

## **“Let this Mind be in You ...”**

Our readings for the day bring us to a consideration of the epistle of the Spirit through Paul to the Philippians. The ecclesia at Philippi had much to commend it: its example of steadfastness was a source of great joy to the apostle – indeed, the aspect of Joy is one of the main themes of this epistle. Paul, we are told in Chapter 1 and verse 3, thanked God “upon every remembrance of you”, and again, he writes: “God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ” (verse 8). But there was a problem within the ecclesia. There were two individuals that disturbed the peace and joy between the brethren and sisters: namely Euodias, and Syntyche two sisters who were at variance with each other. So Paul exhorts them: “I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they may be of the same mind in the Lord” (Phil. 4:2). Whatever the root problem was, we are not informed, but they were entreated by Paul to be “of the same mind”.

This same exhortation is brought to bear in chapter 1:

“let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves ...” (Phil. 1:3).

Here is the secret to solving personal problems between brethren and sisters: to esteem each other better than ourselves. As Paul expressed it elsewhere: “be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10). Love does not vaunt itself (1 Cor. 13:4) but seeks to cover a multitude of sins. We must exercise the same forbearance to our brethren and sisters, as we require from them. Love seeks not her own (1 Cor. 13:5), but the benefit of others. In esteeming each other better than ourselves, we adopt the position of servants, ministering to the needs of one another. So the exhortation continues: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4).

The allusion here appears to be to the Cherubim that overshadowed the mercy seat of the tabernacle system of things. Exodus chapter 25 records their position and formation:

“the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be” (Exod. 25:20).

Notice that here, the faces of the Cherubim, it is said, “shall look one to another”, as well as being “toward the mercy seat”. The interesting thing here, is that the word translated “another” is the usual word for “brother”. That is, these two Cherubim were looking each one to his brother! So it is that whilst our direction is focused on Messiah as being the antitypical mercy seat, we also look towards each other, with care and consideration, seeing how we can encourage each other, and share the burdens that life brings.

In exhorting the dissenting members to be “of one mind”, the Apostle directs our attention to the example of Messiah himself. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ...”. Here is the ultimate example of humility, and seeking the welfare of others. In Christ Jesus we see a mind which we should seek to emulate: a mind not dominated with the selfish cares of this life, but one which inclined to the doing of his Father’s Will, and a mind of subjection in order to meet the needs of his brethren. We find that there a number of particulars described in this chapter relating to the mind of Christ, and we shall proceed through them in order.

### **The Image of God**

Verse 6 describes the Master thus:

“who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:6).

The word “form” carries the sense of a likeness, or image. Accordingly, we read in Hebrews chapter 1, that Christ is “the brightness of His glory, and the express image of his person” (Heb. 1:3). Trinitarians misuse this verse in Philippians to attempt to prove that Jesus was God, being part of a triune Godhead, but it proves nothing of the sort. Rather, it proves that Jesus was in the image, or likeness of his Father.

Genesis chapter 1 records the original purpose of God with man, which was to reflect the likeness, or image, of his Creator:

“and God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:26-27).

Adam, however failed. He transgressed against God, and so whilst being in the bodily image of God, morally he developed the likeness of sinful flesh. Jesus, however, overcame where Adam fell short. He did display the glorious array of his Father’s Attributes, so that whilst bearing the weak and sinful nature of all of Adam’s progeny, he showed forth the image of Almighty God in his life.

The AV rendering of the verse under consideration is: “Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ...”. However, other translations render it “though not equality with God something to be grasped”. Assuming this to be an accurate rendering, we have another allusion to the first human pair. Genesis chapter 3 recounts how that Eve was tempted by the Serpent to transgress:

“... and the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5).

To be “as gods”, or elohim (the heavenly host) was part of the temptation. Eve sought to attain to it by reaching out, and grasping the forbidden fruit. But by contrast, Jesus did not grasp for equality with God, but humbled himself to become “the form of a servant”.

### The Form of a Servant

The apostle continues to describe the mind of our Master:-

“... but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men...” (Phil. 2:7).

The word translated “no reputation” is literally, that he “emptied himself”. Divesting himself of every element of human pride and self-aggrandizement, he emptied himself totally in service to his Father, like the drink offering being poured out under the Law. Speaking of “my servant” through the prophet Isaiah, Yahweh declared: “... his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men ...” (Isa. 52:14).

