

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 46

March 11, 2020

Okay, let's jump back into Luke Chapter 4:16-19

I'll reread that so that we could remember what the text actually says.

¹⁶ And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

And he closed the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And it really went downhill from there ... almost literally downhill because they wanted to throw Him off a hill ... so that is the context here.

So picking up where I left off, the idea of "He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor," *the Gospel is the Kingdom*. It is literally intertwined with the concept of the Kingdom ... you really can't separate the two. It is the Kingdom, it is Jesus, it's the Word, and it **must** be proclaimed. The Gospel is "good news" so it has to be told; it has to be proclaimed. The word "Gospel" is wrapped up in the word, "preach"; properly - to evangelize. The word gospel, by itself, is euangelion (ευαγγελιζω) "the good message". It means to announce good news - # 2097. The "eu" means "good". We do a "eulogy" by saying a good word about the dead. That's what a eulogy is.

By implication, the gospel is positive; it's not *bad* news but *good* news to those who will hear it and embrace it. By the way, many words have the prefix "eu" or "good" in them in the New Testament. If you were to get a Greek Lexicon and go to the place where "epsilon", and "upsilon" are found beginning with those two letters, then you will find a whole bunch of words prefaced by those two letters.

The target audience of the gospel is **the poor**. Is this the economically poor or the spiritually poor? Well, I could tell you that in Haiti it is both. The gospel spreads much easier in Haiti than it does in Guadeloupe because in Guadeloupe, relatively speaking, they are economically middle class at least, and not nearly as poor as the Haitians are in Haiti. But, primarily, I think this refers to the *spiritually poor*.

Or, it could be the concept of those who *know* they are poor as opposed to those who feel like they are "self-sufficient". Or, maybe it is a combination of the two. The word for poor is similar to the word, "beggar" so He is preaching the Gospel to beggars. It's an interesting phrase, because we are all beggars telling other beggars where to find bread. If we **know** we are beggars, then we know that we are asking for something that we cannot provide for ourselves. That is the right place to start in receiving the Gospel.

Matthew 19:21 Jesus says to the rich young ruler, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” It was obviously the economically poor in this context. The disciples argued that the perfume that was used on Jesus’ head could have been sold and given to the poor. Jesus tells them that the poor are always going to be with us.

Now, this is not a reason ‘*not*’ to try to find the best economic system to live under or to propagate in the world; but no matter how much man tries to alleviate poverty, essentially it will never be alleviated. It’s like, no matter how much we want to get rid of all illnesses, they have a way of new ones just popping up. We have vaccinations and other means to pretty much eradicate some diseases, or make them less common in the world. We don’t worry about Polio quite like we used to. I remember when they gave us the sugar cubes, but there are certain things that are going to persist until Jesus comes again, no matter what we do. And that’s not an excuse to stop trying to alleviate the pain and suffering of people.

In **Revelation 3:17**, to the church in Laodicea, Jesus characterized them as being wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. The solution to their spiritual poverty was to buy gold refined by fire. Here, are those in Spiritual need, lukewarm, those neither hot nor cold. A parallel passage is found in **Matthew 11:5** where Jesus uses this as a confirmation of His true identity as the ‘expected One’. Among other things, the poor have heard the Gospel preached to them. He is probably referring back to the same passage, that the Messiah will preach the Gospel to the poor. So, what do they observe Jesus doing ... preaching the Gospel to the poor.

Do you remember when Jesus talked about John the Baptist in **Matthew 11:8**? He asked a question, “What did you go out to see?” He gave them one option ... “Did you come out to see a man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces.” So what did you come out to *see*? In other words, and this is a truism as well, the gospel is going to be received by the poor more readily than it is by the rich. “It is more difficult for a rich man to be saved than it is for a poor man (**Matthew 19:24**). So, who will Jesus be reaching more ... He will be reaching more of the poor. So, when we see that happening, it’s a confirmation of the prophecy that Jesus will preach the gospel to the poor. This list includes the blind, the lame, the lepers, the dead, the dead and the poor (**Matthew 11:5**). “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.”

