



CAPITOL COMMISSION

A Christ-like Posture Toward Others—Philippians 2.5-11

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PHILIPPIANS: CULTIVATING A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE AT THE CAPITOL

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INTRODUCTION

So how is your posture? One definition for posture is a conscious mental or outward behavioral attitude. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ.” Paul uses a term here translated mind, which speaks of one’s disposition, attitude, perspective, or mindset. Showcasing Christ’s disposition, attitude, perspective or mindset toward others, Paul gives us a vivid illustration of the posture that is essential to the unity of believers.

In this study we look into a passage in which Paul summons Christ’s example to flesh out the principle of unity set forth in the previous passage. He urged that nothing be motivated by selfish ambition or arrogance, but instead that in lowliness of mind each regard others as better than himself. Every believer is to look out for the interests of others. Jesus Christ exemplifies the posture every believer is called to have toward others.

In this week’s study entitled, A Christ-like Posture Toward Others, we consider the exemplary posture of Jesus Christ in relation to others.

Philippians 2.5-11—Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

I. THE DIETY OF CHRIST (6)

Paul first highlights the position of Jesus Christ, the Son of God as a member of the Godhead. What does Paul mean exactly when he speaks of Jesus Christ being in the form of God? Given Paul’s understanding of God, we can immediately rule out any reference to outward appearance or visual shape. But here form refers, not to shape, but to character or nature. Christ, by His very nature, is God.

But what do we make of the statement that he did not consider it robbery to be equal with God? One use of the term translated robbery would give the meaning that Christ did not think it to be stealing to claim to be equal with God. Is Paul defending Christ’s right to exercise His prerogative to express His divine nature as God? Context indicates another meaning.

Remember that Paul is setting Christ before us as the ultimate example of humility and selfless service to others. Jesus Christ’s glorified position as God and the prerogative that was His to impose Himself upon His creation was not, to Him, a treasure to be clung to or hoarded. This second meaning is consistent with the central idea of the passage. Christ did not consider His rights and privileges as God a treasure to be clung to, but was willing to lay it aside for His role as our Redeemer.

II. THE HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST (7)

The contrast is sharp, moving from the idea of Christ being in the form of God to His taking the form of man. Paul introduces three ideas which are key in Paul’s description of Christ’s humanity. Christ made himself of no reputation, He took the form of a bond-servant, and he came in the likeness of men.

CHRIST EMPTIED HIMSELF

Paul says here that Christ emptied Himself. Of what did He empty Himself? Some have argued that Christ emptied Himself of His deity—that in becoming man He ceased to be

BIBLE STUDIES (MEALS PROVIDED)

LEGISLATORS ONLY: WEDNESDAY @ LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB (11:30A.M. OR UPON ADJOURNMENT, WHICHEVER IS LATER) OR THURSDAYS @ 7:30 A.M. IN THE MEMBERS’ LOUNGE (E2.1002)

CAPITOL COMMUNITY (ALL ARE WELCOME): FRIDAYS @ 8:00A.M. IN THE MEMBERS’ LOUNGE (E2.1002)

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God. This is a gross misunderstanding of Paul's meaning here and is incompatible with Paul's teaching about Christ throughout his writings.

What Christ emptied Himself of is His rights and prerogative as God. He would live as a man dependent on the Father in all things. He would live in humble obedience to the Father. "Not My will, but Your will be done," Jesus prayed in the garden as He faced the reality of the cross. Having the right to the highest praise, He would submit Himself to derision and insult. The Righteous Judge would submit to false charges, a rigged trial, and unjust condemnation. The Creator would submit Himself to His creation in order to redeem it.

CHRIST TOOK THE FORM OF A BOND-SERVANT

Not only did Christ stoop to become a man, he became a servant to all mankind. The picture is of a man at the very bottom of the social structure. A man whose will is subject entirely to the will of another. A bond-servant is not free to pursue his own interests but is dedicated to the interests of another.

CHRIST CAME IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN

The phrases above make it clear that in this final phrase related to Christ's incarnation Paul nails down the idea that Christ was and is fully man. He emptied Himself that He might be fully man. He took the form of a bond-servant by coming in the likeness of men. He took on the nature and character of man in its fullest expression. God became man in the person of Jesus Christ.

III. THE WORK OF CHRIST (8)

Christ's task as a man was to walk in humility before God the Father and before men. He would demonstrate humble obedience to the will of the Father by offering Himself to die upon the cross. He condescended to become a man, but so much more so to become the scourge of mankind, ultimately to be executed in the most degrading means possible. The

work of Christ, the Son of God, is the greatest example of lowliness of mind that can ever be cited. It is the greatest living illustration of looking out not only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others.

IV. THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST (9-11)

Thus far this passage, in exhorting us to have the same posture toward others that Jesus demonstrated in His person and work, Paul uses active language with Christ being the one carrying out the action. Now Christ is passive as God the Father become the prime actor. He has exalted Jesus Christ to the highest place of worship and adoration.

Christ humbled Himself and now the Father exalts Him. He willingly humbled Himself to mankind and now God will humble all mankind before Him. No other name or authority will supersede His. Every knee will bow in obeisance before Him. Every tongue will profess His worth and His ultimate authority over all things.

CONCLUSION

What profound ideas regarding the author of our salvation! What lofty and noble words to describe the person and work of Christ! Keep in mind why Paul has marshaled them in this place in the letter. Christ is to be an example to us as to our posture toward others.

In fact, there could be no greater model to follow than that provided in Christ in the attitude we have in regard to the value we have relative to the value we place upon others. We are to be lowly of mind, considering others better than ourselves. We are to be willing to defer to others in humble obedience to the Father, that He might be glorified in us.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ!

Wow! What a humbling and, even, overwhelming thought. So how is that coming along for you?