

**WHY DID THE SON OF GOD BECOME A MAN?
JESUS, THE BELIEVER'S EXAMPLE**

1 Peter 2:18-24

Intro: As most of you know, I began a brief Christmas series last Sunday in which I am asking, and hoping to answer, the question, *Why did the Son of God become a Man?* In answering that question I intend to look at various Scriptures which tell us certain things about our Lord that are related to His coming to earth as a human being, to be like one of us. Last week I spoke of His birth, through which He fully retained His Deity, as the culmination of all that God had been doing from the beginning of time to make Himself known to the world. The revelations of God in the OT are wonderful beyond anything that man has ever be capable of knowing, but as wonderful as they are, they are incomplete. But when Jesus was born, the Son of God, in human flesh, we have the revelation of God in the fullest sense of the word. No prophet of the OT could have said, or would have dared to say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." But Jesus not only could say that, but He did say it. That is why it is very important to believe in the virgin birth of Christ, and that although He was born and lived as a true human being, in no way was His Deity diminished at all. If God the Father had become incarnate, that is, if God had been born of the virgin Mary, the Person the Gospels describe, would have been just like our Lord.

We saw in the Gospel of John, chapter 1, that the Person Who is called "the Word," Who was "in the beginning" and "with God," Who "was God," and Who was given the same title when He was born, was not only a true Man, but was also God,

So that is one powerful message that the birth of Jesus brings to us. Jesus was God the Son in human flesh, the one and only perfect manifestation of God on earth. So any study of God has to include a study of Jesus Christ. As we learn about Jesus, we are learning about God. There have been great men of God in the past, such as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, and many others, but none of them were God in human flesh like Jesus was – and still is!

Now this morning I want to speak of Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Example.

I told the men who were at our men's prayer meeting yesterday what I

was planning to speak on this morning, and I mentioned that years ago when the problem in churches was then called modernism, that liberal theologians spoke of Jesus as our Example. But they spoke of it as though following the example of Christ was the way of salvation. This, of course, is heresy. Salvation is not by works, but by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as the One and only Savior. Well, as a result, those who really believed the Gospel avoided speaking of Jesus as our Example. It was much the same kind of a problem when liberal theologians spoke of the Fatherhood of God, making Him the Father of the whole human race. So salvation was more a matter of recognizing who we all are, the children of God, and in this sought to destroy the true Gospel message. So again, those who believed the Gospel shied away from referring to God as our Father.

Now these two truths, Jesus as our Example, and God as our Father, are two of the most precious truths in the Bible. What needs to be made clear is that God is the Father of those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. And Jesus, of the Lord Jesus Christ, is an Example for those to follow who, likewise, have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. It is hard enough for those of us who know the Lord to follow the Example of Christ in our daily lives, but it is totally impossible for those who do not know the Lord to follow His example.

So we must not let rank unbelievers, even though they may be seminary professors, or even pastors, rob us of any truth of Scripture. The Lord Jesus is our Example. God is our heavenly Father. But both of these truths belong to those of us who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. I hope that we are all clear on this point. This is what I want us to think about this morning, Jesus, Who is the Supreme Example for those of us who know Him as our Savior.

Now there are good examples, but there are also bad examples. We all know people we want to be like. It seems to be a God-given tendency which is in all of our hearts. As parents we want to keep our children away from people who will lead our children astray. We know that to follow the wrong person leads only to trouble. It can lead to a corrupt lifestyle. It leads to sin.

Now when a person becomes a Christian, if he or she really has trusted Christ, he wants to know how to live so as to please the Lord. And that is where the Bible becomes extremely important.

In our Tuesday Bible Class where we have been studying John 14, we are seeing that the Lord spoke about His commandments. Obeying the Lord's commandments is the way we show that we love Him. Keeping the Lord's commandments which we find in the Bible, leads to a life of fellowship with the Lord. The commandments of Scripture teach us what pleases God, and what displeases Him. In my Bible reading for yesterday morning, I read of the Lord's commandments in the Psalms and in Proverbs, and in my NT reading. We need to pay attention to what the commandments are, and keep asking the Lord to enable us to be obedient to His commandments. All Christians needs to be doing this as we read the Bible.

But the Bible gives us help in another important way. There are many people who are mentioned in Scripture who are good examples to follow. We learn from the way they lived how we ought to live. Noah is a wonderful example for us to follow. Abraham is another. Joseph is still another. Moses certainly is a good example for us who love the Lord. Joshua is still another. It is encouraging to read about King David, and even before he became King. Many of us have just finished reading the book of Daniel. Think not only of Daniel, but of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It is a great challenge to read of the lives they lived in a foreign country. Think also of Hannah, Ruth, Abigail, Elizabeth in the NT, Mary the mother of our Lord, the Apostles John, Peter, and Paul. I don't have the time to name them all, men and women who lives their lives trusting God and pleasing God.

