

THE SELF-HUMBLING SAVIOR

Philippians 2:5-11

Intro: As we approach this Christmas season and the day which has long been observed as the time when the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born of the virgin Mary, in Bethlehem, I have taken the Sundays leading up to Christmas Day as a time to direct our attention, yours and mine, to passages of Scripture which deal with that most sacred event. While nobody knows the exact date when our Lord was born, we do know that He was born, and born under circumstances which were totally different from the birth of any other person who has ever been born. And the circumstances had to be different because of Who He was, a Member of the Triune Godhead, the Son of the living God. He had no human father. His mother was a virgin. The Child she gave birth to had miraculously been conceived by the Holy Spirit. His coming was prophesied in the OT. We have the record of His birth in the NT, followed by the sinless life that He lived and the miraculous works that He performed. And the significance of His death is explained in great detail in the remaining books of the NT.

The prophet Isaiah, who would have had no idea that such an event was possible, wrote and preached approximately seven hundred years before the event actually took place, that a virgin would give birth to a Son Who would be, Immanuel, meaning *God with us*. Most of you know the verse I am referring to, but just in case some are present who do not know what Isaiah predicted, let me read the verse I am talking about. For those of us who know it, it will be good for us to hear it again. This is what Isaiah predicted:

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

That is found in Isaiah 7:14. Now when the angel Gabriel explained to Joseph, the man to whom Mary was engaged to be married, what had happened, and that Mary had not committed adultery, as it seemed, but which he found it very difficult to believe, either Joseph remembered this verse, or the angel quoted it to him, of Matthew wrote it as proof that it actually had been prophesied that such an event would take place.

The prophet Micah, who prophesied at the same time that Isaiah prophesied, predicted where our Lord would be born. Listen to what he wrote in chapter 5 and verse 2 of the prophetic book which bears his name:

2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the

thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2).

Gradually this day that we have used to remember the birth of our Savior, has become commercialized and sentimentalized with Santa Claus being given more and more attention, and now there are many who would like to do away with Christmas entirely, and along with it, get rid of Christians and the Bible, and even get rid of God and Christ. But the people who have this as their agenda need to be warned that this very thing has been tried before, to get rid of the Bible and all that it stands for, *but every attempt to do so has failed utterly. Today the Bible has been translated into more languages than ever before, and God is not going to let His Word die.* Those who try to do away with the Bible and Christians and the work of the Lord, have God Himself to deal with. The Jews who cried out against our Lord during His days here on earth, thought (or at least hoped) that they were getting rid of Christ when they had Him crucified, but three days later He arose from the dead and today is seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father. Our Lord Himself said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24: 35). And the Apostle Peter expressed the same truth when he was speaking of being born again. Listen to his words recorded for us in 1 Peter 1:23-25:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Now let me get to my text in Philippians, chapter 2, verses 5 through 11. I asked Larry Bell to read the first eleven verses so we would see what Paul was talking about which led up to the seven verses of our text, verses 5 through 11.

I. PAUL'S BURDEN FOR THE CHURCH (Phil. 2:1-4).

We often say that the theme of the Paul's epistle to the church at Philippi was joy, or rejoicing in the Lord. That is seen in the joy that Paul expressed for himself throughout the epistle even though at the time he was a prisoner of Rome. But there are many things that contribute to our

joy. We are never going to find happiness just by looking for happiness. But if we are rejoicing in the Lord, that is a different thing. We can rejoice in the Lord even when our circumstances are not what we would like for them to be. Such rejoicing can make difficult trials bearable. However, in Philippians 2 Paul's main concern seems to be that the believers would be likeminded, that there would not be divisions and contentions among them. This, of course, leads to peace, and peace is a form of joy.

But one big obstacle to likemindedness, is pride. You want your way, and I want my way. But if we are going to be likeminded, then we have to be just as concerned about others as we are about ourselves, and perhaps be more interested in that which is going to benefit others the most. All of us need to read the first four verses of this chapter, thinking primarily about ourselves. How do we measure up to what Paul was saying? Do they condemn us? If so, then we need to seek the Lord's blessing in bringing about some changes in our lives. We need to do this with all of our Bible reading. We read the Bible to learn the truth of the Bible, but the truth is not going to benefit us if we don't obey it!

Usually in most of the trouble we have with each other, pride plays some part in the trouble. Pride is involved in most, if not all, sin. The solution to pride is humility. It is practically impossible to have trouble with a humble person, a truly humble person. Some people pretend to be humble when basically they are very proud at heart. We are all proud by nature, and only the Lord can help us to be truly humble.

Examples always help us. I feel sure that most of us could come up with the names of other believers who have crossed our paths at some time during our lives who were a special blessing to us because of their humility. In my studies I have come across people whom I have never met, perhaps they were already in heaven, but they sounded like people I would love to have known, and I wanted to be like they were. And I hope that I wanted to be like them, not so others would think highly of me, but so I could be a blessing to them. And even more than that, in order that I might live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

Well, the Apostle Paul has given us an example. And this example is the best that you or I could possibly find. The example is our Lord Jesus Christ. And the illustration that Paul used, was when our Lord became a Man! The illustration began with our Lord's birth, and it extended all the

way to His death and resurrection. So let us think now of:

II. THE LORD JESUS, THE SUPREME EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY (Phil. 2:5-11).

As we come to verse 5, Paul was saying, in effect, “If you want to know the kind of a person I am thinking about, it is our Lord Jesus, I want you to have the attitude which He had and which motivated all that He did.”

