

## Four Rights that Christ Gave Up

Philippians 2

### Introduction

In September, 1607, Captain John Smith won the first lawsuit in, what would become, America's first jury trial. It seems that another soldier, by the name of Edward Wingfield, accused Smith of being a liar. In fact, the court records document that he accused Smith of being much more than that. He said that he had acted beggarly in Ireland, as a rogue without license. Well, John Smith faced defamation of character, so he took Edward to court. The first liable suit recorded in American history, John Smith won. His settlement would be, in today's economy, around five thousand dollars.

That case was rare and in defense of Smith's character and reputation. But, as I read that for the first time this past week, the old commercial came to mind, "You've come a long way, baby."

We have, because we now live in a lawsuit crazed society. In fact, I read that one out of four Americans will be involved in a lawsuit of some sort, either directly or indirectly.

This past week, one of the magazines that I subscribe to came. There was an article by George F. Will on our lawsuit crazed society. Several lawsuits that he told of were of:

- One elementary girl who sued her school and won fifteen thousand dollars in the courts, because the school did not remove swiftly enough, graffiti on the restroom wall.
- A student who climbed on top of a building on the campus of Princeton University, where he was a student, and was electrocuted by some machinery that was on the roof. Now the student is suing Princeton University for damages.

- A seventeen year old girl who tried out for the high school football team this past season. If the school authorities had said she could not, she would have sued them for violation of her rights, so they remained quiet. In the first scrimmage, she was hurt and is now suing that particular board of education for 1.5 million dollars because, as she says, no one told her of the potential risks of serious injury inherent in the sport. She should watch Monday Night Football with me!
- Along a more tragic note, a Ducksbury, Massachusetts, fireman clubbed his wife, severing an ear and leaving her partially deaf. She took him to court and lost. The judge acquitted him, saying that he was temporarily insane. However, the fire department fired him from his job – and that was a big mistake. Now, after seven years of litigation, the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination has filed a report that is forcing the fire department to hire him back, pay him 200,000 dollars plus twelve percent interest on back pay, due to emotional distress that they caused him.

Justice lies wounded in the street and injustice sits enthroned.

All that we seem to hear today, is of people who have lost their rights. And, I am all for people keeping their inalienable rights as American citizens. But, all we hear are people who are demanding their rights! "I will have my rights!" – whatever they may be.

We seldom hear anymore, of people who voluntarily give up their rights for someone who does not have any rights. Today, I want to talk to you of a person who, two thousand years ago, gave up all of His rights for you and I, who did not have any rights. This is the age old Christmas story.

## Four Rights That Jesus Christ Gave Up For Our Sake

Please turn your attention to chapter 2, not of Luke, but of Philippians. I want to give four rights that Jesus Christ gave up, beginning on the first Christmas morning through the time of His resurrection, for our sake.

### Right #1 – To live like God

1. Right number one – Jesus Christ, two thousand years ago, gave up the right to live like God.

Look at Philippians, chapter 2, verses 5 and 6.

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped*

By the way, ladies and gentlemen, this is one of the strongest defenses in the New Testament of the deity of Jesus Christ. He was the second person of the Godhead. He would become the visible bodily form of that Godhead. He had, in effect, equal rights with the Father and the Spirit. It says in these verses that He did not grasp those rights; He literally, gave them up. He gave up the right to live, with all of His majesty and glory, with God.

This is right number one that He gave up. It is quite a “riches to rags” story, if we have ever heard one.

I read, some time ago, of David Buick, who founded the Buick car company. He made millions off the sale of his particular line of cars and lived the life of a millionaire. However, Buick would lose his fortune. In fact, he became so destitute that he had to declare bankruptcy and, in the later years of his life, was too poor to buy a car with his name on it.

William Durant ultimately brought the Buick line of cars into General Motors. Durant also bought out Olds of Oldsmobile and others as well. He took all the automotive strings and pulled them together. If you want to read an interesting biography, read his. Durant was a creative genius, but he was not able to organize what he created. He eventually, even tried

to compete against his own creation, General Motors, and lost his fortune. He also, became too poor to own a car. His last job, before he died, was managing a bowling alley.

All of these stories pale in significance when you think of the One who rode upon the wind; who had multitudes of cherubim and seraphim singing of His holiness and His glory. He came down and became one of us. Jesus gave up His rights to live like God.

### Right #2 – To act like God

2. Right number two – Jesus Christ gave up the right to act like God.

Look at Philippians, chapter 2, verse 7.

*but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

Your translation may say that “He made Himself of no reputation”. The words “emptied Himself” or “made Himself of no reputation” are one original Greek word “kenoo,” which means, “to empty”. It is called the “kenosis” of Jesus Christ; the emptying of Christ.

The question is, “What did Jesus empty Himself of?” His deity? There are those who would say so. However, I think the original word “kenoo” helps, because it is translated throughout the New Testament as “empty handed”.

Jesus Christ, who with His own hands, Colossians, chapter 1, tells us, created the universes, now empties His hands of the prerogatives of deity; of the independent use of His sovereign power. He is giving up the right to, upon a whim, act like God. Jesus Christ could have smashed His way through history, manipulating everything from the weather every day to His work bench in the carpenter shop.

