

From Glory to Golgotha

Text: Philippians 2:5-11

Introduction:

1. The Philippian church has just been exhorted to pursue unity through humility. The Apostle Paul now turns their attention to Christ as the supreme example of humility and in so doing, pens one of the greatest Christological passages in the New Testament. We soar to the lofty heights of Christ's pre-incarnate, heavenly glory and then follow His successive self-humbling as He takes on human flesh and ultimately goes to the shameful death of the cross.
2. This great doctrinal passage is given in the context of a very practical exhortation to humility in the church. The point for the Philippians was abundantly clear. If Christ the Lord of glory could so humble Himself, how much more should we as Christians be prepared to humble ourselves with one another. We will consider this section under **3 headings**.

I. THE EXHORTATION TO HUMILITY (VS. 5)

This verse focuses our attention on the mindset/attitude we are to have as believers. It is:

A. The Selfless Mind (Vs. 3)

1. "this mind" = what mind is Paul referring to? He is referring to the mindset and attitude he has just described in the previous verses. Wuest observes, "This exhortation reaches back to 2:2-4 for its definition and ahead to 2:6-8 for its illustration... That which Paul speaks of as being in the mind of Christ and which the Philippians were to include in their own spiritual lives consisted of a spirit of humility and of self-abnegation and an interest in the welfare of others." Gromacki adds, "This joyful outlook includes unity, humility, and the welfare of others."
2. 'strife' = contention, a selfish, competitive spirit. Word was used to describe a self-seeking pursuit of political office, of party squabbles, of the jockeying for position.
3. 'vainglory' = empty pride; describes one ambitious for his own reputation and advancement.
4. "lowliness of mind" = humility of mind.

B. The Sacrificial Mind (Vs. 4)

1. 'look' = behold, to fix one's attention upon. Our English word 'scope' is derived from this word.
2. It does not say that we are not to give consideration to our own things at all. The word 'also' qualifies this. Some attention needs to be given to our own things (e.g., family duties, care of the body etc.) but not exclusive attention.

C. The Submissive Mind (Vs. 5a)

1. We are commanded to submit to this mindset – "**Let this mind be in you**".
2. Grammatically the voice is passive, indicating that the work is performed by someone else. It is in the present tense, indicating that this is to be an ongoing, daily exercise. God is the One who will

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produce this humble, selfless attitude in us as believers. Our part is to cooperate with the workings of the Spirit, submitting to Him as He seeks to cultivate this mindset in our lives.

D. The Saviour's Mind (Vs. 5b)

1. Paul now links his exhortation to the example of Christ. This humble, selfless attitude was demonstrated in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. To have the mind of the Living Word, we need to fill our minds with the Written Word.
2. The Apostle's pen under inspiration, now breaks forth with a series of glorious statements concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. This passage takes its place alongside other mountain peak Christological passages such as John 1, Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1.

II. THE EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY (VS. 6-8)

The overall thrust of the Apostle's argument is this matter concerning the need for unity through humility. But in the process of pointing to Christ as the example of humility, the Apostle includes some very significant doctrinal statements. Let's follow the steps of the Saviour as He goes from the glories of heaven to the stable of Bethlehem and then to the lowest, most shameful death of the crucifixion.

A. The Deity of Christ (Vs. 6)

Jesus Christ was and is:

1. The Expression of Deity (Vs. 6a)
 - a. 'being' = present not past tense. This points to the eternality of the Son of God. He did not take on the form of God at a point of time but was in the form of God from all eternity.
 - b. "form of God" = the word 'form' in a literal sense means 'shape'. However, the word was often used by the Greeks in a philosophical sense to speak of "that outward expression which a person gives of his inmost nature." (Wuest).
 - i. Vincent explains it well: "It is the perfect expression of a perfect essence. It is not something imposed from without, but something which proceeds from the very depth of the perfect being, and into which that being unfolds, as light from fire."
 - ii. Illustration: The sense of the word is captured in this example sentence: "The tennis player was in fine form today." "We mean by that, that the outward expression he gave of his inward ability to play tennis, was excellent. The expression in this case took the form of the rhythmic, graceful, swift, and coordinated movements of his body and its members." (Wuest)
2. The Equal of Deity (Vs. 6b)
 - a. "equal with God" = words could not be plainer as to the Deity of Christ. He is equal with the Father. You do not honor the Father by trying to make Jesus Christ less than God. John 5:23 Jesus said, "That all *men* should **honour the Son, even as they honour the Father**. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." There is personal equality

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within the Godhead but a functional headship. The same is true between husband and wife in the home.