The common denominator is that all are weak, vulnerable, helpless, neglected, marginalized, ignored, shunned and considered ‘sinners’ as evidenced by their condition, because most people of that day believed that if you had these conditions, it’s because you are a sinner. I refer you to **John 9** where the apostles asked Jesus about the blind man ... “Who sinned, this man or his parents; that he was born blind?” It was the common assumption in Job that he must have done something really horribly wrong to have the conditions he was enduring. That’s the way people thought then and many people think that today ... particularly those who preach a prosperity gospel. They believe ‘if you are sick and poor, it’s because you are a sinner and you just need to repent and have more faith.’ And you may feel very good if you are rich because you can look down on the poor and think, ‘it is because all of the faith I have, and the evidence of the wealth is there.’

The common belief was those in these kinds of situations were being punished for their sins. They deserve what they *have* or *do not* have. One of the evidences of Jesus' identity was that He looked at these people differently, and He was willing to serve them ... to help them and to get involved with them, to touch them and to save them. That was one of the things that was **so** different about Jesus.

The Bible (or God) seems to place a lot of emphasis on the poor for two reasons. The first has to do with why some people *are* poor. And secondly, some have *allowed poverty* to make them rich in **faith**. There is nothing inherently noble about being financially poor, and there is not inherently something ignoble about being financially poor. But God does take notice of the poor because of *injustice* that often **makes** people poor.

When **James 5:4** talks about this he really gets it because he says, “Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth” the Lord of Hosts. That means “the Lord of the armies”; He has heard the cries of the poor as they didn't get paid a day's wages. Their salaries had been withheld.

Brian: It's heartbreaking when we see people still do that. It happened in South Texas when they were hired to work for \$10/hour and they got paid \$8; the second week they were paid \$6, and they stopped being paid. You can see that people still do that.

Rod: Yes.

So God looks down on some of the reasons why there are poor. Some people are poor because they're lazy. **Proverbs** talks about that a lot. ([Go to the ant, thy sluggard. Consider her ways and be wise. Proverbs 6:6-11](#)). **II Thessalonians 3:10** says, “If a man doesn't work, he shall not eat”.

But some people are poor, not because they are lazy or because they won't work, but because the circumstances require them to work for people who treat them unjustly; who won't pay them. In Haiti, (and I'm sure they have caught on to this *now*), but somebody would pull up in a car and says, “I have a job for you in the Dominican Republic”; and if they don't have a job in Haiti they'll do almost anything, so they get over there and they are practically enslaved in the sugar cane fields. They were just about as well off on the streets of Haiti than they were working out in the hot sun all day cutting sugarcane and being paid almost nothing or being charged for their food from the little wages they were getting, and at the end of the day, *they owed more than they had earned*. There are circumstances, and sometimes we wonder why we need unions. I'm personally not a big fan of unions because if people did right, we wouldn't need them; but people don't always “do” right. So, many are poor because they are exploited by the rich and the powerful, and this makes the Lord of Hosts, the armies {of angels}, very angry.

Jesus says, “But woe to you who are rich; you are receiving your comfort in full.” Just as there is nothing inherently virtuous about being poor, there is not anything inherently evil about being rich. There is, however, a generalization made by experience. The rich tend to be corrupt, stingy and self-sufficient; the poor tend to be humble, generous and dependent.

Those are generalizations, though. We find exceptions. You can find really good rich people and you can find really horrible poor people. **James 2:1-13** teaches us how to leave the poor with dignity and not give favoritism to the rich.

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. ² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, ³ and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? ⁵ **Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?** ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? ⁸ If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not commit murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law...