Now, there were times when Jesus Christ expressed His divine power. Acts, chapter 2, verse 22, tells us that it was to accredit Himself as God. But, He limited Himself to, what theologians call, the independent use of His attributes. That is why He was always talking with the Father; doing the will of the Father in His function on earth.

Think about this carpenter for a minute. If you and I had the power, would we slave and hammer and saw and sand? No. We would snap our fingers – and there it is; there is that bed, that desk, that table, with no sweat or labor. Yet, Jesus Christ lived the life of an ordinary carpenter, working hard in His earthly stepfather’s business.

So, He did not empty Himself of His deity, but of the independent use of His attributes, and He became an ordinary man. In fact, He became so ordinary that, when He introduced Himself as to who He was, even His half-brothers and half-sisters did not believe Him. They said, in effect, “Him . . . God?! Can’t be.”

Look again at Philippians, chapter 2, verse 7,  
***but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant . . .***

Now, do not miss this. A bond-servant in that day, never owned anything. All they had was, in a sense, dependence upon the one who owned them. How does Jesus measure up as a bond-servant? Well, He did not own anything; He borrowed everything. For example:

- The manger that He came to lay in, was borrowed. It would go back to the cattle the next day.
- He never owned a home. The gospels tell us that He did not own a place where He could pillow His head; He borrowed places to sleep.
- He borrowed a boat to go across the Sea of Galilee.
- He borrowed the donkey that He rode into the city of Jerusalem.
- He borrowed the upper room where He met with His disciples.
- The tomb where He was buried, was borrowed.

This is a person who has given up the right to act like God. Jesus could have had anything He wanted at any time, yet He had absolutely no privileges nor advantages; He lived as a slave.

### **Right #3 – To look like God**

3. Right number three – Jesus Christ gave up the right to look like God.

Before His incarnation, Jesus was clothed with divine splendor. Now, He takes on the human form of a Jewish male – dark skin, dark curly hair.

The problem is, you and I cannot really be very objective. We do not think it is so bad to be a human. I do not think any of the created creatures think they look all that ugly. The hippopotamus does not think he looks ugly. No gorilla thinks he looks all that bad; he thinks he looks kind of suave. It is hard to step

back and look at humans. We think, “What is so bad about that?”

My wife, Marsha, and I moved into a rented home when we first moved to this area. We quickly discovered why the former residents had wanted to move. I had to pick the home, because Marsha and our five month old twin boys were not here yet. I searched and searched for a house that we could afford and finally found one.

The first time I went to the house to look at it, the family had cats everywhere. I do not like cats. I know that a lot of you like cats. You are weird, I know! I can say that and you cannot talk back; isn’t that terrible! In fact, the day I went to see the house, there was a cat on the counter eating leftover food from one of the people’s plates. It made me sick.

When the family moved out, one of my younger brothers helped me paint every room in the house, clean all the carpets, and clean the whole house as best we could. Then, Marsha and the twins moved in.

Soon after moving in, we noticed that we were always scratching our ankles and that they were covered with little red spots. We did not know what to think about that, until one night, when we had our twins on a blanket on the floor, I reached over to brush a black speck from one of their cheeks and it jumped. Fleas! That house was infested with fleas.

We had the carpet professionally cleaned. It cost \$29.95. That did not work. I even went to the hardware store and got one of those flea bombs. Are you familiar with those? The directions said that one bomb would take care of our house. It did not work; we still had fleas. We did everything that you could imagine to try to get rid of those fleas, but could not get them to leave. We even called an exterminator to come out. It did not work.

Finally, we were going out of town for several days. So, I loaded the boys and Marsha and all of our suitcases in the car and then, I went back in the house. This was war! I put a bomb in every room of that house, set them off, and drove away. I wondered if anyone would call the fire department when smoke billowed out of that house! When we returned, there no more fleas. There was no more house – just kidding!

Now, I do not hate fleas. I do not know much about them. I would have been glad to gather up all one thousand of them in a cup or something and take them over to the neighbor’s cat! But, how could I tell them that “bomb day” was coming? How could I tell

them that I really did not think that poorly of them, but if they did not get out of my house, they were going to die?

I know how – become a flea. That would be humiliating, however, because that would limit all of the freedoms that I have; everything that I can experience, in order to become a little flea.

Ladies and gentlemen, we can be objective enough to recognize that when Jesus Christ left heaven's glory, He became a little man. And, He landed not on satin sheets, as we would have designed it, if we were God, but on prickly straw, surrounded by munching cattle and the smell of manure. Here is God, who is giving up all of His rights to become a little baby boy. And, He gave up His rights throughout life.

What did this man look like? Isaiah, chapter 53, tells us. Look at verses 1 and 2, which talk about Jesus,

***Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.***

For goodness sake, if we were God and we were going to become a man, we would at least make ourselves look a little like the actors John Wayne and Robert Redford mixed together. He picks an ordinary Jewish look. He is just a plain doe who blends in with the rest of the nation. He did not just give up His rights, it is as if He threw them all away.

