

The verses we are memorizing this week have such a message for us. And I will tell you up front that this devotion will be a little longer this week. It should all balance out in the end as last week I was a bit short ☺ so stick with me here. As I write this I am in an airplane at about 30,000 feet in the air. Perhaps I am a bit closer to the Lord because of that, able to hear Him better so He has more to say this week. (I know that isn't true, but I had to say it anyway ☺)

These verses bring the example and life of Christ right home to us, into our humanity. They also offer us a choice, a very clear choice that God has been offering for quite some time. Let's see what it is.

Philippians 2:8-9

In verse 8 we see Jesus became just like us. It says, "***And being found in appearance as a man...***" Verses 6-7 also alluded to this but here in verse 8 it leaves us with no question. Jesus, the Son of God, wrapped Himself in flesh and became one of us.

Many people have a difficult time understanding the nature of Jesus. I believe the Bible makes it clear that Jesus was fully God and fully man. Countless declarations convince me of that but especially Jesus' own words calling Himself, "***I AM***" in John 8:58 make it clear that Jesus was God. Countless verses also make it clear that Jesus was fully human too such as Philippians 2:8 which we are memorizing this week. Do I understand it all? Not quite. It is part of the mystery of God as I accept His Word on faith.

I also see here an incredible model for us. Whereas Jesus was fully God and humbled Himself to full humanity, in contrast but likeness too, we are fully human and He has offered us the opportunity to take on His nature of deity. Consider II Corinthians 5:17 that tells us if we are in Christ we are a "***new creation***". As born again believers we have taken on the Spirit of God. Once again, it is a mystery of God that I don't fully understand, but I take on by faith.

Understanding this foundation is so important before we move on. In a nutshell this foundation is that God in the fullness of deity chose to become human and we, though human, have been given the Spirit of God. This foundation of understanding will help us as we look at verse 8b and 9.

In looking there we see that Jesus, though God, took on humanity and then completely humbled Himself to death and not just any death, but the most cruel and humiliating death, death on a cross. But... that choice birthed the resurrection. We know from the gospel, as Jesus humbled Himself to death, He was resurrected and seated at the right hand of God – the highest place. There would never have been a resurrection without the choice of death. From Jesus' choice of ultimate humility, He was then exalted to the place of His name being above every name. Verse 9 says, "***Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name...***"

So what choice are we then presented with? Actually several. First we have the choice to be grateful for the willingness of Jesus to die for us. Without this sacrifice we would be stuck in our sinful human state forever. We should be overcome with gratefulness.

However we are also offered another choice. As followers of Jesus, God also calls us to die to our flesh. Luke 9:23 tells us, "***If any man would come after me, he must deny himself daily and***

take up his cross and follow me.” We are given the choice to deny our flesh and die to self as well, believing that life, true life, will be resurrected in us. I love Romans 8:11 which speaks of this, ***“And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.”***

Many may say, “but how can I die on a cross, what does that mean?” I recently heard this definition of “our cross”. Our cross is found at the place where our will and God’s will differ. We then have the choice to die to what we want (taking up our cross) believing that God will bring us a resurrection.

It isn’t always easy to do that. Jesus struggled in the flesh with the choice to go to the cross but He surrendered His will (Matthew 26:36-46) We will struggle as well. But... we can know that life, abundant life (John 10:10) is there for the one who does this. I love these words from St. Francis of Assisi:

It is in giving that we receive

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned

It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

I personally am convinced that the life He brings us as we choose to die to self is broader than we understand. Yes it includes the life we will one day enjoy in Heaven, but it also includes the wonder of the Spirit of God living in me now and all that brings with it. From experience I have learned that when I pick up my cross, dying to what I want that is in conflict with Him, He always brings something better. What a joy to walk with Him.

Way back in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 30:20) God spoke these words, ***“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants.”***

Today He offers that same choice for us and He also has set before us the example of Jesus who chose death and was exalted to greater life. We too have that opportunity, the choice is ours. What cross are you facing today? Pick it up and carry it with ***“your attitude being the same as that of Christ Jesus.”*** God bless you this day as you pick up your cross, knowing that resurrection life always follows.

Thanks for sticking with me, I hope it was worth it!
Sharon Thomas