

I. JESUS' IDENTITY IN LOVE, HUMILITY AND SERVANTHOOD (PHIL. 2:6-8)

- A. Jesus is the premier example of loving God with all of His soul by living with a right identity. Jesus' identity is in love and humility. His humility was expressed when He became a man and died on the cross. In Phil. 2:6-9, we gain insight into how Jesus carried His heart before people.
- ⁶ Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery (something to be grasped, NIV) to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation (nothing NIV; emptied Himself NAS), taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death... (Phil. 2:6-8)*
- B. Jesus did not consider it robbery to be equal to God in privilege and honor. There are two ways to apply this. First, Jesus would not have "taken" anything from God by *insisting* on enjoying the privileges that were rightfully His by virtue of being God. Secondly, He did not "take" anything from Himself by *refusing* the privileges of being treated as equal to God.
- C. After the incarnation, Jesus had two natures, being fully God and fully man. ***He was never less than God, but He lived on earth as though He was never more than a man.*** Being in the form of God, He had the power to influence people. He only used it when He was led by the Spirit. He lived as every other godly person by praying, obeying and waiting on the Spirit's leadership. Jesus emptied Himself of the right to ***take the initiative*** to use the fullness of God's power.
- D. In denying Himself of His rightful privileges by being a servant, He did not deny His true identity, but was being true to Himself. He did not grasp at His unique privileges of being God. He did not insist on His rights to live free from rejection, pain, and humiliation. When One has the power to create the heavens and the earth, why should He ever be hungry or rejected?
- E. Jesus emptied Himself of His reputation in the eyes of man. He embraced a lifestyle where everyone underestimated Him and His abilities. People never knew how superior His abilities were. When they saw Him, they saw nothing to distinguish Him. He was happy to be seen as an ordinary man without any special form (status) or comeliness (attractiveness).
- ² He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. ³ He is despised and rejected by men...and we did not esteem Him. (Isa. 53:2-3)*
- F. What was most important to Him was to tell the Father's story and to enrich the lives of people by dying for them. If His core identity was in having power, then His incarnation would have been a denial of His true self.
- G. Jesus did not serve to prove something, but to express the truth about Himself. It is precisely because Jesus is God that He served and gave freely to ungrateful men (Lk. 6:35). There was nothing un-Godlike about washing the disciples' feet. He was at home doing this.

- H. Jesus valued and honored all humans. He sought to break down lines of division by building bridges and confronting sin with his presence. In this way he demonstrated the love (agape) of God for mankind (John 3:16). Whether eating with sinners or talking to the political and religious elite, Jesus loved all. He moved beyond the gender and ethnic bias of his day to talk to a woman at Jacob's Well in Sychar (John 4). He spoke with Pilate at his trial while the Sanhedrin waited outside (John 18). Jesus did not abide by man-made prejudices.

II. WE EXPRESS LOVE TO JESUS BY ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF HONOR

- A. We love God by loving and honoring the people He called and who are dear to Him. We must not regard men after the flesh by seeing them based on how they look or what they accomplish (2 Cor. 5:16). ***16 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh... 2Cor. 5: 16.*** We are to see them as God sees them, recognizing His heart for them and His plan to use them.
- B. The Holy Spirit is the guardian of the culture of the Body of Christ. He requires that we dwell together in a ***culture of honor and corporate union*** (Jn.17:20-23). God's love is experienced most as we honor each other. Part of our inheritance and what we lack is in the hands of others. We can receive this by blessing them. Blessing is not the same as ***unconditional tolerance*** of everyone's doctrines and practices.
- C. ***Blessing without criticism:*** Receiving revelation of God's heart for specific people convinces us that God greatly desires to bless them. This makes it easy for us to bless them.
- D. Blessing comes from honor. We must demonstrate a culture of honor in our personal families and in our ministry assignment (church, marketplace, school, neighborhood, etc.).
10 In honor giving preference to one another...14 Bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice...16 Do not be wise in your own opinion... (Rom. 12:10-18)
- E. ***Bless:*** We bless their ***budding virtues*** that have not yet matured, regardless of their ***deficiencies*** and without needing to agree with or endorse their ***differences*** in focus, style, and standards of excellence. The Spirit forbids us to verbalize such deficiencies and differences (Jms. 4:11). We speak affirmations that we believe, without any flattery. ***Rejoice:*** We celebrate their increase. ***Do not be wise:*** We do not presume to understand all that God sees in them.
- F. ***Inclusion without elitism:*** Understanding God's kindness, His value of His people and His desire to use all His people convinces us of their value to the kingdom and our need of them. However, the natural bias of the human heart is elitism that seeks to be best and speaks without a spirit of inclusion. Ask the Lord to show you ***how He sees others***. After we see their value and virtues, then we feel differently about their deficiencies.
- G. God is ravished for each of His people and has an agenda for each that is important to Him. The miracle of mercy is that God uses us, even in our weakness and sin. The reason we have future usefulness in His kingdom is because God is kind to evil men (Lk. 6:35).

- H. **Righteous judgment without compromise:** We must uphold the primary tenets of faith and basic standards of behavior to cultivate a culture of honor within the Body of Christ. The culture of honor is based on our allegiance to Jesus and His Word. We must faithfully address significant deviations from Scripture, but in the right process and with a right spirit of kindness. There are times we must bring righteous judgment to those with destructive doctrines and behavior (Mt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 11:12-15; 1 Thes. 5:14, 21; 2 Thes. 3:6-14; Rev. 2:2, 14-15, 20).

²⁴ ***Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. (Jn. 7:24)***