- b. “thought it not robbery” = the word ‘robbery’ means “the act of seizing or grasping.” Christ did not consider his equality with the Father as something to be grasped at. Why? Because He was Deity and Christ had no need to grasp at something He already possessed. The word can also mean “a thing to be hold fast, retained.” Within the context of the passage with the central theme being humility and self-abnegation, it may be that the thought is that Christ did not selfishly hold onto His lofty position in heaven but rather was willing to leave heavens glories temporarily to come to earth. As we will explain under the next point, in no way does this mean that Christ ever relinquished the possession of His Deity.

B. The Humanity of Christ (Vs. 7)

1. Christ’s Servanthood (Vs. 7a)

- a. Christ’s Emptying for Servanthood – “made himself of no reputation”.
 - i. This phrase is a translation of two Greek words which literally read, “Himself emptied”. The KJV translators wisely translated the word ‘emptied’ as “no reputation” so as to not create the false impression that Christ’s emptied Himself of His Deity and ceased to be God at the incarnation as some have falsely claimed.
 - ii. Question: If Christ “emptied Himself” when he became man, we need to ask ourselves the question, “of what did He empty Himself?”
 - iii. Answer: Christ laid aside not the possession of His Deity but the free and independent expression of His Deity. He laid aside the independent exercise of His own attributes as God. There were times during Christ’s earthly ministry where He did exercise His Divine attributes but it was always in submission to and at the direction of the Father.
 - iv. The Christmas Carol expresses the truth well, “veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity.”
 - v. John Walvoord writes, “Christ surrendered no attribute of Deity, but that He did voluntarily restrict their independent use in keeping with His purpose of living among men and their limitations...He was like a king who temporarily puts on the garments of a peasant while at the same time remaining king, even though it was not outwardly apparent.”
 - vi. Illustration: Christ’s washing of the disciples’ feet (John 13:1-12)
 - 1. Christ lays aside His outer garments.
 - 2. Christ takes the posture and position of a servant.
 - 3. Christ puts His outer clothes back on and resumes His seat.
 - vii. 2 Cor. 8:9 expressed the truth well, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich,

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yet **for your sakes he became poor**, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

- b. Christ's Expression of Servanthood – “the form of a servant”.
 - i. “took upon him” = the self-emptying of Christ is further explained.
 - ii. The word ‘form’ is the same as the previous verse (“form of God”). This means that servanthood was and is a part of our Lord's very character.
 - iii. The word ‘servant’ is from the Greek word ‘doulos’ meaning bondsman. “Think of it! The One who made all things (Joh. 1:3; Col. 1:16) and is before all things and by whom all things consist (Co. 1:17) and is Lord of all (Acts 10:36) and King of kings (1 Tim. 6:15) took the form of a servant” (Cloud). The Gospels bear testament to our Lord as a servant. In fact, Christ stated that this was the reason He came.
 - iv. Matt. 20:28 “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but **to minister**, and to give his life a ransom for many.”
2. Christ's Manhood (Vs. 7b)
 - a. ‘made’ = to become. Christ did not become God at a point in time as He has always been God from all eternity but He did become man at a point in time. This is a reference to the historical fact of the incarnation.
 - i. Gal. 4:4 “But when **the fulness of the time was come**, God sent forth his Son, **made of a woman**, made under the law,”
 - ii. John 1:14 “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”
 - b. “the likeness of men” = the Greek word is ‘homoima’ which is translated ‘similitude’ (Rom. 5:14) and ‘shape’ (Rev. 9:7). This does not mean that Christ was less than a real man. He was 100% man and was like us but not identical to us. He was different to us in that He was also 100% God and He was totally without sin. Romans 8:3 states that Christ came “in the likeness of sinful flesh.”

C. The Humility of Christ (Vs. 8)

1. The humility of His Life (Vs. 8a)
 - a. “fashion as a man” = the word fashion “refers to an outward expression that is assumed from the outside and does not come from within” (Wuest). It is the Greek word ‘schema’ that refers to the external form and appearance. This word is distinct from the word ‘form’. Our Lord's expression of Deity was not assumed from the outside, but came from His inmost nature. Likewise, His character as a servant. But His expression of His humanity came, not from His inmost nature as God, but was assumed in the incarnation.
 - b. “humbled Himself” = means to make or bring low. Christ was not humbled by others. He voluntarily submitted to the Father's will.