I hope that I don’t have to tell any of you that becoming a Christian, a child of God, means that you have to learn to live a different kind of a life. Before we were saved, we all walked in darkness. But after we were saved we had to learn to walk in the light, or as Paul said in writing to the Ephesians,

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8).

Now you and I can never be exactly like our Lord was because He was Deity, and we are not. Nevertheless, He is our example. We are to pattern our lives after His life.

Now this is a passage over which there has been a lot of controversy. I have one commentary in my library in which the author has devoted over thirty pages to these seven verses. But that number could probably be cut in half if we could omit what this commentator had to say about this verse as compared with what another commentator said. Sometimes the writer would say that ten or so commentators said this, and another ten said this, and still another ten said something else. The result is that you get worn out trying to get the meat out of what the Lord said.

Now let me read again verses 5 through 8. In studying the Scriptures we don’t just read the Word as much as we should, and as repeatedly as we should. (Read.)

Now Paul said that the Lord Jesus before His incarnation was “in the form of God.” This, of course, means that He was Deity. He was just like God in this respect. But it means more than that. *It means that He looked like God.* And by that I don’t just mean that He looked like God the Father, but I mean that if you saw the Lord in heaven, you would have seen His glory. You would have seen how majestic He was. More glorious than any of the angels. You would never have had to ask, “Which one is the

Son of God?” It was immediately and unquestionably apparent. And the same could be said about the Father and about the Holy Spirit. When you get to heaven, don’t worry about whether or not you will know Who God is, or Who Christ is, or Who the Holy Spirit is. Their glory far exceeds the greatest of their creatures.

When the Lord prayed the great prayer that He prayed shortly before His arrest and death, in that prayer He prayed these words:

5 And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was (John 17:5). He longed to be returned to that state where He looked like God.

One writer used this illustration of the word “form.” He said that if you would take any king and dress him like an ordinary man, you would probably never realize that he was a king. But if you took His royal robes, and put them on him, and placed the royal crown on his head, and a scepter in his hands, then there would be no doubt but that he was the king.

The Lord’s glory was His “form of God.”

But “he thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” This means that He did not consider His glory something that He could not temporarily set aside for whatever the Father wanted Him to do. Obviously for Him to become a man would have been humiliation itself, but to be made even lower than angels (who were His creatures), was humiliation beyond what any of us could possibly understand.

It is foolish to think that the Lord laid aside His Deity. His Deity was His very nature, and that was one thing that He could not do. He could not make Himself stop being God! He could voluntarily not exercise some of His divine attributes, but He could not give them up.

But He could, and He did “make himself of no reputation.” Or more accurately, *He emptied Himself*. This means that He “took on Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” For a time His Deity was concealed in His humanity. When the Lord walked into the temple in Jerusalem, people were not able to see anything but a mere man. There was no glory about Him at all. Isaiah predicted, “And when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isa. 53:3). Instead, “He is despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:4). The

Apostle Paul told the Corinthian believers that if the princes of this world had known Who He was, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. See 1 Cor. 2:8).

“He took upon Him the form of a servant.” This is where we need to turn to John 13 where we see our Lord with His disciples in the Upper Room, taking a towel, girding Himself, and making the circle washing His disciples feet.

But think with me for just a moment about that word “servant.” Whose servant was He? He said that He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). He served people. He served them tirelessly and lovingly. But more than being a servant to the people of this world, with all of their sicknesses and sins, our Lord repeatedly made it clear that *He had come to do the Father’s will*. See John 6:38. He came with the words that the Father had given Him to speak, and He came to do the works that the Father had given Him to do.

But this was not the deepest depth of His humiliation. But “being found in fashion as a man” (everyone could see this), “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” Our Lord did not just die, but He died as a common criminal, “even the death of the Cross.” Would you ever expect to find the Lord of glory, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, being put to such a horrible death at the hands of mere creatures in such an ungodly manner. Is it any wonder that our Lord prayed on the Cross as He reached the depth of His humiliation, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

But did it all end there? No, thank God, it didn’t! The Bible teaches us that the Lord had power to lay down His life, and He had the power of resurrection, to take it again. This means He had the power to raise Himself from the dead. The Bible also teaches us that our Lord was “quickened by the Spirit,” meaning that the Holy Spirit had a part in His resurrection. But here we read, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.” This is past, and speaks of His glorious resurrection and ascension back to the right hand of the Father. “That at the name of Jesus . . .”

When the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead, there was a glory about Him which kept even His disciples from recognizing Him. Remember

the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. Today as we sit and stand in this room, the Lord of glory, our Lord Jesus Christ, is seated, the Man Christ Jesus, at the right hand of the Father.

Concl: Let me ask all of us a question. I ask myself this question. Do I, do you, do we, see evidence in the way we have been living this past week, that we have the mind of Christ. Do we have the attitude, the intention, to please the Father that is in any way similar to the determination expressed in the earthly life of our Lord. In serving the Father, the Lord Jesus rendered the greatest service that was possible for Him to render to us; by His obedience unto death, He forever put away our sins and took away our death and gave us eternal life. What wonderful words were those spoken by the Apostle John and recorded for us in John 1:14. He was speaking primarily of the glory he saw with Peter and James on the mount of transfiguration. Hear his words:

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

No one this side of heaven can adequately speak of the infinite and undiminishing glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It surpasses all of the glory of men and of angels and all creation, a glory we could not see now, but we will see it and worship before Him when we see Him as He is.

His example is for us to follow. James and Peter have given us basically the same message, thus its importance. Here are Peter's words:

5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you (1 Peter 5:5-7).

We are all called to be humble; the Lord will take care of the exaltation.