

THE EPITOME OF HUMILITY

The Incarnation Of Christ

Philippians 2:5-8

This passage transitions from *exhortation* to *illustration*...and the phrase **have this attitude** looks both *backwards* and *forward*. It looks *back* to the principle just given in **verses 3-4**...

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

~Philippians 2:3-4

It looks *forward* to the *illustration* of that principle in Jesus' *perfect fulfillment* of it as described in **verses 6-8**.

Christ is the supreme example of *humility* and *selfless concern* for others. These verses, along with **verses 9-11**, constitute a grand statement on **Christology**...*the doctrinal study of the person and work of Christ*.

The *incarnation* is the *central miracle* of *Christianity*...the most *majestic* and *perfect* of all the things that God has ever done. That *miracle of miracles* is the theme of this passage. It has been called *a theological diamond* that perhaps sparkles brighter than any other in Scripture. In a *simple, brief*...yet *extraordinarily profound way*...it describes the *love, willingness*, and *obedience* of the *second Person of the Trinity* to be *born*, to *live*, and to *die* in human form to provide *redemption* for fallen mankind.

Keep in mind that this is God's *purposed* and *predetermined plan* for man's sin to be *atoned* for. It goes all the way back to *before creation* when *Lucifer sinned* and along with *1/3 of the angels in heaven* were *judged* without any means of *forgiveness* and *redemption*. They were *judged eternally*. So when God began creation, He had *already put in place* a

means for *atonement* so when **Adam** and **Eve sinned**, they were *clothed in forgiveness*. This means of *atonement* continued throughout all the Old Testament (I.e. the **Exodus**).

But when the **fullness of time** came, God sent His Son to be the *final atoning sacrifice* for mankind.

“The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”

~John 1:29

“Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”

~Hebrews 7:25-27

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption...For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

~Hebrews 9:11-12, 15

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus (vs. 5)...

As *profound* and *deep* as this passage is *theologically*...it also makes clear that it's *primary design* is to *motivate* Christians to *live like* Christ. **Paul** wasn't merely describing the *incarnation* to reveal its *theological truths*...as magnificent as those are. He presents the *ultimate* and *unequaled* example of *humility* to serve as the most powerful motive to believers' as to what *humility* looks like.

Attitude...means *like-minded...to be of the same mind*.

Believers are exhorted to have the *same attitude*...the same *selfless humility*...that Christ exhibited in His incarnation.

The incarnation calls believers to *follow* Jesus' *incomparable example* of *humble self-denial*, *self-sacrifice*, and *selfless love* as He lived in *obedient submission* to His Father's will.

“The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”

~I John 2:6

Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped (vs. 6)...

Although He existed in the form of God...Paul is very careful to stress the *complete* and *absolute deity* of Jesus. Jesus' claim to deity *infuriated* the Jewish leaders (**John 5:18**) and caused them to accuse Him of *blasphemy* (**John 10:33**).

Existed...Gk. *huparcho*, a **present active participle** which denotes *the continuance of a previous state or existence*. It expresses that *before*, *during*, and *after* His *incarnation*... Jesus was by His very nature, *fully* and *eternally* God. It stresses the *essence of one's nature*...that which is *absolutely unalterable*, *inalienable*, and *unchangeable*.

Form...Gk. *morphe* describes *image* or *resemblance*...and it typically appears with the Gk. *schema*, which means *fashion*. Combined, it refers to the *outward manifestation* of an *inner reality*.

Christ Jesus is the same *nature* and *essence* as God...*in every form and fashion* (**vs. 6**). It also means that Jesus *was man in every form and fashion* (**vs. 7**). It's the same word in both verses.

Jesus was *completely God* and *truly man*. To *deny either the deity* or *humanity* of Christ...*requires denying the other*.

Equality with God...is *synonymous* with the preceding phrase “**form of God.**” In becoming a man, Jesus didn't in any way *forfeit* or *diminish* His *absolute equality with God*.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus never *denied* or *minimized* His *deity*. He was *unambiguous* in acknowledging His divine Sonship and oneness with the Father (**John 5:17-18; 10:30**). Yet He never used His *power* or *authority* for *personal advantage*.

