

Kenosis

By Paris Reidhead*

Now your Bible is open as I have requested to Philippians, the 2nd Chapter, and this is called the kenosis portion, the emptying portion, I shall read again, verse 5 on:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Php. 2:5-11).

Years ago as a little lad, Memorial Day had a strange significance to me. It happened to be my birthday; and so, with characteristic egotism, I felt that the flags were being flown on that occasion to celebrate my birth. I soon learned, however, that this was not the real reason why the flags were there. I had family that were quite eager to set me straight on that point, and they've been through the years reminding me of it. And I would call to your attention that this period in this particular year ought to have far more significance than just a holiday. It ought to mean more to you than just an occasion when you are free from work for 24 hours and are at liberty to have a vacation. I think we should remember that there are those in other days that have loved freedom and liberty enough to be willing to die for it. I believe we should go again somewhere on that day, either in memory or actually, to try and bring back to mind the reason for its being established, that there is a memorial that has been raised to those who cared enough to give their life that we might have freedom and liberty. We have taken it so for granted; we have lost sight of its value and of its meaning.

But may I call this to your attention. It came to my ears just this past week. There are a great many that have fought in battle; some have been craven cowards; some have been heroes; most have been brave men. The distinction between a brave man and a hero, someone said, was that the hero was brave just five minutes longer than the others. That extra five minutes at the last, at the point of test, made the difference. We find our Lord Jesus has been set before us as an example, not only as our redeemer, as our sovereign, as the one who died that we might live; but He is also become our example. And this strange word: “Let this mind, this attitude, this disposition, this purpose, be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Then it proceeds to establish His person, who He is, being in the form of God; from eternity past, equal with the Father. All things that were made were made by Him. Without Him was not anything made that was made. He reigned. He ruled. Angels worshipped and adored Him. And yet, in order that the purpose of the Father might be fulfilled, He was willing to take upon Him the form of a slave, and was willing to be made in the likeness of men. Such condescension. We cannot understand it, how the eternal God, the Creator and the Sustainer of all things, was willing to accept the body like unto our bodies, and be in every way a man, with sin excepted. He did not have a nature of sin, nor did He sin. But He had a body like your body, and a personality similar to yours and mine. He was willing to clothe Himself, and cover Himself with our flesh, to obscure that transcendent glory before which angels bowed their faces in order that we might behold Him, and know Him, that we might have thus a revelation of God in human flesh, that God Himself might become flesh. He was made in the likeness of man.

But you will notice that He took upon Him the form of a slave. He became to the will of the Father as a slave should be and was to the will of His master. Our Lord Jesus had, by virtue of His incarnation, relinquished the right to act as God. Now, I want you to notice my choice of words. He relinquished the right to act as God. He did not relinquish His Deity. No, not so much as for a moment. He was Emanuel, God with us, but He counted that to be equal with God nothing to be grasped after. He did not insist that each and every moment He should be displayed as God. He was willing, prepared in mind, and heart, and spirit that He should be known as a man and have the demeanor of a servant, of a slave; but He was God, nonetheless God. He was prepared, therefore, to fulfill the Father's purpose at the expense of His own Name, the expense of His own position, at the expense of His rights, for He had rights; but all of these He gladly relinquished in order that the purpose of the Father might be fulfilled.

Now, the Word is, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." We understand, for many of you have lived through two World Wars, that there have been great sacrifices made by parents in 40-year and 20-year periods in this country. Many of you will remember with grief the death of loved ones in the first Great World War; and others of us recall, all too clearly, what this latter, second World War cost. And there are still others, younger, that have realized that even though the 2nd World War is supposedly over, there has not been so much as a day since the signing of the surrender of the Japanese Government there out in the West, and then with the capitulation of the others, that not so much as a day since then when there has not been fighting and bloodshed somewhere. All of us are filled with trepidation, and fear, and grief as the news comes over the air and through the papers, and the magazines; for we realize that there are fires burning around the world, and that we are still in the state of war. But let us understand that this has meant great cost.

