

The Witness of the Cross Philippians 2:3-11

The witness of the cross reveals a radical contrast between what Jesus could have done and what He did. Although (since) He was God and could have ordered us to bring Him perfect offerings, He did not require of us what we could not give, but rather He gave to us His perfect life as an offering in our behalf. Amazing! Herein we see the witness of the cross - a life of self-offering to God and to others.

ALTHOUGH He "existed in the form of God" (a status that implies a full and free exercise of power), HE DID NOT "regard equality with God as a thing to be grasped" (did not exploit that status for personal gain), BUT "emptied Himself" (poured out His life for the sake of others). He certainly acted contrary to what we might expect from those in positions of power, but not contrary to His nature or to His mission. This is God in fullness of character being and behaving as a human in the world! (Are we sure we want to be like Jesus?) This is the "mind of Christ" (I Cor 2:16) that we freely received. (Do we know what it means to think Christianly?)

Wherever Crucified, Risen Life reigns, this witness shows up! In Timothy: "ALTHOUGH he could have sought his own interests, he DID NOT live for himself, BUT he concerned himself for the welfare of others." (Phil 2:19-21) In Epaphroditus: "ALTHOUGH he was sick to the point of death, he did not use that as a reason to be self-preserving, BUT risked his life for others." (Phil 2:25-30) In Paul: "ALTHOUGH we have the status of apostles, we DID NOT use our position for special treatment, BUT we made ourselves as slaves to you." (I Cor 9:1ff)

Do you understand then, why Paul told the Philippians, "ALTHOUGH you may be right and others wrong, DO NOT operate from self-centeredness or empty conceit, BUT in humility put others interests about yours." (Phil 2:3-4). Or, why to husbands he would say, "ALTHOUGH you may be head of the household, DO NOT take advantage of that status to oppress your wives, BUT rather sacrificially love them." Or, to wives, "ALTHOUGH there is no male of female in Christ, DO NOT exploit that to usurp your husbands' headship, BUT instead respectfully subject yourselves to them." (Eph 5:22-33)

This is how the cross "in the heart of God" shows its character. This is how the Crucified, Risen One in our hearts bears witness to Himself. This is what it means to "work out our own salvation" according to the nature of God "who is at work" in you and me. (Phil 2:12-13)

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 **GREETINGS** 

If God is inherently and eternally free, freedom must be one of the defining characteristics of what it means to be humans created in His image. No wonder we long for, fight for, and will even die for freedom!

While we rightfully remember and socially celebrate our generous and hard won freedoms in the United States of America this month, let us not forget the even more generous and hard won freedoms that are ours as citizens of the heavenly kingdom.

When "Thy Will" came to earth declaring war on "My Will", the Captain of our Salvation fought and won our release from a captivity that could have held us for eternity. He came in Person to meet head-on every hindrance to personal freedom.

In our deliverance through His life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and return to dwell in our spirits, we are free from sin for righteousness, from separation for fellowship, from hell for heaven, from death for life - to name only in part the freedoms no human nation or army could every win for us.

This month, and every month, on every level, let freedom ring!

 **CALENDAR** 

<u>JULY</u>	
5,12,19,26	CCF
8	Alachua Study
<u>AUGUST</u>	
13-16	Hobbs, NM
<u>SEPTEMBER</u>	
26 - OCT 2	Durango, CO
<u>OCTOBER</u>	
9-11	Binghamton, NY
23-24	Sebring, FL

 **PRAISE and PRAYER** 

-  Our freedom in Christ
-  The mind of Christ
-  Those in captivity
-  Those in darkness

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