

Guidelines for the Exercise of the Lord's Day Prophesying

Message Two : Knowing and Taking Christ as Our Pattern

I. Overview:

In Philippians 2:5-11 Paul presents Christ as the pattern; we need to have this pattern infused into us. The pattern of the Christian life is the God-man Savior who emptied Himself and humbled Himself and who has been exalted and glorified by God. Christ humbled Himself by becoming obedient even unto death, the death of the cross. The Lord humbled Himself to the uttermost, but God exalted Him to the highest peak and bestowed on Him "the name which is above every name". We have a life in us that is a self-emptying and self-humbling life; this life never grasps at something as a treasure but is always willing to lay aside position and title. The highest life on earth is the crucified life; whenever we live a crucified life, God will bring us into the power of resurrection. Only when we see the principle of submission can we serve God. Hebrews 5:8 tells us that the Lord's obedience was learned through suffering. Suffering brought obedience to Him. The Lord became the source of our salvation through obedience. God saved us with the hope that we would submit to His will. When one meets God's authority, submission is a simple matter, and knowing God's will is also a simple matter, because the Lord, who was submissive throughout His life, has already given us His life of submission.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Explain the word "existing" in Philippians 2:6, and its significance.

In Philippians 2:6 the Greek word rendered "existing" denotes existing from the beginning. It implies the Lord's eternal preexistence. The word

form refers to the expression, not the fashion, of God's being. It is identified with the essence and nature of God's person and thus expresses His essence and nature. This refers to Christ's deity.

B. Expound the words in Philippians 2:7, and what revelation has.

In Philippians 2:7 when Christ emptied Himself, He laid aside what He possessed—the form of God. The word form in verse 7 is the same word as used for the form of God in verse 6. In His incarnation the Lord did not alter His divine nature; He changed only His outward expression from the form of God, the highest form, to that of a slave, the lowest form. This was not a change of essence; it was a change of state.

Day 2 —

A. Explain Christ as our pattern which must be subjective.

Philippians 2:9 says clearly that God has highly exalted Christ. Thus, there can be no doubt that as our pattern Christ is in heaven. This is related to the objective aspect of the pattern. How could we take Him as our pattern today? How could we, who are on earth, follow One who has been exalted and who is now in heaven? It would be impossible. In order for us to take Christ as our pattern, this pattern must be subjective.

B. Expound how to work out our own salvation.

Salvation here is not salvation from the lake of fire. Rather, it refers to what Paul has already said about salvation earlier in this Epistle. The words so then in verse 12 indicate that what Paul says in this verse is a consequence of what has gone before. Working out our salvation is the result of taking Christ as our pattern, as seen in the preceding verses. As our pattern, Christ is our salvation.

Day 3 —

A. Expound the pattern in Philippians 2 being the life within us.

The pattern presented in Philippians 2:5-8 is now the life within us. This life is what we call a crucified life. The seven steps of Christ's humiliation are all aspects of the crucified life. Although Christ had the expression of deity, He laid aside this expression. This was the crucified life lived out in a full and absolute way.

B. Present how to live a crucified life.

Christ is not only an outward pattern for us; He is also the life within us. As this inner life, He would have us experience Him and thereby live a

crucified life. In this crucified life there is no room for rivalry, vainglory, or self-exaltation. On the contrary, there is self-emptying and self-humbling.

Day 4 —

A. Explain the meaning of the words of that the Lord Jesus and the Father are one.

The Word of God tells us that the Lord Jesus and the Father are one. In the beginning was the Word, just as in the beginning there was God. The Word was God, and this Word created the heavens and earth. With God in the beginning there was glory. It was an inapproachable glory, the glory of the Son. The Father and the Son are equal, equipotent, coexisting, and existing simultaneously. But there is a difference in person between the Father and the Son.

B. Expound what the two sections in Philippians 2:5-11 are.

The first section is on Christ emptying Himself. The second section is on Christ humbling Himself. The Lord lowered Himself twice, first in emptying Himself in His deity, and then in humbling Himself in His humanity. In the Godhead the Lord voluntarily chose to be the Son, submitting Himself to the authority of the Father. In the Godhead there is full harmony. The Father became the representation of authority, and the Son became the representation of submission.

Day 5 —

A. Expound that His being the Lord was something given to Him by God.

Concerning His deity, the Lord was equal with God. But His being the Lord was something given to Him by God. Being made the Lord is something that happened after He emptied Himself in His deity. The deity of the Lord Jesus is something that is based on what He is. Being God is His original position. When He laid aside His divine form to fully maintain the principle of submission and subsequently ascended to the heavens, God accorded to Him the position of Lord.

B. Explain the portion in Philippians 2: 5-11, and what the revelation is.

Philippians 2: 5-11 is very difficult to explain and a most divine passage. It seems as if there was a conference in the Godhead in the beginning in which a plan was made to create the universe. In this plan the Father would be the representation of authority and the Son willingly emptied Himself to become a created man as the representation of submission to authority. Only through the submission of a man could God's authority be established. This is why the Lord had to come to the earth to become a man.

Day 6 —

A. Explain the significance of the Lord declaring "It is done" on the cross.

The Lord Jesus was able to return because He accomplished a perfect and pure submission. Suffering upon suffering was piled on Him, but He remained absolutely submissive. There was not the slightest reaction or rebellion. Therefore, God exalted Him and ushered Him back as Lord in the Godhead. This was not just a refilling of what had been emptied but the ushering of a man into the Godhead by the Father. The Son became Jesus and was received back into the Godhead.

B. Expound how God maintains His principle of submission.

When the Lord came forth from God, He did not intend to return by His deity. Rather, He intended to return through His exaltation as a man. This is how God maintains His principle of submission. We should submit to authority completely. This is a great matter. The Lord Jesus' return to heaven was through His being a man and being submissive in the form of a man. As a result He was exalted by God. In the whole Bible there is hardly any passage as mysterious as this one.

III. Conclusion:

The saints often complain about their own weakness. When we do not take a crucified life as our pattern, we will be weak. If you are weak in your family life, daily life, and church life, it indicates that you have not lived a crucified life, and you are not in the power of resurrection. To enter into the power of resurrection, the entrance is the crucified life. Today, we believers have an urgent need to experience Christ as our pattern. We urgently need to experience Him as our crucified life. Such a life is opposed to the life of rivalry and vainglory. In the church life, if we do not have a crucified life as our pattern, then we automatically live a life of rivalry and vainglory. If we do not model our lives after a life of being crucified, we will automatically live a life of rivalry and vainglory.