The young man that hears the call of government, whatever that government might be, has to lay aside the right to his name, for there is something so leveling about the uniform, the family, the resources of the family, are all forgotten; the social position of the family ought to be forgotten; and they stand on the same level, men that have accepted the call of the country. They have had to abandon their own plans. They have to give up their own career. All that has been dear, all that has been the goal and reason for being is laid aside when the country calls for one to stand by in service. Now this is what we find happening. It is happening and it is true in many of your experiences; but we also find that there is something similar to be your experience as a Christian.

You understand when the Lord Jesus Christ called you to Himself, He became the Captain of your salvation, and you enlisted under His banner. You took His authority, His government. The very Scripture that we most frequently use concerning salvation says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). But to believe on Christ is to commit oneself wholly to Him, to receive Him as He is, as Lord and as Savior. So, as the Lord Jesus was willing to relinquish all claims to His Name, all rights to His time and to His person, all of the interests that had been His from eternity past, so He says, Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. And therefore, we are to come to Him on the basis of a complete severance with the past.

You understand that this is nothing new or novel that I am presenting to you. Simple conversion to Christ means a complete break with the past. For He has said, "That if any man hate not his father, and his mother, (husband,) brother and sister husband and wife, yea and his own life, he cannot be His disciple" (Luk. 14:26). All family relationships are to be broken. There is to be no hold, no claim. Oh, it does not mean that the family is divorced. It does not mean that it is broken up. But it does mean that the transcendent authority of Christ supersedes all other loyalties. Then we find that He said, "If any man does not take up his cross and come follow Me, He cannot be My disciple" (Luk. 14:27). You understand that this has reference to career. For there is something so restricting and limiting about being nailed to a cross. And to come to Christ means that all plans of the past have to cease right there at that point. We cannot carry any plans, any ambitions over into this new relationship. The one, trained for business, coming to Christ, has to relinquish the right to his business. The one that has been trained for theology, coming to Christ, has to relinquish his right to the ministry. Oh yes, I have known of individuals who have been in the ministry, because they chose it as a profession; and, when they were born of God, they discovered that He had not called them to this particular kind of service.

You would say, This is a reversal of what we would expect. But you see, the principle is that coming to Christ, His sovereignty transcends all previously made plans. You can't carry any plans of the past. All plans that were made before ones' encounter with Christ were plans that had some other motivation and some other government, some other incentive, some other grounds of direction and choice. So coming to Christ means that one has to make a complete break with the past, all the plans of the past.

We also find that He said there in the portion I am quoting, Luke 14, "that any of you that doth not forsake all that he hath cannot be My disciple" (Luk. 14:33). And coming to Christ means that all personal possessions, all right to possessions has to be abandoned to Him, that one cannot make any claim upon things, upon honor or position, anything that is esteemed as being of value. So let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. It isn't only that we began in the Christian life with this capitulation to the person of God's Son, but we continue in that attitude, and at no place in our life are we to allow interest, family interest

shall we say, to stand in the way of this supreme commitment to the person of Jesus Christ. Again at no time are we to allow commitment to career, or to work, to stand in the way of His gradually unfolding will. We are committed, not to a ministry, or to a task, or a career; we are committed to Christ. So "let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus" means that there is at the very threshold of commitment to the Person of the Son of God; and this commitment extends on out, through every day, week, month, year of life.

One might think at some time that he is committed to missions. I know years ago, in 1945, '44, I was accepted to go to the Mission Field. I had then, as I have mentioned recently, some who were candidates with us that said, We are called to go to Africa, and had a vision, and a dream to substantiate the call. And I couldn't say anything of that sort. It would have been ethically dishonest to have said it. For the call that I had was a call to Christ, and the Person of the Son of God. This is all that I recognized. It seemed to me that He was very clearly leading to the Mission Field, and He did lead; but the call was to Christ, and not to an it, or a thing, or a there, or here. The call was to the Person of the Son of God into whose hands all authority in Heaven and earth has been committed. "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus."