Verse 5 tells us that God made a deliberate choice to use poverty to make people spiritually rich. And, again, whether He means just financial poverty or whether He means spiritual poverty, there is a correlation between the two, I believe. Did Jesus not say something similar in **Matthew 5:3**, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”? There seems to be in this interchange between poverty of resources and poverty of spirit. So God is shaping the faith of people on earth through life experiences. **Romans 8:28** talks about “in all things, God is at work in those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.” So, God is *in* the circumstances; working in the circumstances of poverty in order to help shape the lives of His people.

It seems that the tool of poverty is much more effective in producing a faith outcome than is riches. I'm reminded in **Matthew 13:22** where Jesus talked about the seed that was sown among the thorns; the riches of this world. People's concern about their riches choked out the word that was planted. “And the one on who seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and it becomes unfruitful.” Just as knowledge tends to puff up (**1 Cor. 8:1**), riches tend to make one *dependent* on oneself. Poverty provides the occasion for one to trust because the person is weakened and in need. The Gospel is truly their Good News.

There seems to be a parallel between being ‘anointed’ and being ‘sent’. I'm going back to the idea of “the Spirit of God anointed me.” The parallel between the two: The Father has two actions in this text using Hebrew parallelism. The parallelism is usually a statement said one way, and then followed by a statement that parallels it, being said in a different way. Sometimes the second statement will be the antithesis of the first statement, or sometimes it will be just another way of saying the first statement. That is part of the way they do Hebrew poetry. It's more a rhyming on concepts rather than a rhyming of sound.

The parallelism in **Isaiah 61:1** we have ‘the anointed’ as the equivalent to ‘being sent’. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord *has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted*; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners...

Because I was *anointed* (in the first phrase); I was *sent* to *proclaim good news* to the poor (in the second phrase). So those are the two that I am paralleling here. It seems the word “commission” is related to the word “apostle”. It is easy to see one who is anointed is on a mission.

The second mandate of this passage is to bring release to the captives (**Luke 4:18**). *He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives...*” It immediately struck me that whether one is actually released depends on their response to the proclamation.

When Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, the document did **not** end slavery and it had many limitations to it. However, it *was* designed to secure freedom for blacks *wherever* there was a Union victory. So whenever they had a victory in a particular place, the blacks in that vicinity were automatically freed because the Union had secured their freedom. It did not mean that every black person in every state or every place was freed. It just meant that the conquering army was freeing the captives in that particular area. **Battles for freedom still had to be fought** and **blood still had to be shed for real release from captivity to occur**. And when it **did** occur, many blacks did not accept freedom in reality. They did not know HOW to live ‘free’ and so they remained in virtual slavery. They didn’t know what to do. They didn’t know where to go. It wasn’t like they could just hop on a boat and just go back to their homeland. They may have been a third generation slave who knew nothing about their homeland. It wasn’t like the children of Israel going back to the promise land, though of course most of them hadn’t ever lived there either. They grew up in captivity.

The mere *proclamation* does not mean they will ‘be’ released. When you *proclaim* release to the captives, it doesn’t necessarily mean that the captives will be released. It merely sets forth the legal means *to* release them.

Jesus secured pardon for ALL men, but ALL men did not accept the pardon; nor did they accept the ‘terms’ of the pardon. So, when Jesus pardoned everyone on the cross, only those who have accepted the pardon are truly pardoned. The pardon is available to everyone on earth, but someone made the parallel that if a man is on death row, and the governor calls at the last minute and gives him a pardon saying, “I’m commuting your sentence” or I will change it from ‘death’ to ‘life in prison’ or whatever, the person has to **accept the pardon** in order for it to be valid. IF the person on ‘death row’ says **I do not accept the pardon**, then they have no recourse but to put him to death. The pardon has to be accepted. It’s only a proclamation of a pardon; it’s not a pardon in reality until the one actually accepts it.

This has lead some people thinking that the Gospel is about *universalism*. They say, “If Jesus died on the cross for everybody; everybody is automatically saved without any response at all.

