

## Philippians 2:5-11

Philippians is a short letter but one with many important passages, perhaps none more important than 2:5-11. Verses 5-8 describe the humiliation of Jesus as He became a man, dwelt among us and died in our place. Verses 9-11 describe the exaltation of Jesus because He was willing to humble Himself. In this passage we are given a glimpse into what it meant for Jesus to take upon Himself our nature and be born in a manger. Paul's primary challenge to us is to follow the example of Jesus by practicing humility. Believers should seek to display the same behavior and attitude. It is the Christ-likeness that we strive for in every area of conduct.

The literary form has lead many to think it is an early Christian hymn that Paul incorporated into his Epistle. The NIV translation is printed in poetical form reflecting that idea. If this was a hymn of the church it provides us with an unusual look at the early church telling us both how they thought about Jesus and how they expressed that in praise.

Verse 5 challenges us to imitate the humility of Jesus. Verses 6-11 are among the most informative statements in the Bible on the nature of Jesus' incarnation. Those verses speak of Jesus' preexistence, His equality with God, His identity with humanity, and the costly nature of that identity in order to purchase our redemption. The passage also provides insight into Jesus' status after His resurrection and looks into the future when all created beings will be submissive to His authority.

Philippians 2:5 reads, **"Your attitude should be."** The King James said **"Let this mind be in you"** This is not one's intellectual mind but the moral attitude. That attitude is **"The same as that of Christ Jesus."** The life of Jesus becomes the highest example of all that is right and that certainly includes humility.

Paul then gave us a powerful picture of what it took for Jesus to provide for our redemption. Philippians 2:6 begins by describing Jesus as one **"Who being in the nature of God."** There are two words in Greek for **"nature."** One describes that which never changes and is the one Paul used here. Jesus in His very essence or nature is divine. He is God, even if His outer form changes. The Babe of the manger was inwardly the eternal God. The noun used in verse 7 refers to the outward appearance. The outer appearance of Jesus as a man was temporary, His essence is always God.

Paul added, Jesus **"Did not consider equality with God something to be grasped."** Jesus had both the form of God and the independence and authority of God. Because Jesus was in every way God, He did not have to seize it, as Lucifer sought to do at his fall. His deity is never denied or even minimized during His earthly ministry but He chose not to insist on the rights of it.

Verse 7 reads, **"He emptied Himself."** Although He was fully deity He chose to lay aside for a time the prerogatives of that deity, not the deity itself. The verb "emptied" is also translated

“made void” or “nullified.” This included the fullness of His glory, His full use of his power, and the use of some of His divine nature such as being everywhere (omnipresent) at once. Then on the Cross as He gave up His sinlessness and perfect fellowship with the Father by taking upon Himself our sin so He could pay our penalty for them.

Paul went on, Jesus “**Took the very nature of a servant.**” The actual word is that of a Bond Slave. He who was Lord of all became a slave. He owned nothing and became obedient to mankind and death. The “**form of God**” could not be relinquished, for God cannot cease to be God; but our Lord could and did add the form of a lowly servant when He became a man like us.

And He was “**Made in human likeness.**” This is the miracle of the incarnation. He literally took upon Himself all of the limitations of mankind, all of the frailties, all of the problems, all of the challenges etc. He got tired, hungry, exhausted etc. He could say literally that He has been tempted in every way as we have. The only difference is that He withstood the temptation to sin. He was also, as man, subject to physical death and so was able to die in our place. Had He not been fully man He could not have been our substitute on the Cross. **Made** is not permanent. He became man for a time; not forever. He is by nature forever God, but by choice for a season man.

Paul then said in verse 8, “**He appeared as man.**” Paul shifted from essence to appearance, to outward appearance. And “**He humbled himself.**” This is more than becoming a man as seen in verse 6, but going to the Cross. Becoming a man was humiliating to His deity but going to a Cross was humiliating even to His humanity. The arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus is the deepest example of His humility. He allowed men to question Him as a thief, hit Him, spit on Him, rip out His beard, put a crown of thorns on Him and make fun of Him.

And “**He became obedient to death.**” Obedient not to death itself for He was master of that but obedient to His Father. Jesus said in John 10:17 and 18 that no man took His life, He laid it down. He accepted the authority of death so that He might defeat it. It was the plan of the triune God He willingly accepted. It was not forced on Him. Then Paul added, “**He even died on a cross.**” The cross was the cruelest form of death devised by men. It was considered a curse to die that way but He became a curse to take away our curse.

But that was not the end of the story. He was raised again from the dead as the first fruits of a resurrection we will one day share in. So Paul went on in verse 9 to write, “**Therefore.**” What follows is the consequence of and a reward for His faithfulness. Paul had described the depth of condescension and next he described the height of His exaltation. His humiliation is what He did for us. His exaltation is who He is. Read Hebrews 12:2.

The principle set forth in the example of Jesus is the principle that should control the people of God. Read I Peter 5:6, James 4:10, and Matthew 32:11, 12.

Verse 9 say, “**God exalted Him to the highest place.**” Literally He was welcomed back to the full glory that had been His. “**Exalted to the highest place**” or He was “super-exalted.” He who was disgraced by man is now exalted by God. God “**gave Him the name that is above every name.**” Paul did not specify that Name here although elsewhere we discover that He is called “**King of Kings and Lord of Lords.**”

In verse 10 we learn “**That at the Name of Jesus, every knee shall bow.**” The purpose of His exaltation and declaration that He is Lord is so all will worship Him The promised response to that name is **bowing and confessing**. There will be two attitudes of bowing and confessing. For many their bowing will be one of heartache for having failed to recognize and acknowledge Him earlier. For Christians it will be a bowing in love, wonder and awe and worship.

Paul clarified who will bow by adding in verse 10 that “everyone” includes all who are “**In Heaven, on earth and under the earth.**” This universal acknowledgment will include angels and departed saints in heaven, people still living on earth, plus the satanic hosts and lost humanity in hell. Will men acknowledge Him in time for redemption or will they wait until they have to acknowledge He was right and they never accepted Him as the way the truth and the life?

Verse 11 adds “**And every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.**” This is certain. It carries two ideas. Paul does not imply a universal salvation, but that every being will ultimately confess Christ's Lordship, either with joyful faith or with resentment and despair. **Jesus** is the name given at His birth and means “**Savior.**” **Christ** is the Greek word for **Messiah** or promised one. He is the one spoken of often in the Old Testament. **Lord** is the name of His exaltation. Jesus will bear that name for all eternity.

The picture of Christ's humiliation and subsequent exaltation was intended by Paul to encourage in his readers an attitude of Christlike humility. If we are to be identified as Christ's followers, then we should demonstrate His character. The appeal, however, was not only to a life of lowliness, obedience and even hardship, it was also a reminder that victory follows humiliation and that God's will and glory will ultimately prevail.