

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 48

April 1, 2020

Back in 2010, I began a study called “The Mind of Christ”. I used it “Challenger Deep”. The reason I called it “Challenger Deep” was because I wanted to make sure that people understood how deep the Mind of Christ really is. The deepest place in the ocean is a hole that is called “Challenger Deep”. It is over 36,000 feet deep and that place in the ocean off the coast of China has been explored only twice, by only three people in the history of the world. Imagine how deep that hole is. Mount Everest is 26,000 feet high. You could put Mount Everest inside this hole in the ocean, and still have 10,000 feet of ocean on top of that. That’s a pretty deep hole. When I was looking for a metaphor to help me understand the mind of Christ, I looked for something that was really deep, and that was the deepest thing I could find.

So, this is a study that began in 2010 and it took me seven years of study, 1 to 2 hours every morning. I wrote 21 journals during that period and this is journal #2. We’ve already been studying for about a year here at Central Church so we are about in the middle of journal 2, so we are going to jump into the middle of a study.

The text that we are in is **Luke 4:14-21**. I am reading this to give you the context for the study tonight.

¹⁴ And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread throughout all the surrounding district. ¹⁵ And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. 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 downtrodden, ¹⁹ to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

²⁰ And He closed the book, 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.”

This is a quotation from **Isaiah 61**, from the Scroll He was reading that day in His hometown Synagogue. He was chosen to read that day, and He took the opportunity to announce to His hometown that this Scripture had been fulfilled in their hearing that day; *meaning* that He **was** the fulfillment of that Scripture.

Now this is a Messianic prophecy. It is a prophecy about the coming Messiah or the Christ. The words ‘Christ’ and the word ‘Messiah’ are the same; just in different languages. Jesus took the opportunity to say, “*I am basically **the Christ**. I am the One you have been looking for* and when the Christ comes *He is going to be the anointed One and he is going to do all these different things that this text talks about.*”

We have talked about three or four of these “things” already but now we are going to look at the one in verse 18 where it says, “to set free those who are downtrodden.” This is the fourth mandate for the Anointed One...to set free those who are downtrodden. Literally, this phrase means, ‘to set free the downtrodden’. It is “to send away, having been ‘crushed ones’ in release.” I know that sounds a little bit awkward but that’s how it is in the Greek. This phrase is just one word in the Greek, (τεθραυσμενους). It means literally, that those have been crushed; those who are downtrodden. But what does that mean?

Here are the words used to define the ‘downtrodden’: it means to break someone, to be downtrodden means to be broken, to be someone who is shivering, (you get the picture in your mind of someone who is broken is shivering), someone who is shattered, or someone who is crushed by brutal oppression. This is the only reference where this word is used in the New Testament.

We have to get the idea that He is addressing people who are in situations where they have been broken, they’re shivering or shattered; they are crushed and oppressed. Now His action, the action of the Messiah, is to “send them away in release”. Before He *sends* them away, He *releases* them, and to send someone away *for* their release is really kind of cruel in itself because you have to release someone who has been shattered before you can send them away. So He does both.

The question for me today, and I am going to be contrasting the physical situations (the social situations) in which people are downtrodden, and the situations of which people are spiritually downtrodden. I want us to put the emphasis on the spiritual, but I want to recognize that there is a correlation between the different ways people are downtrodden in the world, and the spiritually downtrodden people.

In my experience, it is a **tragedy** ... such as abuse, or neglect that causes people to be downtrodden or to be crushed. It sends a signal to people who are being oppressed that they are unimportant; they are simply there to be used by someone else; they are unappreciated or they are devalued. That’s what crushes peoples’ spirit. That is what causes them to be downtrodden. Perhaps it is even literally ‘to be enslaved,’ or to be held without one’s will being consulted. It may mean being falsely accused. The scene that comes to my mind is a scene in **John 8:1-11**. In John 8 we have the story of a woman who was caught in adultery. She was a sinner, and there is a back-story as to what was involved in her sin of adultery; but she was being, literally, dragged before Jesus and all these men standing around ... I can imagine her literally shivering; scared to death not knowing what was going to happen to her on that occasion because they were talking about literally stoning her to death.