That thinking is very closely akin to the point of Calvinism of limited atonement. Calvin said that *Jesus only died for those who God had already decided to save*. And once those people were identified, they could not resist salvation anyway; so basically, they had *always* been saved from the time Jesus had died for them ... because they couldn't reject it anyway. That's pure Calvinism; that's what it means.

I'm thinking of a person who is held captive to unforgiveness. She is bound by this hate and is controlled by the person she hates. Jesus proclaims release to her, but she doesn't accept it and stays imprisoned. Hate isolates her from others and makes life difficult ... crippling. She *could* walk out of the cage, but in her mind, she is locked in; she is trapped. Even though Jesus has opened the door and told her it's okay to leave, she stays inside afraid to walk out. How sad.

We know people like that who are held captive by trauma, by circumstances in life, by attitudes, by not being able to forgive someone, and they are trapped in a cage when the door has been opened.

Proclamation is necessary; so people must know that they cannot say in bondage. People need to know that they can be free if they put their faith into it. They must accept what Jesus secured on the cross. Jesus knew His proclamation must be backed up by His blood.

Brian: It is true that Christ has set me free, but I really want to make up more rules for myself so that I could follow them, or I could "work hard". The Jews seemed to want to "do" more to save themselves ...

Rod: Yes, because to accept just pure freedom from captivity, you have to accept the fact that you were *truly* "captive" and there was *nothing* that you could do about it. People don't want to accept that they are that vulnerable ... that they are that helpless.

I think more people would have responded to a Gospel where Jesus said, "*I'll make a deal with you. How much do you have; how much can you put into the deal? And what you can't pay; I'll pay the rest.*" I think a lot of people might go for a 'gospel' like that.

Macy: We saw the coolest thing on Friday. A man had to tame a horse. We got to watch the entire process. The horse had to realize that 'that man was his only option. The horse had never been ridden and by the end of it, Buck Brannaman was riding it. He had never met this horse before. And by the end of it, he was riding it.

Rod: Was this the Horse Whisperer? I wanted to take Brenda to that but she wasn't well enough.

Macy: Yes. But in that, the **horse** had to realize – that **this** man was his only option. The horse rejected the man, snorted at him, and ran around until he realized that "that" just wasn't going anywhere. His *only option* was that man in the middle. Eventually, he was able to show him that. Sometimes the horse would just reject him, and would run; but then he would realize it wasn't getting him anywhere.

It was so beautiful. You could use that in so many areas. I mean, his goal was to win the horse to come to him. He was in distress. The horse is still free to run around the arena, but would slowly begin the process of ‘coming to him’. We could watch the process of him learning to trust him more and more until he would be able to actually come up to the man. It was gorgeous.

Rod: That’s a beautiful picture and sometimes, I don’t know that I’m very good at it; but sometimes I feel like that horse whisperer with people who would come in and they just “don’t get it”, or they are very scared of it. They are afraid. It’s just hard.

I started a relationship with a new, young man this week and it is just amazing. I’m just amazed that this particular young man is here and I am talking to him because it is that opportunity to see him blossom and bloom. He is just coming to life. I’m just excited about that process.

The idea of *anointing* and *sending* someone, especially when done by God and the anointing of the Holy Spirit indicates the highest level of confidence and expectation. This calls for, from a person, a high degree of commitment and discipline.

★ This is **key**. Perhaps the degree of commitment is directly related to the degree of:
1) Confidence 2) Expectation 3) Direction

And this is followed by ongoing support and praise. The anointing also provides authority to do what one is sent to do. Without this, the person flounders and may not be able to have the confidence to act.