In 1947, when Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh were married, everybody who was anybody came to London. Monarchs came from around the world. Even King Faisal the II, the twelve year old monarch from Iraq, came.

On the day of the parades and the festivities, King Faisal was dressed in ordinary street clothes, for some reason. He was more interested in seeing the stallions and the steeds than anything else and so, he pushed his way through the policemen to get a better view. He was treated roughly by the policemen. When the news got out as to who he was, the London newspaper carried the story the next day with the headline, "We're sorry, King Faisal, we didn't know who you were."

That is exactly what happened with Jesus. He gave up the right to look like God and was mistreated

and ultimately, crucified by a nation, and by us, had we been there, because, "We really didn't know who He was. Look, we've never seen God before, but if we knew what He looked like, certainly this thirty three year old man wouldn't be God."

Jesus gave up the right to look like God.

#### **Right #4 – To be treated like God**

4. Right number four – Jesus Christ gave up the right to be treated like God.

Look at Philippians, chapter 2, verse 8.

***Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.***

Isaiah, chapter 53, verse 3, says,

***He was despised and forsaken of men . . . He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.***

That was not the way to treat a king! You could render the Hebrew phrase "we did not esteem Him," as "we did not think He was important".

Paul highlights in verse 8, the cruelty of the cross. He says that He became obedient to the point of death, even, and imagine this, even the death of the cross.

Death on a cross does not mean a lot to us. Perhaps if it had said, even the death of the electric chair, it might mean more. But, it would not really fit, unless we re-designed the electric chair to slowly burn a person to death over six to eight hours, and maybe there would be a little more of a parallel.

Death on a cross was a most inhumane way to treat a person. The Persians created this way to torture people to death; those who were enemies of their state. In fact, a Roman citizen was free from ever worrying about being hung on a cross because it was so despicable, so humiliating, and so torturous. But Jesus not only came to die and be treated unlike God would be treated, but to die on a cross.

Look at Jesus in the gospels as He stood before Pilate, and what did He do? Absolutely nothing. He gave up the right to a fair trial. I read that story this past week, and as Pilate asks Him those questions, I would like to jump in that story and say, "Lord, tell him! Call down fire! Do a miracle! Speak up!"

Why? Because that is the way I am "wired". That is the way you are too. In this society, we stand up for our rights!

However, here is someone who came and gave it all away. He said, "You can treat Me inhumanely

like an slave, but before the councils of God and before the foundations of the world, I had already decided to die this way and I gave up My rights.”

Jesus did not demand worship then, and He still does not.

An education report came out last year that was designed to help teachers and principals over, what was called, “the December dilemma”. In this report, several ways were suggested that teachers could use to handle Christmas without ever mentioning Jesus. First, they were to avoid asking students to explain their beliefs and customs. They were to focus on how and when holidays are celebrated, not why. They were to teach through attribution; that is, for example, by reporting what Buddhists believe. Finally, the educators were reminded that nativity pageants and plays were not appropriate. Why are we having this party?

My wife took a rather courageous step and asked our twin boys’ first grade public school teachers if she could come in and tell the Christmas story. That caused quite a flurry. There were memos being sent, and letters, and people were discussing, and the answer came back, “Yes, you can.”

I was able to go along the first day, when Marsha went to one of the boys’ first grade classes. That age group is not one that will sit still very long to listen to a story, but for twenty minutes, those kids were enraptured. Marsha told the Christmas story using flannel graphs and other objects. In fact, when she would take one flannel graph background off and expose another, and put the little figures on, the kids “oohed” and “aahed”. We were wondering if they would even want to sit still and listen. Some of them probably heard for the first time, why America is throwing this big party. Near the end of the story, a little girl raised her hand and said, “Why was Jesus called the Son of God?”

My wife looked over at me and said, “I’d like my husband to answer that question.”

So, what am I supposed to talk about – the “kenosis,” the second person of the Godhead, “kenoo” means this . . .?! I stumbled all over my feet, but here was a little girl who did not know who Jesus was. If I were God, I would write it in the sky every year, so that no one could ever forget. He is still giving up the right to demand worship. It is a gift you and I give Him because of what He gave us.

America will have a birthday party and invite everyone to it, except the Person whose birthday it is. Can you imagine having a birthday party and giving presents to everyone except the person whose birthday it is? We are going to do that this Christmas as a nation. Are you going to do it as a family? Have you given your heart to Him? Will you worship Him? Is He the Lord and Master of your life?

Think of all of the lawsuits in our day. I would imagine that if someone had a birthday and was not invited to their party, they would probably sue all of the party-goers for emotional distress. But think of all the lawsuits of people who got what they did not deserve or who did not get what they thought they deserved or who were treated unfairly, and so on. Yet, here is a person who gave up His rights. He gave up the right:

- to live like God;
- to act like God;
- to look like God;
- to be treated like God.

Why did Jesus Christ give up all of those rights? I will tell you why. John, chapter 1, verse 12, tells us.

***But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God . . .***

Think of it! Jesus Christ gave up all of His rights, so that He could give you and I the right to be a child of God. Ladies and gentlemen, of all of the rights that are claimed in our society, that is one right that you had better claim.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 12/20/1992 by Stephen Davey.

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