

WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

There is no better role model anywhere in Scripture of someone who responded to adversity with submission, forgiveness and trust than our Lord and Savior. In regard to *submission*, from the incarnation to the crucifixion, Christ's attitude was that of setting aside His will in order to accomplish the will of His Father, as eloquently expressed by Paul in Philippians 2:5-8. When the plan of God called for Him to leave heaven and come to earth, in taking on our humanity, vv6-8 reveal that He did not "grasp" onto His equal position with God the Father in heaven. Instead, He "emptied" Himself, so that he could fulfill God's redemptive purpose on earth.

Yet in taking on our humanity, He did not surrender His deity. The incarnation resulted in God the Son becoming God the man; one person, fully God and fully man. On the other hand, His self-emptying did involve the temporary relinquishing of several privileges He possessed as God. For example, His divine and heavenly glory, as the One who was worshipped by angels, was set aside. In addition, His sovereign authority as Creator over His creation was placed "on hold." He exchanged these privileges for the many vulnerabilities of a human on earth. Although He was sinless, He was exposed to the temptations of sin. In spite of His deity, He experienced hunger and thirst. He was the Lord of glory, but also a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Even though He is the source of eternal life, He tasted death for every man (Hebrews 1:6; 2:9-10; 2:17-18; 4:15; Isaiah 53:3). Nowhere is our Lord's submission to His heavenly Father more evident than on the eve of His death on the Cross. Knowing what incredible suffering He would experience, His humanity recoils from such a prospect and Christ's struggle with submission becomes very real and intense. The conflict takes place in the garden of Gethsemane and is resolved there as well; recorded in Matthew 26:39, 42; where Jesus twice submits to His Father's will –

"And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will'. . . He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.'"

Jesus is also the ultimate example when it comes to the horizontal response of *forgiveness*. During the course of His earthly life, He demonstrated forgiveness toward others for the sorrow and grief that they caused Him. Christ's disciples needed His forgiveness more than once. However, such a humble and loving reaction was never more necessary than at the time of His death. We see Jesus' willingness to forgive expressed toward those who were responsible for His crucifixion, in spite of the unimaginable physical and verbal abuse to which He was being subjected (Luke 23:33-43). Equally important was Jesus' need to forgive and restore His disciples after the resurrection. These were the men whom He had called to His side, and appointed as apostles, for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission. He poured three years of His life into training these men. But when He needed them the most, prior to and during the crucifixion, they abandoned Him. Yet after the resurrection, we see no such abandonment of the disciples by their Savior. Instead, there is forgiveness and restoration, as evidenced in the example of Peter (Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-17).

We will consider the third response of dependence/trust expressed during our Savior's life, next.