So, for the word ‘downtrodden’, we could use words like ‘trampled upon’, ‘oppressed’, ‘subjugated’, or ‘someone who has been terrorized or treated badly by people who are in power’. It is interesting to me because of what we do today when we want to understand more about a subject, we “google” it. I “googled” the word ‘downtrodden’ to see what would come up. I was amazed that one of the references of “downtrodden” that *most* came up was: ‘Downtrodden football teams’ of all things. I guess there are downtrodden football teams. Maybe some teams come to your mind of things that have been oppressed or trampled on, but it struck me that that’s how the word was used most often in “google”.

But something else came up in those quotations about a situation in Pakistan years ago. They had a lady, who was the Prime Minister of Pakistan, named Benazir Bhutto. I have a quote that I want to share with you: “***Benazir Bhutto always aspired a society free from exploitation and discrimination; and fought for the rights of downtrodden and oppressed people of the country.***” Now, later on, because she was working for the downtrodden people, she was assassinated in her own country. The article goes on to talk about women not being subjected to humiliation or torture; but were to be treated with respect as equal partners on a road toward progress and prosperity. That’s really what she was fighting for within her country. She was fighting for the downtrodden women of her country. She was fortunate enough to be elected as Prime Minister but the forces against her were so strong that she was assassinated. To be downtrodden implies that someone or some system is trodding on a person or a group. This is sometimes difficult to identify even within our society; but even more difficult in the Spiritual realm.

It’s interesting that in exploring the Mind of Christ (which I wrote on January 12, 2011), but while I was writing this, it was the first anniversary of the devastating earthquake in Haiti that took the lives of over 200,000 Haitians. Downtrodden seems to be so appropriate to describe these people who are at the mercy of corrupt politicians who care more about power and money than they do about the misery of the people of Haiti.

Release of people who are oppressed is not merely stopping the oppression, but it means also to open doors of opportunity creating a ***new*** system that gives the downtrodden the ability to stand up with dignity to make their way through work and meaningful service. The corruption must stop. The road must be paved, also though, to allow people to grow. It’s not enough simply to ***free*** the downtrodden or to stop the corruption that leads the people to being downtrodden, but we must also give them new opportunities to go forward. Now this has a special significance to it that we will see. We’re going to apply this to Spiritual oppression.

I want you to look at **Hebrews 2:14-15**. “¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”

In Hebrews 2 Jesus has said to have freed those who all their lives been held captive by their fear of death that had been fostered on them by the devil. But how does Jesus free us from this kind of oppression? At the heart of oppression is someone who is afraid for their own life. They are afraid that they will be killed by someone who is more powerful than they are. The answer that is given in **Hebrews 2:14-15** is a little surprising about how Jesus actually freed the downtrodden.

First of all, Jesus became ***like us***. He was partaking of flesh and blood, and through His death, He rendered **powerless** the devil who had the power of death. By voluntary, self-sacrificing service, that is how Jesus disarmed the enemy that was oppressing us. It is somewhat amazing to me because that doesn’t seem to be right. It seems like if you are going to free people who are downtrodden, you need to ride in, need to have a sword to kill the enemy, and free them that way.

But Jesus' answer was that you need to sacrifice; you need to lay down your own life; you need to give things up; you need to empty yourself because **that** takes control away from the enemy making him helpless to scare us or to intimidate us or to control us.