But with all of the wonderful men and women that you read about in the Bible, we have to remember that none of them is a perfect example for all of us to follow. I have to admit that most of them were far better than I am, but still none was perfect.

This brings me to what I want to say about the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is a perfect Example. You will never find a single flaw in His life. He always did that which was pleasing to the Father. He trusted God in every situation in His life. He teaches us that God the Father is to be trusted. He showed us that you can never go wrong by doing the Father's will. Take your NT and you will see that almost half of the NT is devoted to our Lord's life on earth as related for us by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There we see how the Lord lived, what the Lord taught, how He prayed. We see how He humbled Himself, coming from greater heights and descending into greater depths than any person ever did before Him,

or since. And that which ought to make us especially interested in Jesus Christ is that we have been saved to be like Him. Paul said that we all are, each one of us, has been predestinated by God “to be conformed to the image of His Son.” When you start to think of our Lord Jesus Christ as our Example, you can go on and on in what we learn from Him and about Him in the Word, both the OT and the NT. When we look into the Word we see Him. The Word is like a mirror according to 2 Corinthians 3:18, and as we look into the Word seeing Christ, the Spirit of God works in us to make us like the Lord Jesus. He is what God wants all of us to be like.

So do you want the perfect Example of what God wants all of us to be. You have Him in Christ.

The Lord Jesus even claimed the right to be our Example. In our Tuesday Class we started this year where with John 13 where you have that amazing account of how the Lord washed His disciples feet. There was no household servant where the Lord observed the Passover with His disciples, and so that which a servant would do when guests came into a home from the hot, dusty roads, washing the feet of the guests, none of the disciples did, so the Lord took a towel and a basin of water, and one by one He washed their feet. Try to picture all of that in your own mind. But do you remember what the Lord said to them afterwards? He said, “Know ye what I have done to you?” (John 13:12b). And then He continued,

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them (John 13:13-17).

Matthew tells us about a previous incident when the mother of James and John came and asked the Lord if her sons could sit on His right hand and His left hand when He came into His kingdom. The other disciples didn't like what she did; they were indignant! But then the Lord said this:

25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:25-28).

Even there He was indicating to His disciples that He was their Example, and that they should be like Him.

But nowhere was our Lord a greater Example than He was in facing the opposition that He did throughout His ministry, which culminated in His death. You will notice in the context of this verse where the Apostle Peter spoke of our Lord as our Example, that he was actually addressing *servants*. This is not the word for a bondservant, but for a household servant, a domestic, one who lived in the house with the family. He had a reason for placing himself above the bondservants, but not with reference to the master. (Read 1 Peter 2:18-21.)

Notice two expressions in these four verses:

1) “for conscience toward God” in verse 19.

2) “acceptable to God” in verse 20.

If circumstances, and especially our relationship with people, were always what we wanted them to be, this would not be such a problem. But they never are, or hardly ever are. We are to respond to provocation just like the Lord did in the worst moments of His life on earth. And yet the Lord never experienced the feeling of retaliation or of wanting to get even with those who made life miserable and, really, unbearable for Him.

How did He react? “Who did no sin? What is sin? Sin is anything that is displeasing to God. When was the last time that you, or I, reacted in a way that was unbecoming to God? How much does it take to provoke us to sin? How strongly does your conscience, and mine, control us when we are tempted to displease the Lord?

You will notice that Peter said that the same principles apply whether the one over you is good and gentle, or froward (crooked, perverse).

Most of the sins that Peter mentioned here were sins of the tongue. But the tongue registers what is in our hearts. The Lord never talked back to His accusers, nor did He do what He could have done, and that was to get even. You can see that that which guarded the Lord against sin, from a

human point-of-view, was that He was so conscious of the presence of the Lord, and the power of the Lord to deliver Him if that were God's will, that He was silent like a sheep before his shearer. Instead of retaliating, or raging against His enemies, or threatening them with what He would do to them, He "committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (v. 23b). Jesus was always conscious of the presence of the Lord, and His wisdom in doing or not doing what seemed justified, that His heart was resting in the Lord and He did not fear what man could do to Him.

Concl: Let me ask you some questions. And I address them to myself as well as to you. How long does it take for you in the morning when you get up before you are thinking about the Lord? Is your first thought of Him when you bow your head to thank Him for the night and for a new day, and for the food before you? Or do your thoughts go the Lord even before you are out of bed? We often do the wrong thing, or say the wrong thing, or go to the wrong place, because we forget the Lord. The Lord not only sees what we do, but He hears what we say, *and He even knows what we are thinking – all of the time!!!* These statements ought to be the greatest delights of our hearts. They are all expressions of how constantly the Lord cares for us, and has set Himself and His Word before us, that we might by His grace seek always to do that which He would do if He were in our place.

Why did Jesus the Son of God become a Man? There are many reasons, but one of them certainly is that by our acquaintance with Him, our personal fellowship with Him, we might learn to know Him so that we would long to be like Him. Jesus is our greatest Example as to how we are to live if we want to be like Him.