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“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,” Ephesians 4:17.

Pattern for Living

Lesson Aim: To magnify and exalt Christ as the believer's pattern in every area of interest and activity.

L519. Date: June 1964. **Text:** Philippians 2:3-16.

Topic: Growth: Spiritual; Righteousness: Of Believers.

INTRODUCTION — God's predetermined purpose for each of His children is that he might be conformed unto the image of His divine Son, Jesus Christ, Romans 8:29. Only in this confirmation can the Divine purpose (as studied last Sunday) be realized in each believer. The realization of this Divine purpose is the highest possible good which could come to a man.

God's purpose for His children includes every area of life--social, business, home, and religious. Jesus Christ, as the only begotten Son of God and the elder brother of believers, is the pattern for God's will in every area of life. The aim of today's study is “to magnify and exalt Christ as the believer's pattern in every area of interest and activity.” **“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps,”** I Peter 2:21.

Let no one think that the pattern Christ has set is impossible of attainment. Each believer has the potential of growing to the complete spiritual maturity of the full man. God does not save one and then leave him to follow his own way. He comes to him, dwells within him, and directs him by example, instruction, and inspiration into the best paths of Christian service. No man can follow the pattern and example set by Christ within his own strength. **“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure,”** Philippians 2:13. It is hoped today's study will inspire some readers to attain the stature of maturity set out in this lesson. The Christ who lives within can make it possible.

EXPOSITION

I. MUTUAL ESTEEM, 2:3.

Those who are brethren in Christ are to be marked in their relationships with one another in the spirit of Christ. Not moved by unworthy motives nor base desires, true Christian love will join believing brethren into the bonds of a most holy fellowship. When all love one another and live for the glory of Jesus, these grand results follow.

First, party spirit dies so that nothing is done “through strife nor partisanship,” verse 3a. There is no place for jealousy, envy, malice, nor kindred emotions among those who “walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit,” Romans 8:1b. Indeed, these things are evidences of the works of the flesh and not of the Spirit, Galatians 5:19-25.

Second, there is absolute humility while each one esteems his brother better than himself, verse 3b. He who looks with God's love upon a brother will not be anxious to search out his faults. By comparing what we sadly deplore in ourselves with what we admire in others it is not difficult to think others better than ourselves. “Lowliness of mind” is a distinctive Christian virtue in which each man is viewed in his potential worth to God. It is everywhere encouraged as worthy of a Christian's emulation. See Romans 12:10; Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5.

Observe how the words, “strife, vainglory,” are opposed to the words “lowliness of mind.” The former are expressions of the carnal nature while the latter is an expression of the spiritual nature. The former are inspired by Satan while the latter is inspired by God. Which should characterize the Christian?

II. SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION, 2:4.

The growing Christian will have a deepening appreciation and respect for all those who love Christ better than all else. The spirit of Christ will lead us, however great may be our powers, and however beautiful our character, in comparison with the powers: and characters of those about us to endeavor to serve them in love. Christ's spirit produces in us a wide sympathy. When we have learned to love Christ aright, we can see Him in many who are not members of our own social circle or of our local church. This gives us an increasing concern for their well being.

It is this spirit of sympathy which makes a man no longer give primary

attention to his own things, but to be primarily interested in the welfare of others. It is this spirit which prompts men to become preachers and men and women to become missionaries, teachers, etc. It is the supreme example set by Jesus who gave up the glories of heaven for the sake of sinful men.

An abiding sympathy for others follows the pattern set by Jesus. Not only did He suffer being tempted as other men, but He abides faithful and sympathetic concerning all those who thus suffer, Hebrews 4:15. Those who follow Him must conquer selfish ambition by taking up His yoke and cross and following Him, Matthew 11:29; Luke 9:23.

III. SELF SACRIFICE, 2:5-8.

In all the Scripture there is hardly a place of equal majesty to these verses. The Saviour's majesty and humility are here brought into abrupt connection. The supernal throne of the eternal God and the cross of shame of Jesus are brought to stand side-by-side, all for the redemption of rebellious sinners. Paul here calls for believers to have the same spirit of self sacrifice as Jesus has shown. He is saying, "Never look exclusively upon your own interests, never count anything of your own worthy to stand in the way, but always be prepared to the last point to deny yourself, that the redemptive purpose of God may flow through the channel of your life to those who sorely need his blessed help." This habit of mind to think of self-abnegation for the benefit of others is like Christ and should be the mark of a real Christian.

1. Self sacrifice means the denial to self the luxury of personal benefits for the sake of others, verse 5-7a. This is what Jesus willingly did. He is in the form (meaning, "essential quality" rather than external form) of God! He possessed the essential quality of Deity. Indeed, He was very God of very God preceding the incarnation. **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,"** John 1:1. There was no "robbery" (a thing to be grasped after and held to regardless) in His claim to equality with God. He shared one of the three positions of the Holy Trinity. Yet, he was willing to waive His rights as Deity when the need arose. This is exactly what he did when he "made himself of no reputation." Emptying Himself of the absolutes of Deity, he became limited as a man that he might experience man's sin problem and become his redeemer. This is the pattern for all believers. Denying themselves of earthly advantage, each Christian is to devote his most unselfish energies to serving others in Jesus' name.

