

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

PASTORAL COUNSEL ON THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST, PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

- A. Introductory notes on Christian living.
1. A Christian's behavior should be worthy of the Gospel of Christ which is the topic of the entire section.
 2. A worthy walk is characterized by humility with Jesus as our example.
 3. Paul's lesson on Christian behavior makes this one of the key theological passages on the person of Christ.
 4. Athanasius (296-327 AD) gives a humbling perspective on the study of this section, *Man can perceive only the hem of the garment of the triune God; the cherubim cover the rest with their wings.*
- B. The example of humility is Jesus (5), ***Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,***
1. Paul declared that Jesus demonstrated qualities Christians need to develop by God's grace.
 - a. The primary attitude seen in the life of Jesus is humility as seen in Philippians 2:3, *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*
 - b. Other key verses on humility
 - 1) Ephesians 4:1-2, *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,*
 - 2) Philippians 2:3-4, *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*
 2. Christians are to *have the mind of Christ*
 - a. We are to think the way He thinks.
 - b. Warren Wiersbe, *...the secret of Christian joy is found in the way the believer thinks - his attitudes.*
 - c. H. D. M. Spence, *He bids us mind the things which the Lord Jesus minded, to love what he loved, to hate what he hated; the thoughts, desires, motives, of the Christian should be the thoughts, desires, motives, which filled the sacred heart of Jesus Christ our Lord.*
 3. We have access to these qualities *which is yours in Christ Jesus*
 - a. When Christians accept Christ as Savior, there is the ability to choose the mind of Christ, as well.
 - b. J. Alec Motyer, *There is great stress on the fact that this change came about by voluntary decision.*
 4. The following verses (8-11) exhibit the humility of Jesus in his humiliation and exaltation.
 - a. They deal with divine revelation which is the only way we can hope to understand the mind of Christ.
 - b. Paul describes Jesus' prior existence in relationship to His humanity in order to describe the depth of His humility.
- C. The cost of humility is humiliation (6-8)
1. Jesus' humiliation is seen in three stages.
 - a. His humiliation began before the incarnation (6), ***who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,***
 - 1) His deity
 - a) He has always existed, John 1:1, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
 - b) He possesses all things, 2 Corinthians 8:9, *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*
 - c) He is the Creator of all things, John 1:3, *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*
 - d) He is God.
 - 1] *form is nature or character.*
 - 2] He always had the nature of God.
 - 3] Whatever attributes (characteristics) are possessed by God, the Son of God possesses them.
 - 4] It will be important to note the distinction made in verse 7 which refers to attributes not nature.
 - 2) His eternality
 - a) *was* is the stronger verb of *to be* which denotes *from the beginning.*
 - c) It is in the present tense and points to Jesus' continuing existence with the full nature of God.
 - c) Thomas Constable, *His full deity is not something Jesus Christ gave up or laid aside when He became a man at the Incarnation.*

- 3) His sacrifice
 - a) *did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*
 - 1] *grasp, here, means to retain by force what one possesses.*
 - 2] Jesus did not try to take something He already possessed but chose not to keep it by force.
 - b) Quotes on Jesus' sacrifice
 - 1] Marvin Vincent, *Christ's great object was to identify Himself with humanity...If He had come into the world emphasizing His equality with God, the world would have been amazed but not saved.*
 - 2] Gerald Hawthorne, *...his true nature is characterized not by selfish grabbing, but by an open-handed giving...*
 - 3] Max Anders, *As God, he did not selfishly grasp hold of or tightly hold to his position as equal with God. Instead, he was willing to leave his high position in heaven temporarily and to give himself over to serving our needs.*

b. His humiliation continued as He lived incarnation (7), ***but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.***

- 1) It was a change of function (*Kenosis*)
 - a) The term *kenosis* comes from the verb, *to empty*
 - b) Jesus emptied Himself not of His divine nature but there was a change of function.
 - 1] Jesus gave up the independent use of His divine attributes.
 - 2] His divine power was veiled but not surrendered, John 17:5, *And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*
 - 3] Jesus surrendered no attributes of deity but He did voluntarily subordinate His use of them in keeping with His purpose of living among men and their limitations.
 - c) Quotes on Kenosis
 - 1] John Walvoord, *...Christ surrendered no attribute of Deity, but that He did voluntarily restrict their independent use in keeping with His purpose of living among men and their limitations.*
 - 2] Charles Ryrie, *...the emptying concerned becoming a man to be able to die. Thus the kenosis means leaving His preincarnate position and taking on a servant-humanity.*
- 2) It was a change of state (*Hypostatic Union*)
 - a) Jesus placed His divine nature into humanity, fully God and fully man, one person with two natures.
 - 1] It is personal whereby the two natures constitute one person.
 - 2] It insures the constant presence of both humanity and deity.
 - b) Notes on *taking the form of a servant* and *being born in the likeness of men*
 - 1] *form* is the same word used in verse 6, *form of God.*
 - 2] *likeness*
 - a] Jesus is fully man but without sin, Hebrews 4:15, *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*
 - b] Sinfulness is not an essential feature of mankind since Adam was created sinless.
 - c) Quotes on hypostasis
 - 1] J. Alec Motyer, *Christ Jesus brought the whole of his divine nature, undiminished, into a new and - had it not been revealed to us in Scripture - unimaginable state.*
 - 2] Irenaeus (170 AD), *...the incomprehensible being made comprehensible, the impossible becoming capable of suffering, and the Word being made man.*
 - 3] Tertullian of Carthage (160-220 AD), *...we see plainly the twofold state, which is not confounded, not intermixed but conjoined in One person, Jesus, God and Man.*

