



FAITH matters

September 11, 2023

Several years ago, I needed to make a phone call to a man who was quite angry with me. I knew I needed to make that call but I also knew that it would not be a pleasant or delightful conversation. I knew that I would have to listen patiently and try to understand and not become angry in return. I picked up the receiver and began to dial the number. I put the phone to my ear and heard the line ringing. Before anyone had a chance to answer, I put the phone back down again. I bowed my head and I prayed these words: "O God, let the same mind be in me that was in Christ Jesus." I picked up the receiver again, dialed the number and talked to the man.

Sometimes the mind that is in me is the mind of Christ Jesus. Sometimes the mind that is in me is my own mind... and I am generally satisfied with my own mind except when my own mind and the mind of Christ are miles and miles distant, one from the other. Have you ever been there? Have you ever come to some moment in your life... perhaps picking up the telephone to make a call to somebody you would just as soon not talk to... perhaps receiving a letter in the mail that you would just as soon never have received at all, that you would gladly take back to the Post Office if you could... perhaps an angry outburst in your daughter's bedroom and a door slammed... and walking out of that bedroom feeling about as low as the carpet on the floor... have you ever come to a moment in your life where the truth rose right up and slapped you across the face: your own mind and the mind of Christ... miles and miles and miles distant from one another.

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." Those are the words of the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians. Few words in the Bible have more ingrained themselves in me than those. For it's so easy, is it not, to let somebody else's mind become your own... to let somebody else's thoughts become your own. It's so easy to let somebody else tell you who you ought to be, or who you need to be, or who you could be if you really wanted to. The problem with living that way is a fairly significant one: when life becomes a matter of allowing other people to define your identity, then you have no

identity of your own... you have no place inside of you that says: this is me... this is who I am... this is the center of my being and out of this center will I live my live.

And yet, holding onto that identity is so very difficult. For we live in a culture that frequently presents us with values that are quite antithetical to those embraced by Jesus Christ. Watching television this past week, I learned of a man who had been sentenced to life in prison without parole. His crime was a serious one but he appeared to be a man in whom repentance could take hold and grow. But life in prison without parole was not enough for the victim's family. They felt he deserved the death penalty and they were very angry he did not receive it. As I watched that news report, I wondered: where is the mind of Christ here? Have we become so hardened as to believe people cannot learn from their mistakes, cannot rise up out of their sins and become new people?

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.”

~Written by Rev. Fred Edmonds



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