His form was that of a servant, and his service required that he be found “in the likeness of men”. This latter aspect is something emphasized very strongly in the book of Hebrews:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, **he also himself likewise took part of the same** ... in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:14, 17).

The point is, that Christ could only defeat the great enemy – human nature itself – by possessing that nature, and overcoming its inclination to evil. The record could not be stronger: “he himself likewise” took part of the same flesh and blood of his brethren, and this was necessary for him to be “a merciful and faithful high priest”, to atone for the sins of his brethren.

### **Becoming “obedient unto death”**

One of the great difficulties for Trinitarians is to explain how it is, that part of an immortal godhead would have to ‘become’ obedient unto death. That is the testimony of Scripture: “he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Similarly, it is stated elsewhere that “though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). Why would an immortal part of the Godhead need to learn anything, let alone how to be obedient to the will of the Father part? Why would he need to learn, and become obedient through suffering? We can readily understand however, if he were born of a woman, and partook of a nature that needed to be mastered. Each trial he was subjected to would be greater than the last, building him up to the greatest trial of all: to lay down his life for his friends – and to take it again, being elevated in glory. His sufferings taught him obedience, and it took a preparation period of 30 years before he was ready to commence his ministry, and make the ultimate sacrifice.

It is stated that “he humbled himself”. It is an aspect of Divine Wisdom, that before glory comes humility: “whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Mat. 23:12). In this, we have the divine order, as exemplified in the Master himself. Rather than to vaunt ourselves above our brethren, we need to “each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3), and it is to the mind of Christ that we go, to learn humility before glory.

### **The Exaltation to Follow**

Because of our Lord’s obedience unto death, “God also hath highly exalted him” (Phil. 2:9). This exaltation of Christ comes out in many Old Testament prophecies, for example Isaiah chapter 52:

“Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high” (Isa. 52:13).

Again, the New Testament echoes this same vital teaching, speaking of how our Lord is:

“far above all principality, and power and might, and dominion, and that every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:21).

Though he was despised and rejected of men, he was raised to a highly exalted position, and it is with Divine authority that he shall come again to reign over the earth as king. He is above “every name that is named”, for his name contains his Father’s Name (Yah-shua), which shall be highly esteemed in the age to come.

### **Bowing Before the Name**

Whereas in our day, the phrase “Jesus Christ” is despised and used as an oath of contempt, in the age to come, it shall be highly esteemed and honoured:

“at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11).

There is an interesting contrast here, with the idolatry of Babylon, as described in Daniel chapter 3. Here, Nebuchadnezzar made an idol of gold, and commanded that every person should bow before it:

“to you it is commanded, O people, nations and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up ...” (Dan. 3:4-5).

At the sounding of the instruments, every knee was to bow before the Image. But there were three men who refused to conform to the commandment, and the example of the majority who obeyed it. Even though they were threatened with death by being cast into the fiery furnace, they refused:

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. 3:17-18).

Here was an uncompromising refusal to bow before the altar of mammon. When all around them, men and women were bowing down in worship to the golden image, these three men stood tall, and trusted in the power of their God to save. A passage in Romans chapter 12 seems to be relevant:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

These three men refused to conform. The world around them worshipped an idol, the work of men’s hands, but they refused to do likewise. Even so, all around us men and women bow before the god of this world, even King Sin. But what is our approach to these things? Shall we conform? Only at the Name of Jesus shall we bow, and no other. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, we will not submit, but rather trust in Yahweh’s power to save – and of a certainty he will.

### **The Mind of Christ**

In considering these things, we have a powerful exhortation in the example of our Redeemer. Rather than to strive with our fellow brethren over matters of no consequence, the Apostle exhorts us to develop the Mind of Christ. And what we have seen is that the Mind of Christ is a mind of humility, subjection, and obedience before Yahweh Himself. The Psalmist describes such a spirit, to be developed in true believers:

“Yahweh, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me ...” (Psa. 131:1).

The Lord Jesus Christ showed the true spirit of humility, and we must do likewise. Devoting our lives in Divine service, we seek not our own affairs only, but like the Cherubim of Glory, we look also to the affairs of others, to give brotherly help where the need arises. And humbling ourselves in the hand of Almighty God, we look forward to the glory that shall follow, as we shall live and reign with Christ throughout the ages to come.

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