Our Lord Jesus had come to seek and to save that which was lost! He came, as Hoffman said, to live His life under the shadow of the Cross. But, because He knew that He was going to die on a Cross, He could not hurry to it. He could not accelerate it, for there was the time when it said, His hour was not yet come. He wasn't committed to the cross; He was committed to the Father. He wasn't committed to death; He was committed to the Father. And when the Father's hour hadn't come, He walked in the Father's will for that hour. Then there came a time when the Father's hour had come, and knowing that the hour had fully come was the Word. How did our Lord express His relationship to the Father? He said, "I do always those things that please the Father" (Joh. 8:29). His commitment was to the Father. It was not to the carpenter's trade, which He followed probably for 14 or 15 years, for He had been an apprentice until He was 20, and then undoubtedly He had engaged as a carpenter for at least 10 years in Nazareth. But He was not committed to carpentry; He was committed to the Father. The Father's will for a period of His life was to be an apprentice, learning the trade of the carpenter, and then ten long years to work as a carpenter. You say, Well here is one that is God, by whom all things were made, and look at the waste of time, 10 years. Why He ought to have been preaching. He ought to have been... Ah, but you see, His commitment was not to a task. His commitment was to the Father. I submit to you, therefore, if your life is to ever be lived successfully and happily, you must commit yourself, not to an ideal, not to a principle, not to a task, or not to a work, but you must commit yourself to a Person, that person Jesus Christ, who invited the commitment, who demands, commands the commitment, and who accepts all the responsibility for the fulfillment of the good purpose of the committed life. How easy it is at some step along the way, and, how subtly do we who are in the ministry find ourselves affected by it.

I remember hearing this of a Pastor in the Southland. Someone went to this man, speaking to him about the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and the glorious provisions of God's grace. And this man said to the one who came, Well, I am not even going to discuss it with you. I am not even going to think about it. For, if I were ever to come to the position that you hold, I would have to give up everything I have spent all these years working for. And it is too big a price to pay. His commitment wasn't to the Lord for whom he spoke, as much as I know, and love, and admire, and respect the man, I have to say with all sympathy, and understanding that his commitment wasn't to the Lord, but it was to the denomination of which he was a part, and the position that he held, and the esteem in which he stood. Oh, how subtly does this creep in on all of us, upon you. For you are constantly facing this issue. Oh, how nice it would be if at some day in the past we could make an issue, make a decision, face an issue rather, and make a commitment, and then it would be all over. But it isn't that way. For each step of the way, and each hour of the day, there is going to be a challenge to this coming from one hand or the other, from within or from without, from below, or from above, a challenge to the committed life, just as there was ever the challenge to our Lord Jesus. "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." He not only began that way; but He continued that way, utterly, absolutely committed to the will of the Father.

He became obedient. This is the issue. This is the test of the successful life; the life which will tell for eternity is not the life that has achieved goals. How easy it is to set up intermediate goals. How easy it is for us to set up standards of our own achievement and thus to measure our success, but one of these days, when the fire of God's revealing test is going to have gone through all of our works, all of our words, all of our activities. There is going to be just one thing that will endure, and that

is that which was done with an eye single to His glory and under the direct and immediate command of the Lord Jesus Christ. For as He lived His life in utter obedience to the Father, the Father asks us to live our lives in utter obedience to the Son. And so, we are to become obedient unto death. What death is this? Just as our Lord Jesus symbolized by going into the water of baptism death, death to what? death to the right of His rights, death to His Name, death to all the honor that He had received, the reverence and worship by which He had been held by angels in the times past, and He took upon Himself the form of a slave, made in the likeness of man. So He asks us to become obedient unto death. This is a death to self, a death to our own interests, our own aims, our own plans, our own purposes, to come to that place that we have entered into, have conscious union with Him, of which the apostles spoke, for he symbolized this life and could say, "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). It is death, death to all that is dear, all that is precious, all that is meaningful, that He who is dearer than all that is dear, and more precious than all that is precious, and more important than all that his meaning may receive the glory that He deserves.