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If Christ, the eternal Son, the Lord of glory, could humble Himself, how much more should we!

2. The humility of His Death (Vs. 8b)
 - a. A submissive death – “became obedient unto death”. Christ was totally surrendered and submitted to the will of the Father. Matt. 26:39 “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless **not as I will, but as thou wilt.**”
 - b. A specific death – “even the death of the cross”.
 - i. This was the most shameful and humiliating of deaths. It was reserved for the worst criminals who were not Roman citizens.
 - ii. Christ literally went from the highest position in the universe to the lowest place of shame and humiliation. It helps us to see how wretched and wicked the sin of pride really is when we are confronted with such humility by the Son of God.
 - c. Summary: Consider the steps in the humiliation of Christ.
 - i. He emptied Himself, laying aside the independent exercise of His own attributes as God.
 - ii. He permanently became a human in a sinless physical body.
 - iii. He used that body to be a servant.
 - iv. He took that body to the cross and willingly died.
 - v. Challenge: If Christ could be that humble, how much more should we be prepared to humble ourselves!

III. THE EXALATION FROM HUMILITY (VS. 9-11)

A. The Exaltation of Christ’s Position (Vs. 9a)

1. ‘wherefore’ = because of Christ’s humble death, He has been exalted by the Father.
2. “highly exalted” = means to lift above or to life beyond; to exalt to the highest rank and power, to raise to supreme majesty. Christ is above all! John 3:31 “He that cometh from above is above all...”
3. Christ was highly exalted in the Resurrection.
4. Christ was highly exalted in the Ascension.
5. Christ is highly exalted now, seated at the right hand of the Father.
6. Christ will be exalted at His return, during the Millennial reign and on into eternity.

B. The Exaltation of Christ’s Person (Vs. 9b-11)

1. Every Knee Bowing at His Name (Vs. 9b-10)
 - a. “given him a name...above every name” = the ‘name’ speaks of more than just a title in the Bible. It denotes the office, rank and dignity of a person. Dwight Pentecost explains, “Name is used here in its Old Testament sense where the name represents the total person. It bespeaks the office, the rank, and the dignity attached to the person because of his position.” Christ’s Name has been elevated above every other Name. What is that Name? It’s the Name of Jesus!

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- b. Note: How wicked it is to use this blessed Name in a blasphemous and foolish manner!
 - c. Every knee will bow at the Name of Jesus, either in the place of repentance and salvation or in the place of judgment.
 - i. Things in Heaven = every man and angel in heaven.
 - ii. Things in earth = every man who lives on earth.
 - iii. Things under the earth = the occupants of hell. Hell is called 'beneath' (Prov. 15:24) and "the deep" (Lk. 8:31).
2. Every Tongue Confessing His Name (Vs. 11)
- a. The confession (Vs. 11a)
 - i. 'confess' = means to openly or plainly confess. It also means to confess in the sense of "to agree with someone." Someday the entire universe will agree with God the Father on the testimony which He has given of His Son. (Wuest)
 - ii. All will one day confess the truth of Christ's Lordship. Imagine it. Atheists, agnostics, dictators and devils will have no choice but to admit that Jesus Christ is Lord.
 - iii. Challenge: You can either confess Him as Lord now and be saved (Rom. 10:9-10, 13) or confess Him as Lord one day in the place of judgment.
 - iv. Theodore Epp writes, "From this we see there are two aspects to the incomparable name of Christ. It means comfort to those who are His children; it means terror and condemnation to those who are not. Do not reject Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. If you have not yet confessed your sinfulness to Him and placed your trust in Him as your Saviour, do so now before it is eternally too late. Every person must someday acknowledge Him as Lord, and you must choose whether you will know Him as your Saviour or as your Judge."
 - b. The intention (Vs. 11b)
 - i. What was the goal in this exaltation of Christ? The glory of the Father – "to the glory of God the Father." This was no vain glory on Christ's. It was God-centered and God-focused.
 - ii. This teaches a powerful lesson for believers in the context of the passage. It is a principle in the Bible that honor comes as a result of humility (Prov. 15:33, 18:12). 1 Peter 5:6 "**Humble yourselves** therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:" But we need to remember that any honour God may bestow upon us is still for the ultimate glory of God. It is not for the glorification of ourselves. Like Christ, we need to learn to give all glory to the Father.

Conclusion: In light of the example of Christ, there is no excuse for prideful division, vainglory and self-seeking in the local church. What is dominating your life as a believer? The prideful mind of self or the humble mind of Christ?