

“The Great Example” *Philippians 2:5-11*

INTRO:

To understand this great statement of the condescension and exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ we need to revisit the words Paul wrote in **verse 2**, ***“Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”*** Paul’s joy would be full and complete, if they were to learn as a body of believers to think the same way. Remember the difference between unity and uniformity. They could be united because they shared the same basic value systems through Christ. Although they did not necessarily dress alike or act the same way, they could love what the Lord Jesus loved and share basic life values.

What does having the same mind look like? How do we put others ahead of ourselves? Paul, immediately after giving the command, gives us the greatest example of all, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

I. Christ Humbling Himself (v.5-8)

II. The Father exalting Him (v. 9-11)

I. Christ Humbling Himself (v.5-8)

A. ***“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” (v.5)*** The best way to understand what this looked like was to look at it in the life of the Lord Jesus Himself. They were to think in the same way that Christ thought. They needed to think among themselves as Christ thought.

B. How did Christ think? First, He thought that doing His Father’s will and saving us was more important than holding on to His own rights as a member of the Godhead. **(v.6)** ***“Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.”*** Many want to discuss the language here and try to find a crack to drive the wedge of doubt in and make us wonder how God works. I want us to just look at who it was who left the wonders of glory for us to die on a cross.

John 1:1-3 says, ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made.”***

Colossians 2:9 says;

“For in [the Lord Jesus Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

The writer to the Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 1:3**;
“[The Lord Jesus] being the brightness of [God the Father’s] glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of [the Son’s]

power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

We could go on and list more verses like these. If Jesus was not God in human flesh, the writers of the New Testament did an incredibly poor job of saying so. The New Testament writers labored to make it clear to us that this Lord Jesus was and is God. So, what Paul is saying here in **Philippians 2** is a repetition of what he said in **2 Corinthians 8:9**.

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

The Philippian believers and we should be willing to give up our rights and privileges for our fellow believers because Jesus was willing to give up His rights to the glories of heaven for us.

C. We saw, in **2 Corinthians 8:9** that our Lord Jesus was rich. Before He left heaven to be born as a baby in Bethlehem, He enjoyed all the rights and privileges of heaven. He never quit being God, but He did become a servant and live His life here in humility that He might save us. **2 Corinthians 8:9** continues, *“yet for your sakes He became poor.”* How poor did He become?

1. **Verse 7-8** reads in the ESV;

“But He emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

The phrase, *“made Himself of no reputation”* in the KJV is the translation of a word meaning *“to empty oneself.”* The Apostle is probably referring to Christ’s privileges and rights. In **John 17:5**, the Lord Jesus asks the Father to restore the glory that He had with Him before the world began. Whatever Paul meant here, he did not mean Christ gave up His deity. The writer of Hebrews asserted in **Hebrews 13:8** *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”*

Paul did not write this text for theologians. He wrote it first for his Philippian readers. The deity of the Lord was not in question to them. He wanted them to understand the incredible step that our Lord took in humbling Himself to be our Savior.

D. What did it mean to Christ to be born as a slave and a human being? Before He became incarnate, He was omnipresent. There was nowhere He was not. Now He was limited to a human body.

Before He became incarnate, He was omniscient. Yet, He set some of this aside so that we could read in **Luke 2:52** *“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”* Yet, at times He demonstrated omniscience when He dealt with men. For example in Simon the Pharisee’s house we read;

“Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, ‘This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’” Luke 7:39-40.

Before He became incarnate, He never knew what it was to need anything – He never hungered or to thirsted. When He was born a human being for you and me, He hungered and thirsted at the well in Sychar. He stumbled beneath the weight of the cross on the road to Calvary. On the cross He cried out and gave voice to His intense suffering when He said, ***“I thirst!”***

This gives us a little understanding of what Paul meant when he wrote: ***“He emptied Himself”*** and became in every way a servant. This says He was man of very man. In **verse 6** we learn that He was, is and always shall be God of very God. Here we learn that He became man of very man for us. He came to serve our needs. Our greatest need was to be restored to fellowship with the Father.

E. **Philippians 2:8** takes us a little deeper into His poverty.

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Here is the reason why the Apostle Paul cites our Lord as an example. We should humble ourselves in relationship to one another because He humbled Himself for us. How much did He humble Himself? He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Crucifixion was the worse way anyone could die. Crucifixion was reserved for criminals and insurrectionists in the Roman Empire. A Roman citizen could not be crucified. It was unthinkable to the Jews. The Apostle Paul wrote in **Galatians 3:13**

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).”

He was willing to humble Himself all the way to becoming accursed from His Father in order that we might be saved. Is it then too much to ask, that we who have received this so great salvation, live in unity with one another in His church?

Because of time we must stop here. What does all of this mean to us? To tell you the truth, I think we are hampered in our appreciation because we cannot understand what it is to be a part of the Godhead – to be omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. We cannot comprehend being totally self-sufficient and then being willing to become nothing for us. There have been many hymn writers that have attempted to make us understand what this involved. But perhaps the best is Isaac Watts who wrote:

Alas, and did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

2 Was it for crimes that I had done
 He groaned upon the tree?
 Amazing pity, grace unknown,
 And love beyond degree!

3 Well might the sun in darkness hide,
 And shut his glories in,
 When Christ the mighty Maker died
 For man, the creature's sin.