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CHRIST, OUR MODEL LIFE

Most of have seen advertisements for car kits that people can buy to mount on a Volkswagen chassis to make a model of an expensive roadster. You still have a VW motor, frame, and wheels but the outside shell looks like a Bentley or Aston-Martin. For people who like to tinker with cars this might be a fun project but owning a kit car could never give the same kind of satisfaction and enjoyment as having and experiencing the real thing.

So often we are admonished to let Christ be our "model" as we live our lives. We are to walk in His steps and do the things that He would do. On the surface, this appears to be the right thing to do. Modern day psychologists tell us that we need a role model and that each of us, consciously or subconsciously, fix on a model and pattern after it. In the natural scheme of things this is what happens and, as Christians, we could legitimately ask, "What better model could we find other than Jesus?"

I think that God, not being limited to the natural, but having the option of the supernatural, has a better way. Instead of letting Christ Jesus be our model, He becomes our life. He literally lives in us and expresses himself through our lives, both collectively and individually. Our will is transformed into His will, our values take on His values. As John the Baptist told his follower concerning Jesus: "I must decrease and He must increase." So that Christ becomes all and in all. There is to be a oneness with Him. Not only are we "in Christ" but "Christ is in us." Jesus gave a similar explanation of His relationship with the Father. "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father. I am in the Father and the Father is in Me." Our collective unity in Christ should and will cause unity in the community of believers.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4 If each of us is letting Christ live His life in us, and since Christ is going to be in agreement with Himself, then we will find agreement with each other as we find His will in any situation. What Paul is saying is "if we have found a place of rest (from our own labors) in Christ and are comfortable and have peace with that position, then we will not be acting out of the old fleshly nature toward each other." We will supernaturally consider the feelings of others and will have empathy with them. I just read the other day that the key to communication is to "seek first to understand and then be understood." We are to listen empathically and to respond with empathy. Most of don't listen at all and wind up responding emphatically with our own agendas and opinions. That is not Jesus working in you, that is the world, the flesh and the devil.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11 The mind is our thought processes, our frame of reference, our attitude, our approach to and view of life. If Christ is in us, then we can choose to let Him be in control or we can choose to do it our way. Christians have a choice. Jesus had a choice. He did not let the fact that He is God prevent Him from coming to us in human form so that we could know Him. He did not take the attitude that "being God" was something that He had to hold on to. The fact that he took on the role of a servant and was limited in time and space in the human body did not diminish His worth. He was still God. The fact that He suffered death for us and became sin for us did not make Him any less God than He was. In the same way, if we do what the world considers to be a menial task by helping someone who is poor, if we befriend a person who is outcast by society, or if we get down on the floor and take care of little children in the nursery it does not diminish our value or take away from our dignity.

If Jesus had been only human, then He would not have been able to do what He did since pride would have prevented Him from doing so. It was the fact that He is God that made it possible.

It is only because Christ is in us that we can do the humble and lowly things that really minister to other people. Jesus was exalted to His place at the right hand of the Father and because He is in us and we are in Him, we too are with Him in the heavenlies. The ultimate outcome of all things is that Jesus will be recognized as Head of all things in heaven and in earth. Now He is Head of all things to the church, but eventually He will be all and in all.

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13 Sometimes we get the idea that we need to go on retreats or have some great or famous Christian come in to conduct meetings to keep us on the right track. Paul was encouraging these people to not let such things as whether or not he were present or absent make any difference in the way they lived. You see, it was not Paul or any other preacher that was the difference in their lives, it is the fact that God was working in them His salvation. As God works in us those things that are pleasing to Him, then we are to manifest the results of this inner working by our walk or lifestyle. As we manifest what God is doing in us, we should be in awe that it is, in fact, Jesus Who is expressing Himself through us and our personality. It is a great responsibility to be a Christian.

PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16 As we "work out" or walk out our salvation -- that which God is working in us, we will find that discontent and disputing will cease to be part of our character. Instead we will be recognized as salt and light in the world. We will be seen as steady and reliable and dependable while all around us is perverse and not dependable. As Christ lives and expresses His life in us even what we say will be words that bring life and not death, encouragement and not defeat. God will take pleasure in us and we will not only have His acceptance because we are "in Christ" but we will have His approval because Christ is in us.