

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

“Humiliation of Deity”

Philippians 2:7b-8

Revision

1. Four first class conditions are recorded (2:1). While addressed originally to the Philippians, they are obviously applicable to every believer.

2. Accepting the statements of the first verse as true (first class conditions), six specific exhortations are recorded (vv. 2-4): 1) About thinking (v. 2). 2) About loving (v. 2). 3) About being (v. 2). 4) About minding (v. 2). 5) About considering (v. 3). 6) About looking (v. 4).

3. The highest example of what is found in the opening verses (vv. 1-4) is demonstrated in the condescension of Christ in His incarnation and death at the cross (v. 5). The first four steps of His incredible self humiliation are these: 1) His existing in the form of God (v. 6). 2) His thinking it not robbery to be equal with God (v. 6). 3) His making Himself of no reputation (v. 7). 4) His taking upon Him the form of a servant (v. 7).

4. Five additional steps in our Lord’s condescension are clearly listed. Mark them:

1. By Being Made “in the likeness of men” (v. 7)

a. His Historicity

The aorist participle () specifically marks a point in history when the adorable God (v. 6), having received (aorist, v. 7) the form of a servant “became” (cf. Jn 1:14). Should any question how He received the form of a servant, this is the explanation. He “became” what was infinite God, He had not been. It conveys more than “to be born.”

b. His Actuality

“Likeness of men” is a significant phrase. He was more than man. He resembled what men are, but the likeness did not express His whole self. The total of His being could not open to men because that involved the very form of God. He was not abstract man, but men as we see them (note plural:). The point is patent: He actually was similar with men, but one must deny sameness!

2. By Being Found “in fashion as a man” (v. 8)

a. His Presentation

The aorist passive verb () suggests the Lord presented Himself for scrutiny, inspection, examination. Hence, having assumed the conditions of humanity (cf. He “took,” He “emptied,” He “became”), the attention of men was drawn to Him -- then and there they found Him as He was!

b. His Expression

The term “fashion” indicates appearance. It carries out the meaning of likeness

(). So the Lord was in look patent to all, but He was more than met the eye. His true and manifest manhood was the veil of Godhead! This term is distinct, therefore, from the intrinsic and essential “form” (, v. 6).

3. By Being Humble “He humbled Himself” (v. 8)

Interestingly, the emphasis in this phrase rests on the act (verb) rather than on the subject (Himself). This is clear from the word order in the phrase. This is not synonymous with “made Himself in no reputation” (v. 7), but is a reference to His acts of condescension and humiliation. The whole time of His sojourn on earth was a time of self humiliation. He was humiliated and abased rather than ruling in power and majesty. He sacrificed honor, authority, and prominence among men.

4. By Being Obedient “unto death” (v. 8)

a. His Action

The aorist verb “become” () is used to affirm our Lord’s “emptying,” “self humiliation” and utter “obedience” to the Father. What a massive pile up of words expressing another step in our Saviour’s descent! Here is the majestic argument of Romans 5:19.

b. His Extension

The KJV could mean He “obeyed death,” but this He never did. Scripture says He died to “abolish death” (2 Tim. 1:10) and redeem us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13) and He did it by the holy will of the Lawgiver (Acts 2:23). Hence, the text should read “until death” i.e. to the length of death. His patience was to the length of His passion! He sought not His own will but the will of the Father in our salvation (cf. Heb. 5:8, 9; 12:4).

5. By Being Crucified “even the death of the cross” (v. 8)

This is the very lowest step down. Not only death, but a death of suffering, shameful, and accursed. The cross was the death not only one of extreme agony but of the utmost degradation. To the Romans it was reserved for the slave and for the basest ruffian. So in our Saviour’s crucifixion there is combined the Jewish dread of death-penalty by suspension (Deut. 21:23) with the Roman horror of the servile cross. Thus the supreme obedience demonstrated His willingness to “become a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13), to be “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3), as the outcast of the people. Who can fathom the abyss where He plunged for our love? History has no parallel. Mute in contemplation, we can never cease to wonder. He has taken the lowest step; He has touched the bottom.

Conclusion

From the manger to the cross He trod a path of humiliation, which culminated in the fearful misery, agony, and reproach of a shameful death on a criminal’s gibbet. As we view Him there, we must say:

“Two wonders I confess
The wonder of His glorious love,
and my own worthlessness.”
Amen.