2. Self sacrifice means to take a lower position for the sake of others, verse 7. Christ willingly assumed the place of dishonor, "emptying himself"

that he might accomplish redemption. As the co-equal and one with God, He could have called for sacrifice to Himself, but he did the opposite by making a sacrifice of Himself. This does not mean that Jesus ceased to be Divine when He became a man. He emptied Himself of His glory and of the use of many of His Divine attributes. So he set aside the outward manifestation of His deity while occupying the place of a servant of men.

The purpose of His self-emptying was that He might take another form of expression—the form of a servant. Instead of giving expression to His glory, He revealed His humility. He became a “servant” (bondslave) to the world of mankind whose likeness and fashion He had assumed. Three expressions are made about the humiliation of Christ. (1) He emptied Himself of the divine manifestations of His nature; (2) He assumed the place and work of a bond-slave; (3) He was made in the likeness of men, being not some form of glorified manhood but like men as they really are. (See Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15.) What an expression of grace is this! Has the reader ever made himself of “no reputation,” taken on the “form of a servant,” for the sake of another's spiritual welfare?

3. Self sacrifice means the endurance of suffering for the sake of others, verse 8. “He humbled himself” in His manhood so that His whole earthly life was one of submission. His humiliation involved His stooping down in His humanity that He might die the most shameful type of death — “even the death of the cross.” Here is the Master over death submitting to it for the sake of men! Moreover, the nature of His death was one of ignominy and shame. It was the execution method used for the worst of criminals and which bore the special curse of God, Galatians 3:13. Even so, “He became obedient even to the very extent of dying.” Beyond that limit obedience cannot go. By His obedience, Jesus has made the cross a sign of victory rather than a sign of shame. He has changed Calvary's curse into Calvary's cure for sin-sick men. He has forever exalted sacrificial service to the Father for the sake of men, calling, **“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me,”** Luke 9:23.

IV. GLORIFY GOD, 2:9-11.

The ultimate humiliation of Jesus was only temporary. It resulted in His super-eminent exaltation by the Father. Now He occupies “the highest rank and power, having been raised to supreme majesty.” Moreover, the exaltation was accompanied by the Father's free gift of “the Name” to the Son. This is no single name (as “Jesus” or “Lord”) but the designation of Him in His complete authority to be Saviour and Lord over all, Colossians

2:9. So great is His name, so far reaching His authority, that at the very mention of the name of Jesus all creation falls upon its face before Him. Things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth are all subject to the authority of His blessed Name. The ultimate end of it all, however, was to glorify God. This was the whole passion of Jesus who once prayed, **“Father . . . glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee,”** John 17:1.

Again, Jesus is the pattern for believers in this matter. His reverence for God and faithful obedience to God put him in the position that He could lead men to glorify God. Every saved person was redeemed from sin that God could be glorified in his life. He has no higher purpose of existence than this. God is glorified in His children when their reverence and obedience is sufficient to keep their own lives pure and make them evangelists to lead others to forgiveness in Jesus. The great men of God in generations past were not great solely because of native ability, but because of their unreserved dedication to the work and will of God. This is the way to true greatness. The way up to honour is down in humility and service.

V. SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY, 2:12-16.

1. Let the manner of your life reflect the reality of your salvation, verse 12. Salvation involves more than forgiveness of sins and a hope of heaven. Salvation is a veritable manner of life—eternal life in Jesus Christ. This life is implanted in the heart by the conversion experience of the “new birth” in which one becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus. It is then to be lived out in each aspect of life—business, social, home, and religious. To “work out your own salvation” does not mean one works so as to produce salvation for himself. He receives that as a free gift from God. It rather challenges to strenuous exertion through prayerful, resolute, persevering effort in resistance to temptation, and the prosecution of God's service, to carry forward in completeness the likeness of character which God has implanted in us. In other words, it is the “out-living” of the “in-dwelling” new life received by faith in Christ. It is terribly tragic to see a person confess Christ as Saviour and go on in the same old habits of earth-centered living. Paul is calling for something higher and better. Let the saving grace of God which abides in you express itself through your daily routine of duties. This fulfills the admonition of Jesus, **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,”** Matthew 5:16.

2. Let God work His will through you, verse 13. As the sun warms the

earth and causes the flowers to grow and bloom, so the Spirit of God warms the heart and incites the growth and blossom of Christian graces. It is God who works in you both to create the will and to perform the work by which Christian graces are manifest and developed. All of this is likewise according to “His good pleasure”—in fulfillment of His free sovereign purpose of grace.

One commentator has well observed that this verse stressed God's personality (“it is God that . . .”), God's immanence (“in you”), God's energy (“worketh”), and God's purpose (“His good pleasure”). And discontent with one's self, any aspiration to higher and better things, is the direct work of God. Any growth in grace and increase in spiritual stature is likewise the work of God. It is God who works in you to produce the will and to accomplish the work which is willed to be done. Man's part is to cooperate with God's willing and working. Jesus always worked in fullest obedience and cooperation with the Father (John 5:30; 8:28; 10:17-18; 15:10; 20:21), and we who are God's children by faith in Christ Jesus must do no less than He.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the Divine purpose for each believer?
2. Can life be properly divided into “sacred” and “secular”? Why?
3. Why should Christians have mutual esteem for one another?
4. What is meant by “self sacrifice”?
5. How is Jesus our example in self sacrifice?
6. How can the Christian best glorify God?
7. How can one know God's will for his life?
8. What is the remedy for murmurings and disputings?
9. How does the Christian “hold forth the word of life”?
10. How has this lesson helped you to be a better Christian?