Once you have been anointed ... it’s almost like the blessing that the father gave the son in the Old Testament. It was a “kind” of anointing. When that was given to the son, there was a confidence that the son had ... I am now a man. I am now coming into my own. I am receiving the birthright. **Then** there is an expectation and usually spoken into the blessing was some expectation of what this son was going to be. And **then** there was some direction that the son had because ‘you are being anointed to do what’? What is your direction? Where are you going to go? What are you going to accomplish? All of this is built into the idea of anointing. I think we talked about that already, the anointing that John speaks of in with regard to our anointing in 1 John.

There are similarities with Jesus and Moses. He, too, was hand-picked by God to proclaim release to the captives. Moses was given authority. There was an expectation. God had confidence in him even when Moses had no confidence in himself. God gave him a very specific direction to follow. Moses’ confidence grew as he recognized more and more that ***God was a continual support and he received his praise from God*** ... surely, not from the Israelites. The Israelites grumbled at him most of the time. And this led to the actual release of the captives, though only physically were they released.

The kind of captivity mentioned here and the kind of release required is much more formidable than it was in Egyptian bondage. They were captive to fear about and greater degree of comfort and ease than they feared, and the war following to enter Canaan.

For captives, there is a particular “at-home-ness” with captivity. That is why we saw the Israelites wanting to return to Egypt when they were in the desert (particularly when they were eating manna every day), saying, ‘Oh, give me some onions and leeks... give us the vegetables we had back in Egypt!’

The captive knows the cell, and has a predictable expectation that is to come. Release looks risky. There are ‘unknowns’ and a lack of control. It requires faith to walk out of a cell; not knowing where the next meal will come from. At least, the slave knows the master will feed him something because the slave is valuable to the master. There are rules and structure in captivity; and a degree of safety and security there. Often, *winning against the captor and making a way of release for the captive is only the first step.*

Jesus did this on the cross.

1 Peter 3:19

After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

Ephesians 4:8

“When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.”

But **Phase two** of this release is to convince the captives (those who were captives to sin) to believe that they are truly free and that they **do** belong to Another. This is confirmed in **Romans 7:1 and following.**

One is securing their release, and the second is convincing the person who has been released that they truly *are free*. It took Jesus’ death on the cross to secure their release, and it takes a lot of convincing, sometimes, to convince released people that they truly are free. It’s hard. I have spent a lot of time in my life trying to do that.

The Hebrew writer gives us an amazing picture of what Jesus did to free us from slavery. In **Hebrews 2:1-3** it begins with the admonition not to neglect such a great salvation. For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. ²For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, ³ how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

We neglect things when we are **casual**; when we stop giving attention to detail. “*Casual*” is not to opposite of “*formal*”; it is the opposite of “*captive*” and “*committed*”. Casuals are drifters. Casual people are drifters.

The next section in **Luke 4:18** shows us that as Jesus is *anointed*, He is also *appointed* over the works of God’s hand. God puts all things under His feet. Though we do not ‘see’ this in “earthly” reality, it exists in “human” reality. Here is the idea of Jesus having **won the war that gives freedom to the captives**, but we don’t recognize, sometimes, that He has actually won the war. We act, often, as though the enemies of Jesus still have power over us. So it isn’t always seen in the earthly reality. We don’t always “see” it *now*.

This is what Hebrews 2 is talking about. We don't visually "see" it or "understand" it. It *looks* like the enemy is still winning. When we look at the world through *our* eyes, the enemy is winning. I believe that is why Revelation was written. *Through the eyes of the persecuted Christians, the enemy was winning. Through the eyes of God, the persecuted Christians had already won. They were the victors.* So the victory exists in Heavenly reality. Jesus worked to make the 'will of God' in Heaven the 'will of God' on earth! (Matthew 6:10).

Instead of seeing an Anointed King with captives in his train, we see a suffering and dying Jesus who is now at God's right hand, coronated with glory and honor. He went through the full process of suffering, death, resurrection and coronation to blaze a trail for us to bring many sons to glory. He is now totally sanctified or set apart, and He is busy sanctifying us, anointing us, and sending us into a world to suffer, and to fight for those who suffer.