To be grasped...Gk. *harpagmos*...refers to *something that is being held onto...being clinging to*. Although He continued to *fully exist* as God, during His incarnation He *refused to hold on to* His *divine rights* and *privileges*.

Examples of Jesus refusing to grasp His divine privileges:

In the garden when He was arrested...He told **Peter** and the others...

“Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”

~Matthew 26:53

Because if He did...that would have *thwarted* His Father's *purpose* and *predetermined plan*.

In the wilderness while being tempted...

“The tempter came and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live on

bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”’.”

~Matthew 4:3-4

Jesus willingly suffered the worst possible *humiliation* rather than demand the *honor, privilege, and glory* that were rightly His. Nor did He use the powers of His *undiminished sovereign deity* to *oppose the purpose* of His Father because the price was too high.

But emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men (vs. 7)...

Emptied Himself...Gk. *kenosis*, means to *empty completely*. It describes *Christ laying aside all of His privileges*. It describes one being *broken and spilled out*.

What it *doesn't mean* is that He *surrendered any attributes of His deity*, but that He only *surrendered certain aspects of His prerogatives of deity*. He took on the *limitations of humanity*.

As God, He *had all the rights of deity*, and yet during His *incarnate state*, He *surrendered His rights*...especially His right to *manifest Himself visibly* as the God of all *splendor and glory*. This involved a *veiling* of His *preincarnate glory* (**John 17:5**) and the *voluntary nonuse* of some of His *divine prerogatives* during the time He was on earth (**Matthew 24:36**).

Taking the form of a bond-servant...a slave. This points to His *humble, surrendered position*...His willingness to *obey* His Father and *serve* others.

As the *supreme bond-servant*, Jesus carried the burden that no other man could carry...that being the *sin-burden* for all who would believe.

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

~Matthew 20:28

Being made in the likeness of men...Likeness suggest *similarity* but with *differences*. Though His *humanity* was *genuine* and *complete*...*He was all man*. He was *different* from all other humans in that He was *sinless* (**Hebrews 4:15**).

Christ...while retaining the *nature* and *essence* of God...was also *human*. In His incarnation he was *fully* God and *fully* man at the same time. He was God *manifested in human flesh*.

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

~John 1:14

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (vs. 8)...

Being found in appearance as a man...Some have wrongly taught that this phrase means that Jesus only *looked* human. But this would contradict **verse 7**.

Appearance...Gk. *schemati*, meaning *an outer appearance... an earth suit...our earthly tent that we inhabit...which is only meant to be temporary*.

He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death...

He humbled Himself...Gk. *tapeinoo*, has the idea of *lying low*. Jesus *lowered Himself* not only relative to God...but also to other men. He was the *suffering servant*.

During His *arrest, trial, and crucifixion*...Jesus was *mocked, falsely accused, spat upon, beaten with fists, scourged, and had part of His beard painfully plucked out*. Yet He was *never defensive, never bitter, never demanding, never accusing*. He refused to *assert his rights* as God or even as a human being.

By becoming obedient to the point of death...

Jesus' **obedience** and its impact on *redemption* is the theme of **Romans 5**.

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

~Romans 5:6, 8-10

“For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”

~Romans 5:19

Jesus' *perfect submission* took Him all the way to **death**... because it was the Father's *will*.

“No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

~John 10:18

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

~John 15:13

Even death on a cross...This form of *capital punishment* was limited to the *worst criminals* and *enemies* of **Rome**. No **Roman** citizen could be *crucified*...no matter how *egregious his crime*. *Crucifixion* is perhaps the *most cruel, excruciatingly painful, and shameful* form of *execution* ever conceived.

“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

~I Peter 2:24

In God's infinite wisdom, **death on a cross** was the only way of *redemption* for *fallen, sinful, and condemned* mankind.

After reflecting on the *divine plan of salvation* for the *first eleven chapters* of **Romans**, **Paul** declared in *awe* and *wonder*...

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”

~Romans 11:33

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **Jesus was completely God and truly man. To deny either the DEITY or HUMANITY of Christ...requires denying the other.**
- **As a believer, we are obligated to follow our Lord's example by EMPTYING OURSELVES of everything that hinders our OBEDIENCE and SERVICE to Him.**
- **There is no better example of HUMILITY and SELFLESSNESS for believers to imitate and follow than that of Christ.**