c. His humiliation climaxed at the fulfillment of incarnation (8), ***And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.***

- 1) He appeared to other people as any other man.
- 2) His humility is most evident in His full submission to the will of the Father, Hebrews 5:8, *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*
- 3) He chose to die on the cross for our sins.
 - a) Thomas Constable, *He was willing to undergo death by crucifixion, a form of execution that was*

without equal in its pain and humiliation.

- b) It was said that crucifixion was a form of execution from which Roman citizens were exempt. Only the worst criminals among the slaves and foreigners underwent crucifixion.
- c) A hanged man was cursed by God, *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.”* Note Deuteronomy 21:23.
- d) Max Anders, *Becoming a man was humbling. Taking the nature of a servant was more humbling. Christ went still further. He humbled himself to the extent of being willing to die like a common criminal on a cross.*

2. Thoughts on Jesus’ humiliation.

- a. Warren Wiersbe, *The test of the submissive mind is not just how much we are willing to take in terms of suffering, but how much we are willing to give in terms of sacrifice.*
- b. D. A. Carson, *The eternal Son did not think of his status as God as something that gave him the opportunity to get and get and get. Instead, his very status as God meant he had nothing to prove, nothing to achieve. And precisely because he is one with God, one with this kind of God, he “made himself nothing” and gave and gave and gave.*
- c. Charles Spurgeon, *The lower He stoops to save us, the higher we ought to lift Him in our adoring reverence. Blessed be His name, He stoops, and stoops, and stoops, and, when He reaches our level, and becomes man, He still stoops, and stoops, and stoops lower and deeper yet.*

C. The result of humility is exaltation (9-11)

- 1. There is no name greater than the name of Jesus (9), ***Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,***

- a. Jesus humbled Himself and God the Father exalted Him; the word actually means *super-exalted*.
- b. Robert Lightner, *His “name” is not merely a title; it refers to His person and to His position of dignity and honor.*
- c. Jesus’ exaltation was in answer to His prayer, John 17:5, *And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*
- d. God exalted Jesus through His resurrection, ascension and glorification in heaven, .
 - 1) Acts 5:31, *God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*
 - 2) Hebrews 12:2, *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

e. Thoughts on Jesus’ exaltation

- 1) Max Anders, *He became the object of worship for the church. He became the Master instead of the servant. The church became his slaves and looked to him as their Lord. All this is a result of God’s exalting the humble, obedient Son.*
- 2) Charles Spurgeon, *O Christian! Sit down and consider that your Master did not mount from earth’s mountains into heaven, but from her valleys. It was not from heights of bliss on earth that He strode to bliss eternal, but from depths of woe He mounted up to glory. What a stride was that, when, at one mighty step from the grave to the throne of the Highest, the man Christ, the God, did gloriously ascend. And yet reflect! He in some way, mysterious yet true, was exalted because He suffered.*

- 2. Everyone will give honor to Jesus who is Lord (10-11), ***so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***

a. The name the Father gave Jesus is *Lord*.

- 1) This is the earliest Christian creed.
- 2) It acknowledges Who He is and what He has done.

b. Jesus is Lord of all.

- 1) *in heaven*, believers who have died and entered into God’s presence.
- 2) *on earth*, those who are still alive on earth.
- 3) *under the earth*, unbelievers awaiting judgment.

4) All angelic beings will acknowledge His lordship, as well.

a) 1 Corinthians 15:27, *For God has put all things in subjection under his feet...*

b) Robert Lightner, *The extent of Christ’s sovereign authority is delineated in the threefold phrase, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. No intelligent being—whether angels and saints in heaven;*

people living on the earth; or Satan, demons, and the unsaved in hell—in all of God's universe will escape. All will bow either willingly or they will be made to do so.

c. Jesus' exaltation as Lord is to the glory of God.

- 1) He submitted not so He could be exalted.
- 2) He submitted with the motive of exalting the Father.
- 3) The result of exalting the Father is exaltation from the Father.

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| <i>CONCLUSION</i> |
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A. A Christ-like mind thinks more of other than oneself.

B. Godly humility holds heavenly promise, 1 Peter 5:6, *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.*

C. Humility brings glory to God.