

## **THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS**

### **III. Philippians: Nurture In Living In Preoccupation With Christ**

#### **F. Nurture In Heeding The Ultimate Example Of Humility In Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5-11)**

##### **I. Introduction**

- A. When the Apostle Paul wrote the Epistle to the Philippians, his readers were understandably concerned over his imprisonment as is evidenced by his remarks in Philippians 1:12-13.
- B. One way to alleviate this concern was for the church at Philippi to foster much needed nurturing warmth in its own body, what was possible only when self-centeredness was replaced by humility.
- C. Paul thus directed his readers at Philippians 2:5-11 to relate to one another in the humility of godliness, giving Christ's ultimate example of humility as a remarkable, motivating template for the Christian life (as follows):

##### **II. Nurture In Heeding The Ultimate Example Of Humility In Jesus Christ, Philippians 2:5-11.**

- A. After urging his readers in Philippians 2:1-4 to relate to one another in humility, Paul appealed to the ultimate example of Christ's humility, urging, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," Phil. 2:5 KJV.
- B. Paul then described the condescension of Christ in his great "kenosis" passage of Philippians 2:5-11:
  1. Theologians have long debated over the Greek term *ekenosen* from *keno* that is used in Philippians 2:7 and rendered "emptied himself" in the ASV, John Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, 1974, p. 139. Some claim this meant Jesus laid aside parts or all of His deity in the incarnation, or that He emptied Himself in some way regarding His divine attributes (Ibid., p. 142), but that errs according to John 1:3, 14; Col. 2:9.
  2. In reality, Walvoord writes: "Christ surrendered no attribute of Deity, but He did voluntarily restrict their independent use in keeping with His purpose of living among men and their limitations," Ibid., p. 144.
  3. Accordingly, we view Philippians 2:5-8 with this understanding to understand the humility of Christ:
    - a. First, though Jesus on earth possessed the very *morphe*, "form" of God, His divine "essence," He did not "consider His equality with God (Phil. 2:6) as something to be grasped or held onto," He "did not hesitate to set aside His self-willed use of deity when He became a man," Phil. 2:6; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 654. Rather, He made "Himself nothing, taking the very nature (*morphe*) of a servant, and being made in human likeness (v. 7)," Ibid.; Philippians 2:7.
    - b. Second, being found in human flesh, Jesus further condescended to humble Himself to be obedient as a slave to God the Father in dying for the sins of the world, Philippians 2:8a.
    - c. Third, in submitting to the Father's will to die, Jesus went so far in His condescension that He submitted to "the most cruel and despicable form of death -- even death on a cross! (v. 8)," Ibid.; Philippians 2:8b.
  4. So astounding was this condescension of the Son of God, the Father responded to reward Jesus with corresponding great exaltation as is described in Philippians 2:9-11 (as follows):
    - a. First, the Father has highly exalted Jesus, giving Him a name of honor above every name, Phil. 2:9.
    - b. Second, at that Name, the Father has decreed that every knee will bow to Christ, including every knee of human or angelic beings in heaven, on the earth or under the earth as deceased, Phil. 2:10; Ibid.
    - c. Third, in conjunction with every knee of created beings bowing to Jesus, every tongue of those who bow will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, "that Jesus Christ is Yahweh-God" of the Old Testament, to the glory of God the Father, Philippians 2:11; Ibid., p. 654-655. ["Unfortunately, for many it will be too late for the salvation of their souls" (Ibid., p. 655), but this event **will eventually occur!**]
- C. Paul's implied application is overwhelming: (1) if our Lord Who died for us as God of very God Incarnate, submitting not only to taking on mere humanity, but submitting in His humanity to serve God in dying for us in the despicable, cruel death of the cross, only to be reciprocally greatly exalted by the Father, how much more obligated are we who are saved by Christ through His blood to exhibit that same kind of humility one to another! (2) We are to be further motivated unto such humility as it will be honored by God as it was in Jesus!

***Lesson:*** *To nurture one another in the local church, God calls us to follow Jesus' ultimate example of humility where He as God of very God first condescended to take on humanity, then He condescended to serve God in His humanity, going so far as to serve by death, even to the wretched death of the cross. In thus following Christ Who was compensated with God's great exaltation, God will similarly honor us, cf. 1 Peter 5:6.*

***Application:*** *May we believers in Christ follow Him in selflessly, humbly relating to each other in the local church for the nurture of the body, knowing God will also graciously honor us for such true self-condescension.*