy, rather than a commanding because of judgment.

In view of the infinite mercies of God, His love, His forbearing, His kindness toward man in providing such a glorious destiny, I beseech you to present your bodies a living sacrifice.

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"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

This, too, is a familiar passage with Christadelphians. It has a powerful, stirring ring, and adds life to any exhortation.

But do we know what it MEANS? Have we DONE -- are we DOING -- what he so impassionedly pleads with us to do?

"That ye present your BODIES a living sacrifice."

Why our bodies? Why does he not say our hearts, our minds, our lives? Because he wants to drive it home in as practical and powerful way as possible.

Most people prefer to keep their religion indefinite and ethereal -- feelings and emotions -- sensations and experiences.

But Paul says, Present your BODIES, your hands and feet, your eyes and ears and mouth, you, yourself, in all your daily activity -- your attention, your abilities, your strength.

"A **living** sacrifice" -- a life of sacrifice. Sacrifice is a yielding up -- an offering -- a total devotion to a purpose. Sacrifice is a joyful thing -- a privilege and an opportunity. The sacrifices of the Mosaic Law were for reconciliation, for thanksgiving, for fellowship and communion with God -- a joyful seeking of His presence, a thankful recognition of His goodness, an expression of participation in the greatness of His purpose.

"Holy." This is an essential part of the mind of Christ:

"Be ye holy, for I am holy."

"Be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

"Without holiness no man shall see God."

Holiness is separation, both mental and physical, from all that is unclean and defiling. The world is unholy, fleshly, carnal. All its actions are unholy -- for they are natural and animal. "The whole world," says John, "lieth in wickedness."

Mankind is defiled because of sin. ALL natural thinking, ALL natural activity is sin. It is part of the sin constitution; it is unsanctified. Ungodliness, unholiness is our natural atmosphere and condition as sons of Adam.

Holiness is a repudiation of all that is natural, and a prayerful endeavor to think and act in harmony with all that is spiritual. It is a day-to-day and moment-to-moment subduing of the flesh.

Holiness in its deepest aspect is a purifying of the mind from natural thoughts and desires and reactions, and filling the mind continually with spiritual thoughts -- thoughts of God and His goodness and His glorious purpose and revelation.

Holiness is feeding deeply on the Word of God -- striving to fill the mind with its beauties -- to expand the mind from the natural pettiness of the flesh to largeness and breadth of comprehension. Paul says:

"The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God ... but he that is spiritual discerneth all things. . ."

"We have the mind of Christ."

Holiness is cleansing the heart by the washing of the Word, recognizing that the natural motions of the flesh are evil, selfish, impatient, unkind, harsh, proud, unclean -- realizing that only by constant prayer and study and effort can the natural man be put to death within us, and the new man be created and nourished into newness of life.

The fruit of the Spirit -- the mind of the Spirit -- is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.

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The fruit of the Spirit -- the mind of Christ -- is **love** -- a spirit of sympathy and kindness and compassion and mercy -- a Godlike, Christlike outlook toward others -- not condoning sin, but sincerely desirous of helping others out of the way of sin into the way of life -- a deep fellow-feeling for all the victims of this death-tending body of sin.

This was the mind of Christ:

"I came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

This must be our mind too.

Holiness forbids us from associating with sin and error, but it is not ours to condemn, only to exhort and persuade.

The flesh is quick to criticize and condemn, to find fault, to talk of the sins and weaknesses of others. The flesh is very quick to impute motives, to pass judgment.

Truly we must preach righteousness, as Christ did, clearly and fearlessly, we must preach holiness; we must preach perfection. Truly we must condemn sin.

But we must do it as a doctor, seeking to heal and make strong, rather than as an executioner, zealous to destroy.

We must point out with crystal clarity, and to the best of our ability, what is wrong and what is right, what leads to life and what leads to death, what is of the flesh and what is of the Spirit.

But how sad -- how unutterably tragic -- when our condemnation of the flesh is made in the spirit of the flesh! And this we find is usually the case, for the loving, forgiving, reconciling, spiritual mind of Christ is so rare among men, even among men called brethren.

How quick we are to call down fire from heaven! How we like to feed our pride and self-esteem with what we like to call "righteous indignation" and "zeal for the Lord"!

Christ led a life of patience, and gentleness, and submission to evil, praying for his enemies, doing good to them that hated him, even as he taught his followers.

But on rare occasions, by the direct authority and inspiration of God, he spoke in burning condemnation of stubborn, entrenched wickedness and self-righteous hypocrisy which had seen the Spirit manifested in mighty power, and had presumptuously rejected it.

Because our flesh is evil, we would much rather copy him in the latter than in the former -- much rather ape his special divine authority than follow his self-crucifying example.

"Love suffereth long, and is kind; love seeketh not her own, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things; love covereth a multitude of sins."

The fruit of the Spirit -- the mind of Christ -- is joy. This must be our basic frame of mind -- joy in God, joy in His infinite goodness and mercy -- joy in the assurance that all things work together for good, joy that -- regardless of the trial and discouragements of the passing present -- we are on the winning side, the eternal side, the side of righteousness and power, the side that is guaranteed the eternal victory.

Joy that we have been shown the meaning and purpose of the present groaning travail of creation -- that it is merely the brief birth pangs of a glorious eternal creation of righteousness -- a new heaven and earth of eternal beauty.

