

Wrestling / the Sovereignty of God & the Freedom of Relationship

Introduction - Risk BECAUSE He is God

Philippians 2:5-11

* Review so far

First taught this text when I was 19 years old in a small group Bible study
Always had a particular understanding until a few years ago when Brian Fuery and I heard a sermon by a guy that just rocked both of us
Some refer to it as an early Christian hymn
Defines God maybe as much if not more than any other passage
What I want to show is this most basic nature of God is foundational AND consistent with what we have been studying so far
Interesting, it begins, “Have this mind in you which is in Christ Jesus” and ends “to the Glory of God the Father”
How does something SO rooted in Christ end in glorifying THE FATHER?

3 stanzas – depict Jesus’ life

- a) 6-7a – Jesus pre-earthly existence
Begins in the heights of glory
- b) 7b-8 – Jesus earthly existence
Descends to the depths of creatureliness
- c) 9-11 – Jesus’ post-earthly existence
Because He fulfills this descent, He ascends to the highest place

All turns on a decision which Jesus makes in Verse 6
“He did not regard” or “consider”
All of salvation history flows from this point
Everything He does hangs upon this decision and thus our entire eternity

We are going to spend some time doing an extensive word study
May feel arduous at first but it is necessary to understand what Paul is saying
* Review 5 methods for finding context – namely LANGUAGE here

Verse 6

“was” or although He existed”– to exist or have possession of
In His pre-earthly state Jesus existed in and possessed the form of God

Verse 6

“form” = outward shape of a thing that conforms to the inward reality
In His pre-earthly state He possessed inwardly and expressed outwardly God
“equality”

Jesus possess equality with the Father in His pre-earthly state
Why just before the cross He says, “glorify Me together with You with the glory I had before the world was” in John 17:5
His divinity is on the same level as the one He calls Father

Verse 7

“emptied” (kenoo)

What does this mean?

Most turn to “of what did He empty Himself”

Some say of His divine nature

Some say some level of His Godness

But the hymn doesn’t say that He emptied Himself OF anything at all

Just that He emptied Himself

Suggests not due to subtraction but addition – He emptied Himself TAKING...

Verse 7

Taking the “form” – same in verse 6 (morphé)

He who was inwardly/outwardly divine in His pre-earthly state chose to live as a slave inwardly and outwardly – WHY?

“slave” = most render as bond-servant, some as slave

2 Greek different words translated servant

a) one can come and go as long as the work gets done, really a hireling

b) doulos = has no rights, bound to the master

This is the word that is used

The divine One becomes a DOULOS

Why?

Verse 7

“likeness” – related to the word for image but slightly different

Image implies an exact representation of the original

Likeness implies a similarity but allows for a difference

Expresses He became LIKE a human being but not exactly man

Better way of saying it - He is truly man but not merely man

Because He is STILL divine

These words cause us to wrestle with the 2 great mysteries of the Christian faith

1. The trinity within the single Godhead

2. The unity of divinity and humanity in the incarnate Christ

Jesus, who has always existed in the FORM of God becomes real flesh and blood Human

Again, human, but not merely human

LIKE us yet without EVER ceasing to be God

Why?

Verse 8

“obedient”

The divine DOULOS chose obedience

Get a Romans 5 kinda feel here

Paul here I think like he explicitly does in Romans contrasts Jesus with the first human if you will, Adam

Adams disobedience ruins the world

Jesus’ obedience results in the redemption of the world

Verse 8

“even”

In 1st Century there was no worse or more degrading death than the cross

The descent of is brutal

- a) From Heaven to earth,
- b) once here a DOULOS (servant/slave),
- c) obedient to a most degrading death

WHY?

Verse 9, 10

“name”

The DOULOS has been exalted to the throne and given the highest NAME

Looks like it is the name LORD (Kurios)

In Roman world, KURIOS was the name given to the Emperor

In the Jewish world, the name is the equivalent of the sacred name of the God of Israel, YHWH that you couldn't even speak

When they came to this NAME, they would substitute it for the name Kurios

What a name for a slave preacher from Nazareth

The same name as the emperors

And the same name as given to the God of the Jews, YHWH

Why is the DOULOS given THAT NAME?

And WHY is this to the glory of The FATHER?

Now we are ready to tackle the statement – “He did not consider”...vs. 5-6

Our entire faith turns on this statement

And the word consider hangs on the following statement...

“To be grasped” = only time it is used in NT = harpagmos

In Greek literature it is hardly ever used

Word does not mean grasped but to seize upon, meaning to take advantage of it

Now rendered “something to be exploited” – WHY?

In Jesus' pre-earthly state he did not consider taking advantage of something or exploiting something

WHY?

Part of the reason is our need

Part of the reason is our worth to Him

But WE aren't even mentioned

The WHY?

Now the heart of the text, the heart of the faith, and maybe the heart of God

“He did not consider equality with God to be”...X but Y

Language suggests – In His pre-earthly state Son of God is contemplating what it means to be equal with His Father

His conclusion – Equality with God is not something you exploit or take advantage of, but rather emptying Oneself and taking the form of a servant/slave

The Son of God sits back, and thinks thru what it means TO BE GOD, and He comes to the conclusion that TO BE GOD IS TO BE SERVANT

In choosing to become a servant, he doesn't GIVE UP equality with God

He does not LAY aside His Godness to be man

Remember, He is LIKE man, man, but not MERELY man

He considers that being in the form of God, being equal with the Father is most naturally expressed in emptying Himself

Taking on the powerless form of a slave, of a dying criminal

Being God is RISKING EVERYTHING thru self-negation and self-giving love
Did you hear that word...RISK

In becoming a human being, He did not cease being who He was, rather He was EXPRESSING
what it MEANS to be divine

The best way to express this is to be humiliated and to risk rejection by becoming a slave, a baby, a
servant

“Therefore God has highly exalted Him...”

“Therefore He has been given the name...” - KURIOS

It is BECAUSE He risks and lays His life down that He is God

THIS is His very essence

Now this scene at the foot of the cross makes sense

Soldier stares at the dying Jesus

“Truly, this is the Son of God”

In the moment of absolute REJECTION and HUMILIATION FOR THE SAKE OF
RELATIONSHIP

Jesus washing disciples feet – John 13:1, 3

Jesus knows WHO HE IS

He is not confused about His identity

Where did you get the idea of doing this?

This is learned from the Father – this is what it means to be God

To be God is to BE DOULOS – a risking servant

To be God is to LOVE and risk rejection

To be God is to BE in the moment, knowing He can be rejected at any time but doing so for THE
SAKE of relationship

THIS is what it MEANS to be God