The person who literally is dead, doesn't fear death! Someone who has died to himself doesn't fear death; he can't be controlled by other people. So to help a downtrodden person we must **identify** with them first. And then we can lead them out of their plight by showing no fear of death ourselves. Is this why we admire people like Gandhi, or Martin Luther King Jr.? We admire them because they were **self-sacrificial**. But Jesus did what **no one else** could do. Gandhi and King freed people who were being downtrodden in **this world**; they gave them dignity and showed them a better way. But **Jesus** did what no one else could do. He died, removing sin, which when removed, takes away the fear of the second death. It removes any power others might have over us. It reminds me of what Jesus said to Pilate who was trying to intimidate him in **John 19:10**. I can release you or I can crucify you. Jesus' answer to him was, "You have no power over me except what is given to you." So, Jesus did not fear death and He knew that ultimately, Pilate had no power over Him.

Social Justice organizations are usually focused on some oppressive situation and they work to bring about either release for people who are being oppressed, those who are innocently imprisoned, or people who are not being given an equal opportunity in our society.

The **danger** of social action is not usually the end result because we can see that if a person is in jail, for instance, and he didn't do it, that's not social justice, so we need to work to free that person. And so, it's not the **end** result, but often the **means** that people use to accomplish that. If the **means** creates additional injustices, then we have simply moved them from fear from one person to a fear another person.

Another problem is that we may fight for social justice or improvement without actually preaching the gospel to people. Improving the lot of the downtrodden and the oppressed is good and it has value in itself, but it is inadequate to address the real injustices that exist; the **real need** of the oppressed. Their oppression is by the greatest enemy of all; the devil. No social action can touch this. The only weapon to destroy oppression, to restore dignity to the oppressed, is the Gospel itself.

When Jesus demonstrates to us the right balance in His approach, we can see that He often did lead a frontal attack on injustice. For instance, when He drove out the evil spirit, **that** was a frontal attack. A person was being tyrannized by the evil spirit. Or when He drives out the moneychangers from the Temple, He is addressing an injustice that is going on. When He confronts the **religious leaders** of His day who bind up loads and place them on people's backs to carry, He is confronting injustices and the downtrodden. But He doesn't simply confront those things; He gives people an **alternative life** – one that is focused on freedom from sin.

So, if we really are going to follow in the footsteps of the Messiah, who proclaims this release, or people who are downtrodden, then we're going to have to not simply **free** them from their oppression, but we will have to offer them a better **way of life**. A definition of oppression is 'to exercise authority or power in a burdensome, cruel or unjust manner.'

But one site talks about eliminating, for instance, racism, sexism, homophobia or anti-semitism and they add this phrase: *‘in its eternalized forms.’* What are the eternalized forms of such things as racism or anti-semitism ... of people not being treated equally? What are the eternalized forms that really drive those kinds of actions? I believe we have strayed from Jesus’ thinking about oppression and its causes.

The Bible says that the heart is desperately wicked; capable of unspeakable acts of oppression, but the great oppressor is Satan, himself, who enslaves the self in a prison of sin, and law, and death. The oppressor always has power to oppress, and will, until the oppressed has been given a power greater than the tyrant ... the power to **not** fear death ... the power to **know** that their **names** are written in Heaven. They are to fear only One Person in this world; to have respect ultimately for only One and that is the One who has the power of life and death over us, and that is Jesus or God, Himself. And He is the very One who wants to give us freedom from every other oppressor.

I want you to think about the four mandates that the Messiah has been given. Let’s look at the fifth mandate tonight which is found in verse 19 of Luke 4. It says, “... **to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.**” The text has used ‘proclaimed’ before, back in verse 18 when it talks about proclaiming release to the captives. Literally, this is what it means ... “*to proclaim a year of the Lord acceptable*”. Let me say that again; *‘to proclaim a year of the Lord acceptable.’* The acceptable or favorable year of the Lord is to be proclaimed. It is a time of favor; it’s a time of proof. Let’s unpack that and see what it means.

In **Acts 10:35** at Cornelius’ house ... remember that Peter was reluctant to go to Cornelius’ house, because Cornelius was a Gentile and he didn’t think a Jew should be going to a Gentile’s house. But after Peter saw that God poured out the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his household, he said, “**I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality,** ³⁵ **but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is *right* is welcome to Him.**” The word “welcome”, and this is from the New American Standard Bible; the word “*welcome*” is the word “*acceptable*” ... to Him.