Jesus comes alongside us, His brethren and children, trusting His Father. All of this is in Hebrews 2:9-18. Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us why this was so important.

"Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself, likewise, also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives."

In other words, Jesus came down here and essentially, "*became captive*" in order to free the captives! He turned Himself over. He allowed Himself to be arrested. He allowed Himself to be captive to a cross ... nailed to it! He allowed Himself to be captive to a tomb ... with a stone over it! He allowed Himself to be as vulnerable as you can get. You can't get more vulnerable than being on a cross, in a tomb, and dead! This was *in order to show all of us* that *there is no position of vulnerability that He cannot overcome through His resurrection, and now His coronation as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.* And now He is leading **us** to victory and sending us out as His army as those who have already been freed, to proclaim release to the other captives.

The process of freedom for the captives is well-explained here. It is those who are 'captive to the fear of death.' This may be our greatest fear. But when Jesus gives us eternal life, why fear death?

What are people afraid of? Death! I asked a young man this week, "What will you do if you saw somebody choking?" What would most of us do if we saw somebody choking? We'd do *something*. We might try the Heimlich maneuver unless we become paralyzed with fear. We might be looking around to see if someone is better qualified to do something, but usually, when it comes down to it, we do **something**. Why? Because we fear death! The last thing we want is to just stand there and watch somebody die ... and do nothing!

Jesus came to free us from that fear. We're all going to face that at one moment or another. We will all come to that point whether it is suddenly, or we just land a plane slowly as in hospice. But eventually, we are going to land, one way or the other!

The word, “release” in **Luke 4:18** is “aphesis” (αφεσις). It is freedom, pardon, deliverance, forgiveness, liberty or remission. It is “to cause” or “to stand away” or to “dismiss”. So, to what are **we** captive or enslaved? This is what Jesus proclaims release from. So, what are we captive to? Sin, fear, law, death, doubt, anxiety, worry, meaninglessness, casualness, depravity...? We are captive to a lot of things, and Jesus came to release us from all of that.

To be held captive is, at minimum, to have your freedom limited if not totally taken away. Being captive to sin is addressed in detail in **Romans 6:6**. At baptism, **our old self was crucified with Christ that our body of sin might be done away with that we should no longer be slaves to sin**. Death frees us from slavery to sin. **Dead men don't sin**. Look at where we sin, and we will see the part of self that is alive and well.

Paul says in **Romans 6:11** that they have died, but they still have to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God. **Obedience is the test of slavery**. **Who** do we obey? The test of slavery is, “**Who** do we *obey*”? Sin causes us to *have to* choose. Sin wants us to listen to “it”; to respond to its “it's” voice. **Jesus' voice must be stronger**.

Just because we do not obey ‘sin’ in overt ways does not mean we obey Jesus in overt ways. We seem to have a neutral position in much of life; neither good nor bad; neither hot nor cold; neither faithless nor faithful. **THIS** makes Jesus **sick**. ***It makes Him sick for people to be in that neutral position***. I think that's why the people who were steeped in sin during His ministry were the ones who loved Him the most because they knew how captive they really were.

The person who is in that neutral position ... ‘I know I do some things wrong, but I'm pretty good’ ... that person is in a horrible place. Now, Jesus doesn't wish for people to go into sin so they really realize how horrible they are, but it just seems like if you have all this sinfulness in your life, it's easier to see it when you hold it up to the light. It's one thing to have a smudge here and there, and another when you are covered with mud. It's pretty easy to see when you are dirty from head to toe. A smudge or two seems like ‘no big deal’ to us.

Paul speaks of presenting members either as slaves to impurity and lawlessness, or as slaves to righteousness resulting in sanctification. There is no real benefit to the sinful things we do other than fleeting glorification. The benefit of obedience or slavery to God is sanctification leading to eternal life. And we can define eternal life as ‘greater intimacy with God’.