These are the things to which God's love has called us, and all our frustrations and struggles and problems are stepping stones to that glorious destiny.

If we have the mind of Christ, we shall be filled with an unearthly joy and thankfulness that radiates to all around us. They will perceive, as men did of the apostles, that we have been with Jesus. We shall seek to communicate our joy to all, and embrace them in its transforming power.

We shall joyfully forgive seventy times seven.

We shall fervently pray for those who oppose and abuse us.

We shall eagerly return good for evil, thanking God for the opportunity that opposition gives us of manifesting the living power and beauty of goodness.

And we shall do this with joy and kindness and thankful humility that God has entrusted us with just a little bit of His divine wisdom to manifest to men the beauty of holiness.

The fruit of the Spirit -- the mind of Christ -- is peace. Peace is harmony with God:

"Great peace have they that love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them."

We can never have peace while our heart is divided, or interested in worldly things. Peace can only come through single-minded devotion to spiritual things. Paul says to the Philippians (4:4-7), giving four sure, divinely-attested steps guaranteeing peace:

1. "Rejoice in the Lord."
2. "Let your gentleness be manifest to all men."
3. "Do not worry about anything."
4. "But in everything -- (there is the key word) -- in EVERY THING by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God."

-- and the promised result is positive and inevitable:

"The peace of God which passeth all understanding, SHALL keep your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ."

Do we have this peace of God which he describes in such marvelous terms? Do we experience this quiet, unassailable, joyful tranquility of which the world has no comprehension? We are invited to partake of it. The way is clearly shown:

1. Rejoice in the Lord.

In view of God's infinite goodness, there is no other possible frame of mind for His children.

2. Be gentle, loving, and forbearing toward all men.

In view of man's pitiful frailty and weakness, there is no other possible attitude for God's children.

Gentleness is the key to all worthwhile relationships. It is self-control and spirituality-beauty and dignity and maturity of character. The flesh is naturally rough and crude, and if we have the mere facts of the Gospel without its gentle spirit, our zeal for God will be but fleshly self-assertion and rudeness.

3. Do not worry about anything.

Worry is distrust, fear, unfaith, disbelief, lack of trust in God.

4. Draw near to God in everything and for everything -- in thankfulness and prayer.

Drawing near to God does not mean merely pious supplication. It means a quiet and consistent effort to approach unto the likeness of His glorious character and holiness.

This is peace. This is the mind of Christ. This is the mind of the Spirit -- the overcoming of the flesh and of the world. This is the way of life -- the only POSSIBLE way of life:

"To be fleshly minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his" (Rom. 8:6-9).

Paul commands (Rom. 12: 10):

"Be kindly-affectioned one to another, with brotherly love."

This clearly does not refer to times and circumstances when this comes naturally, for then we have no need of the exhortation.

Its significant bearing is upon times when circumstances would provoke us to be otherwise. Brethren are always brethren, no matter how they act. They must some day answer for it as brethren. Our kindness and affection may be the one needful thing in winning a brother back to the way of life, so in failing to manifest them we may have a brother's blood upon our hands at the Judgment seat of Christ. We are our brother's keeper, and it is the erring ones that most need our love.

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In chapter 14 (of Romans) Paul expounds and manifests by example one of the deepest and most powerful aspects of the mind of Christ -- a divine principle of conduct that can solve easily and simply nearly all problems among brethren.

Paul is speaking of cases where the action of one brother, though perfectly legitimate in itself, causes concern or offence or distress to another. HERE is the great test of the mind of Christ:

"Let no man judge his brother, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

"If thy brother be grieved with thy meat -- or anything you may do that is not essential to be done -- now walkest thou not in love."

"Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died."

Christ gladly died for him, even while he was yet a sinner, in the hope of his redemption, but if we willfully distress others and cause them to stumble by persisting in things which they do not believe are right (v. 21):

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

If we persist in anything that troubles another brother or sister, we create tension and estrangement that gradually erodes ecclesial unity and frays the bonds of affection that are essential to sound ecclesial life. "No man," says Paul in this chapter, "lives to himself."

Our every act has an eternal, unchangeable effect, for good or ill. A small evil may have everlasting reverberations. Speaking on the same subject to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 8:13), Paul sums up his own mind, and the mind of Christ:

"Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I WILL EAT NO FLESH WHILE THE WORLD STANDETH lest I make my brother to offend."

The pre-eminent motive of love is the welfare of others, and the forbearing of one's own desires and advantage for the common good.

WHOEVER IS NOT DEEPLY IMBUED WITH THIS SENTIMENT AS THE MAIN-SPRING OF THEIR LIVES IS *NOT* A BROTHER OF CHRIST AND NEED EXPECT NO WELCOME FROM HIM WHEN HE RETURNS.

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."

"Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification."

"For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."

CHRIST HIMSELF, THE SON OF GOD, THE KING OF KINGS, THE HEIR OF THE UNIVERSE, PLEASED NOT HIMSELF, BUT CHOSE THE PATH OF REPROACH AND SUFFERING AND SELF-DENIAL FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS.

Paul again stresses this essential principle of godliness in writing to the Philippians (2:1-5):

"Fulfil ye my joy; be likeminded; have the same love: let nothing be done through strife or pride. . . "

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

(Taken from "Be Ye Transformed" Volume 1 pages 24-36 by Bro. G. Growcott)