This story illustrates well what Luke chapter 4 means. Jesus is proclaiming that God now will accept both Jews **and** Gentiles alike ... a new era ... a new time of entrance into the Kingdom. It is an in-grafting, if you will, of the wild olive shoot onto the natural olive tree. You can go back and read about that in Romans chapter 11. It is a time of inclusion. It is a time to say to the outsider, “You can come in and enjoy the favor and the approval and the acceptance of the Lord.” That’s what this phrase means ... He is proclaiming the *favorable* year of the Lord. It is a year of favor for those who were on the outside and they can be invited in.

Philippians 4:18 uses the term in this way: ‘They are an *acceptable* sacrifice that is well pleasing to God.’ God accepts the sacrifice of the Gentile churches. In other words, God looks down favorably upon the Gentiles now, and that is the *favorable* year of the Lord. And those of us who are Gentiles; that would probably be most of us who are listening to his tonight, God’s favor is **upon us** now. God now looks at us as His people just as much as He does the Jewish people as His favored people.

The idea is that there are *seasons* of favor because He talks about the year of God's favor. We should not discount or take for granted that we are in a season of the favor of God. The Lord shines His face on us. The Lord can also turn His face away from us. The Lord inclines His ear to us, but the Lord can also shut up His ears toward us. Jesus is proclaiming the opportunity for all men to enjoy the Lord's favor and acceptance. It is a time of grace; but a season of judgment is also coming for those who would not respond to His offer of acceptance.

Isaiah 49:8 says this: "This says the Lord, 'in a favorable time I have answered you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you; and I will keep you and give you for a covenant of the people, to restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages.'" In other words, there was a time when God did turn away from Israel and they were taken off into captivity; but then He turned back toward them and they lived in a favorable time.

Paul says something similar in **Romans 2:4** where he says, "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" *Today* is the day of salvation. *Today* is a day of favor where God is extending His hand of favor to you and to me. But He says that we should not take lightly of His patience, His forbearance and His kindness, because it is a time when He is offering us an opportunity to be saved. So, how does God look at that when we turn that down?

Look at **Isaiah 61:2**. "To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God to comfort all who mourn." In fact if you go back to Isaiah 61 and you read in the original quotation, he couples 'the favorable year of the Lord' with 'and the day of vengeance of our God'. Favor is for a **year**, and vengeance, it says, is for a **day** which indicates to us that the favor of our God is going to be extended to us for a very long period of time; and it has been a very long time since Jesus died on the cross. But vengeance will come in a day. When God's favor comes, it will come to those who will seek Him; but what of those who do not? The Bible says that they will receive vengeance. The word 'vengeance' is a word that means 'repayment'. It is used for those who broke the covenant.

He says in **Deuteronomy 32:35** which is also quoted in Romans 12, "'Vengeance is Mine' says the Lord. I will repay." This was for Israel's rebellion, and this connects us with the justice of God. Jesus did not leave out the part about the vengeance of God. In **John 3:17** it says "He did not come to *judge* the world, but to *save* the world", but the day of vengeance **is** coming. It could be significant what He chose not to read. He did not put in the part about vengeance, but He knew the day of vengeance would be coming.

If you read **Romans 2:1-11** it has a balance of the two. {Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ² And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³ But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who will render to each person according to his deeds: ⁷ to those who by perseverance in

doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸ but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress [e]for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God. }

When He talks about vengeance He talks about wrath, indignation, tribulation and distress and righteous judgment, but when Jesus closes this book or this scroll, and He hands it back to the attendant, all the eyes of the synagogue were fixed upon Him. And at this point, **why** were they fixed upon Him? Were they fixed upon Him because He was the hometown boy who has, to this point, distinguished himself; or was it because of how He read the passage? Or were they waiting to see what He would say or what He would do? Perhaps some of ‘all of this’ was why they were fixing their eyes upon Him.