And so He asks you to come to that place of obedience unto death. With the Apostle Paul, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). And as we are thus observing, and will, this week be reminded again by editorial and by what we hear on the air that we are to remember those that have sacrificed their lives for our freedom. Let us look far beyond the mere patriotism that these days might engender, and bring ourselves back to the One who died that we might live and delivered us by His death. May God bring us back to that place where we are prepared to live as did He, in living union with Him in His death, having been brought to that place where with the Apostle we too can say, "I am crucified with Christ," I have understood that in coming to Him His Lordship transcends all other interests, plans, purposes, possessions, and my whole being is His. I am not committed to a task. I am not committed to a work. I am not committed to a Name, mine or others. My only commitment is to the Person of God's dear Son, and I am willing to live in death that He might be glorified. And so He has called us to become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, not that we on that Cross die for others, but that we on that Cross die with Him, until we have no reason for being but the glory of Christ, and no principle of living but obedience to the Son. "Let this mind be in you, is the injunction of the Holy Ghost, which was in Christ Jesus," to name, to reputation, to position, to all that our Lord Jesus gladly abandoned that He might redeem you, you equally, gladly abandon that through your life, thus brought into obedience to death, the death of the Cross, in union with Him, He might receive the glory that is His due. "For if we would save our lives, we will lose it" (Luk. 9:24). And one day everything that we have done and achieved in the energy of our personality is going to be nothing more than ashes, and the only thing that will endure to the praise and the glory of His grace is that which He has been able to achieve through our broken, yielded lives. "Let this mind be in you." He is a hero who is a brave man just five minutes longer than the others. Oh, we don't have it to have our names immortalized. Scott Carpenter said, One of the reasons he wanted to go around the earth three times in a capsule was that his name would thus become immortal. I do not believe that this is the ultimate expression of his purpose, and certainly it is not worthy of yours. I believe there is only one reason why you should be willing to abandon all and let the mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. Not that your name should become immortal, but that His Name be glorified. For God has highly exalted Him, given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow. What joy ought to fill your heart when you gladly bow today and say, Lord Jesus, it is my deep desire that the mind be in me which was in you. And I would say in your prayer as You said, "I do only those things that please the Father," so my passion and purpose is that I may do only those things that please the Son. Shall we bow together.

We rejoice, our Father, this morning that Memorial Day is being celebrated not only on earth but in Heaven where the names of those who loved not their lives unto death are recorded. We believe that this is not just martyrdom, for there are many that have been reluctant martyrs and unwilling martyrs, but martyrs still. We believe, our Father, that that which Thou dost record thus are those that in all the full exercise of their powers and their faculties have come to that place where John came, "He must increase and I must decrease" (Joh. 3:30). Oh, grant to us today, we have heard. Thy Word, enjoined by the Holy Ghost, "let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus," and we can look into the face of Thy risen, glorified Son and say with hearts filled with worship and adoration and love, O Lord Jesus, I would do only those things that please Thee and glorify Thee. I have no plans. I have no program. I have no ambitions. My only desire is to enter into union with You in the Cross so that You can live your life through me. Grant, Father, that this mind may be in us which was in Christ Jesus. Grant, Lord, that these lives, redeemed at such an awful cost, shall render to Him the greatest possible glory.

With our heads bowed and our eyes closed in this lingering moment, is the mind in you which is in Christ Jesus? He has commanded it. He has said, "Let..." Are you prepared on this Memorial Day to be brave for five minutes longer, that He might receive from you the glory which He deserves.

Let us stand together for prayer. "Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and honor, dominion and majesty, now and forever. Amen" (Jud. 1:2425).

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, May 27, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

©PRBTMI 1962