

“Therefore, my beloved . . .”

Philippians 2:5-11 may be one of the most quoted passages in the Bible. It contains Paul's tender trilogy on the mind of Christ: He voluntarily humbled Himself; He came to us as one of us, with all the frailties of humanity yet without sin; He obediently and willingly offered His life on the cross for us. We are entreated to be like Him. Three more edifying, encouraging and challenging points follow in verses 12-16.

“Work out your own salvation...” Jesus did this. He knew from the beginning that His own spiritual condition would have tremendous impact on His mission (Lk. 2:49). Throughout His ministry He was faithful to do all those things which were required of Him. He fulfilled all righteousness (Mat. 3:15), and He finished the work which had been given Him to do (Jn. 17:4). It is true that where one has not been, he cannot lead another. Consequently, the first step in bringing others to Christ is to be certain that we are there ourselves. It is only when we have fully given ourselves to Christ that we become vessels of His word and His will. Jesus set the priorities: First our “beam” and next, their “mote” (Mat. 7:3-5).

“Do all things without complaining and disputing...” Jesus did this. “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23-26). There is hardly anything that will throw a “wet blanket” over the good intentions of the church faster than complaining and disputing, and there is hardly anything more unpleasant, distracting and time consuming than trying to stamp it out. “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in the opposition” (2 Tim. 2:23-26).

“Holding fast the word of Life...” Jesus did this. Philosophizing will never defeat Satan's efforts at temptation like our Lord's masterful use of scripture did (Mat. 4:1-11). There remains no greater power regulating sin (Psm. 119:11), no other instruction unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), no warmer, more instant source of comfort for the afflicted (1 Thes. 4:18), no greater influence to convert a sin-sick soul, or rejoice a sorrowful heart (Psm. 19:7-9) than the word of Life, the word of God. “Sing them over again to me, Wonderful words of Life...”

If we do these things, we will also, “...shine as lights in the world” (2:15). “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...”

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