There seems to be some expectation that there is more to follow this reading, and Jesus did not disappoint them. He proclaims the content of this passage has been fulfilled today ... implying **He** is the anointed One, and that **they** were the poor, and the captives, and the blind and the downtrodden! By implication, this would have been offensive to them. Not only was it that He proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah, but He also proclaimed that they were the poor, the captives, the blind and the downtrodden! The confidence, the assurance, and the self knowledge that Jesus had is incredible. Jesus lived in the acute awareness of who He is and what His mission is. There is no ambiguity. This was the mind of Christ. It was clear; it was focused; it was intentional in revealing to others in various ways **exactly** what He came to do. Jesus broke the silence and began with a statement that, in and of itself, may not have lead to the violent reaction that followed. He was, no doubt, enjoying a time of favor Himself, but the meaning of His words would surely sink in and his audience would see the implication of the statement in this passage.

So, He says, “**Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.**” The fulfillment of prophecy for the Jew of Jesus’ day was something they looked forward to. They **wanted** Scripture to be fulfilled; but they wanted it fulfilled on **their** terms and written in the framework of **their** understanding.

Jesus is not concerned with their terms or with their framework. Today reminds me of **Psalm 95:7-11**. “**For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, ⁹ “When your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work. ¹⁰ “For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways. ¹¹ “Therefore I swore in My anger, ‘truly they shall not enter into My rest.’” This is quoted in **Hebrews 3:15**, “**Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.**”**

We live in **today** as opposed to yesterday or tomorrow. And He speaks today. Each day is like manna from heaven...enough, sufficient for the day, yet we have a hard choice that we have to make, either with a soft heart to receive what He says, or with a hard heart, reject what He says. The Psalmist and the Hebrew writer knows, as does Jesus, that hardness and rejection are options for people.

I also think **2 Corinthians 6:1-10** apply to this case:

“And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain—² for He says,

“At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you.” Behold, now is “the acceptable time;” behold, now is “the day of salvation”—³ giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,⁴ but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,⁵ in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,⁶ in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,⁷ in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,⁸ by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;⁹ as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,¹⁰ as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.”

Paul urges them not to accept the grace of God in vain and he quotes from **Isaiah 49:8**, “At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you.” Behold, **now** is “the acceptable time;” behold, **now** is “the day of salvation”—.

In this passage which is Messianic and about Israel, in verse 6 he also speaks of a light to the nations so “that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth”. Paul quotes this verse in **Acts 13:47**, “For so the Lord has commanded us, ‘I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, That You may bring salvation to the end of the earth.’”

This is significant since Jesus continues on to say that the favor of the Lord at certain times in the past, as in Elijah’s day ... If you keep on reading, in **Luke 4:24-27** you see Elijah’s day. In Elijah’s day, when the sky was shut for three and a half years, he goes on to say that Elijah was not sent to the Israelites; but he was sent to a poor widow in Zarephath who was a Gentile. In the same way, Jesus has now been sent to the Gentiles as well as the Jews, and that was offensive, also, to the Jews. So they took offense at Him for bringing up these passages that had reference to the Gentiles and they decided that they wanted to *kill* Him!

The offence of Jesus in **Luke chapter 4** is now three-fold in nature.

First, He proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah ... and they didn’t like that. Second, He proclaimed them to be the needy ones in this passage ... they didn’t like that. And thirdly, He proclaimed that God would turn to the Gentiles and they *certainly* did not like that.

This is getting ‘into’ the mind of Christ in this passage to see what He understood from the passage, and how the people could listen to that passage understand what He was saying.

I think that’s enough for tonight.

I wanted to show you, who were new, what we are doing here. This is really an in-depth study and it is forcing us to get deeply into God’s Word and to try to understand what is being said.