

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

“An Exhortation to Christ-like Humility”

Philippians 2:5-11

Intro: Paul has been exhorting the Philippian saints *to be of one mind*, to practice unity and harmony among themselves by *“standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ”* (1:27). He has indicated that the basis for such unity is humility of mind (2:2-3). He exhorts believers to consider the needs of others as more important than their own (2:3-4). *Paul now presents the supreme example of humility—that of our Lord Jesus Christ (2:5-8).*

I. The Exhortation to Humility: *Develop the Mind of Christ 2:5*

Paul exhorts believers to develop a Christ-like attitude of humility by following the example set by Jesus Christ Himself (see Mark 10:43-45 and 1 John 2:6).

II. The Example of Humility: *Duplicate the Example of Christ 2:6-11*

A. His Humiliation 2:6-8

1. His deity and eternal existence (v. 6)
2. His “self-emptying” (v. 7a-b)
3. His sacrificial death (vv. 7c-8)



Jesus is the Eternal

B. His Exaltation 2:9-11 *Son of God*

1. The receiving of the “name, above every name” (v. 9)
2. The results of Jesus’ exaltation (vv. 10-11)
 - a. “every knee will bow” (v. 10)
 - b. “every tongue will confess Jesus’ deity” (v. 11a-b)
 - c. “God the Father is glorified” (v. 11c)

Applications:

1. May we *adopt the mind of Christ* and *practice humility in our service to one another.*
2. Self-denial will promote humility and opportunities for service that will result in rewards.

Memory verse: *“For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Philippians 1:21*

3. Service to others helps us to emulate Jesus Christ our Lord, and *brings glory to God!*

(*morphe*) in verses 6 and 7 is a crucial term in this passage. This word (trans. "form" in the KJV and NASB) stresses the inner essence or reality of that with which it is associated (cf. Mark 16:12). Christ Jesus, Paul said, is of the very essence (*morphj*) of God, and in His incarnation He embraced perfect humanity. His complete and absolute deity is here carefully stressed by the apostle. The Savior's claim to deity infuriated the Jewish leaders (John 5:18) and caused them to accuse Him of blasphemy (John 10:33).

Though possessing full deity (John 1:14; Col. 2:9), Christ did not consider His equality with God (Phil. 2:6) as something to be grasped or held onto. In other words Christ did not hesitate to set aside His self-willed use of deity when He became a man. As God He had all the rights of deity, and yet during His incarnate state He surrendered His right to manifest Himself visibly as the God of all splendor and glory.

Christ's humiliation included His making Himself nothing, taking the very nature (*morphJ*) of a servant, and being made in human likeness (v. 7). These statements indicate that Christ became a man, a true human being. The words "made Himself nothing" are, literally, "He emptied Himself." "Emptied," from the Greek *kenoi*, points to the divesting of His self-interests, but not of His deity. "The very nature of a servant" certainly points to His lowly and humble position, His willingness to obey the Father, and serve others. He became a man, a true human being. **"Likeness" suggests similarity but difference.** *Though His humanity was genuine, He was different from all other humans in that He was sinless* (Heb. 4:15).

Thus it is seen that Christ, while retaining the essence of God, was also human. In His incarnation He was fully God and fully man at the same time. He was God manifest in human flesh (John 1:14).

Some have wrongly taught that the phrase, being found in appearance as a man (Phil. 2:8), means that He only looked human. But this contradicts verse 7. "Appearance" is the Greek *schemati*, meaning an outer appearance which may be temporary. This contrasts with *morphe* ("very nature") in verses 6 and 7, which speaks of an outer appearance that reveals permanent inner quality.

The condescension of Christ included not only His birth—the Incarnation in which He became the God-Man but also His death. And it was the most cruel and despicable form of death—even death on a cross! (v. 8) This form of capital punishment was limited to non Romans and the worst criminals.

No better example of humiliation and a selfless attitude for believers to follow could possibly be given than that of Christ. With this example before them, the saints at Philippi should be "likeminded" (v. 2) and live humbly before their God and each other.