When Jesus said that He was here to proclaim release to the captives, He was saying a lot. To understand the mind of Christ, these matters require some digging. Jesus addresses this in **John 8** telling the Jews of their slavery which they denied even though in their history they had been politically and socially enslaved more than they had freedom as a sovereign nation. They still **denied** being *slaves*! And Jesus made it clear that everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

This idea of who is a slave to sin and who is a slave to God is difficult, especially when sin is cloaked in **religious garb**. This is one thing Jesus came to expose.

The kind of release that **Psalm 61** speaks of has reference to Jewish captives of war; those going into exile. That is the context of **Isaiah 61**.

Isaiah 61:1-7

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; ² to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, ³ to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

⁴ Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, they will raise up the former devastations; and they will repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. ⁵ Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks, and foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers. ⁶ But you will be called the priests of the Lord; you will be spoken of as ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. ⁷ Instead of your shame you will have a double portion, and instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, everlasting joy will be theirs.

But the prophetic Messianic meaning and application is much broader. It occurs to me that there is a primary and a secondary application to this release of captives. The primary being released from sin, its power and control; and the secondary is more the problems associated with or caused by sin (fears, addictions, anxiety). These are more “symptoms” of sin and they have pathologies of their own. But the secondary cannot effectively be defeated until the primary release takes place. So even if you teach someone how to win over anxiety, or how to win over an addiction, if the underlying sin is not dealt with through the cross, what ultimately have you accomplished? You may have improved the quality of their life *here* for that person, but if you relieve the symptoms caused by the underlying sin, but don’t relieve the underlying sin, you’ve just made people, perhaps, feeling just a little less sinful. And no, I’m not suggesting that we don’t treat symptoms. We do that in our physical lives. We always treat the symptoms when we have a headache.

Ruth: We’ve seen people with addictions come to Christ, and really give their whole lives to Him, and then suddenly they go back to the addiction. They didn’t stay free.

Rod: That’s true, but part of that is going back to that idea of their not accepting the reality that came with their freedom from sin. What does that mean? They understood they were forgiven, but they didn’t understand their new identity... who they were; they didn’t understand the power they had; they didn’t understand how to incorporate that into their lives. So, they are someone who has been freed, like the slaves; but they don’t know how to live free because no one has trained them. No one has helped them to see how to **be** free.

I’m convinced that one of the things that I teach people that has the most power in it is *their identity*. *Who are you in Christ?* Because sin has so marred their identity, they don’t know who they are any more.

The literal slave who has lived in captivity for fifty years, and then someone says, “You’re free”, for him to start thinking like a free man; he’s a slave. In **his** mind, that’s his identity. He’s been told that for the last fifty years. You are a slave – you are owned by this master. For him to accept this totally different life, he must have a different perception of his new identity. *Who am I in Christ?* He has to learn to own that.

So it does take time, and I believe it takes discipling ... people reminding them over and over again, ‘this is who you are’. “This is who you are.” You are no longer that old person. This is who you are. And they have to *believe* that and they have to *put their faith in that*.

It’s not a simple matter because there is the physical component of addiction. That has a physiology to it that makes it even more difficult.

Brian: Self-righteousness is even more addictive. It’s far easier to fall back into that.

Rod: Oh, yes, exactly. The person who accepts the grace of God, then, still has in their mind that they can somehow get to heaven on their own merits. That’s their *identity*! That’s the way see themselves.

Ruth: And if I work hard enough for Jesus, he *has* to take me in because he *owes* it to me.

Rod: Right. And I agree that **that** is more insidious than, sometimes, the people who have the physical addictions.

Macy: It’s like your hands, after you have washed them and you turn on a black light to see them. It’s disgusting all the filth that’s still there.

Rod: Miss Brenda got a black light out, not long ago, and she tried to prove to me how toxic our world is. But I don’t really want to know how toxic our world is.

And now, let’s pray.