

Brent Alderman
P.O. Box 2060, Annapolis, MD 21404
240.818.3053
brent.alderman@capitolcom.org

THE EXAMPLE AND EXALTATION OF JESUS CHRIST (Philippians 2:1-11)

A television program aired before the start of the 1988 Winter Olympics held in Calgary. As amazing as it sounds, this program told the story of the training of several blind skiers on the slalom course. Each blind skier was paired with a seeing skier, first trying a practice course on a flat area. After that was mastered, the blind skiers would start down the slalom slopes, turning at each flag when their seeing partner would yell, "Left" or "Right." The only options available were complete trust or total catastrophe.

Each time I come to the Scriptures to read what God has revealed about himself, I feel blind. Just like these skiers relied on their guides, I have a sense of reliance on God to show me what is right and what is real. I know my own heart enough not to trust my thinking or opinions to guide me in the right direction with my beliefs and decisions.

We have come to a place in this letter to the Philippians in which we are confronted with a couple of major thoughts. First, as God speaks in this passage, we are taught some of the most profound and important aspects of who Christ is. Secondly, we must trust what is in these verses. Our minds may tell us it is too fantastical or beyond reason. Our world around us may laugh at the strange claims made about Jesus here.

But we have a choice to make regarding the truth claims of the opening paragraph of Philippians 2. We must clearly hear what the claims are, then trust God that they are true, placing our faith in the veracity of his Word. The only other option is catastrophe.

PURSUING ENCOURAGEMENT

Philippians 2:1-4 – So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the

*Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 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.*

For all the things that this church did right, there seems to be a slight problem with unity, and Paul addresses it several times. He just finished teaching them that if your manner of life is worthy of the gospel of Christ, then you will prioritize unity (Phil. 1:27). Later in this letter, Paul even calls two women out by name, charging them to put aside their disagreements.

*Philippians 4:2 - I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to **agree in the Lord.***

Paul knew that effectiveness of a church (really any group of people, but especially a church) is contingent on working together. Political candidates claim they can unify parties or even a nation. Families are torn apart if spouses are headed in different directions. Unity makes us stronger and the only way unity is possible is if each individual is humble, yielding to the interests of others.

Paul is saying if you have received encouragement, be unified. The word for encouragement here is "paraklesis" (calling near or a summons). That's how we experience encouragement – from knowing others in our group, whatever the group, are near to us. When we know we are not alone, but unified, there is a great sense of commonality of purpose and belonging. By thinking and living this way, the Philippians could give Paul great joy as he continued to suffer in prison.

Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10 – Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!

PERFECT EXAMPLE

*Philippians 2:5-8 – Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied himself**, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, **he humbled himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

After stressing unity through humility to his readers, Paul turns to the ultimate example of humility: Jesus himself. No one has ever shown selflessness and sacrifice on the same scale and he is our perfect example to follow to think this way.

Our minds are crucial to how we live. Actions, right or wrong, first find their expression in one's thinking. This is why Paul wanted the Romans to understand

*Romans 12:2 – Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Jesus thought with humility and so must we if the goal of unity is to be reached. But seeking the good of another simply is not a part of our natural way of thinking. We need a supernatural example and empowerment to achieve it.

This is Holy Week, the annual time Christians around the world commemorate the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It happened. It is verifiable. And these verses in Philippians 2 explain how this all happened. By faith, we must accept the truth regarding Jesus – that he is the Son of God who willingly came to earth to be the perfect sacrifice to satisfy God's holy anger towards man's sin. In God's plan, it was the only way.

PROMISED EXALTATION

*Philippians 2:9-11 – Therefore **God has highly exalted him** and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 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.

Verse nine says, "therefore". Because Jesus humbled himself to die on a cross, God the Father has exalted him to the most prominent place. Jesus claimed equality with God (that's actually what got him killed). Contrast that claim with the belief of billions in our world who will tell you that Jesus was just a great man, a prophet who through bad luck was executed in first-century Palestine.

If Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and was wrong (either lying or crazy), then how could he be a good man? The only other option is that he really is Lord, alive today awaiting the Father's timing to subject all things to him. That means from the most vile atheist to the most devout believer will someday bow before him. Tyrants from all periods of history will bow and confess. Devoted martyrs will bow and confess. You and I will bow and confess. Every knee and every tongue will be subject to him one day.

But we must decide in this life if we will follow and obey him, the most desirable, beautiful, and giving One we could follow. Of all the decisions we make, this is the most crucial. Our eternal destiny depends on it.

Hebrews 9:27 – And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

Jesus will be worshiped one day by every person who has ever lived. But the ones who will spend eternity in his presence will only be those who believe in him, trusting him for their salvation, not their own works or merits.

*John 14:6 – Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.**"*

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
Room 153 House Office Building