

HUMBLING ONE'S SELF

PHILIPPIANS 02:05–11

Introduction

This is one of the greatest passages ever written about Jesus Christ. It paints the perfect picture of humility — the humility of Jesus Christ. No one has ever come close to humbling himself like Jesus Christ did, and no one ever will. Yet, if the problems of the church and of the world are to ever be solved, we must humble ourselves just as Christ did. The church is too often divided, too often rumbling with criticism, murmuring, differences, jealousy, envy, ambition, outside talk, negative feelings and desires for position and recognition. The only answer is the declaration of this passage: humility — letting the humility of Jesus Christ flow in and out of our minds. Humility is the second step to unity. The unity of a church depends upon one thing: its members walking in humility — in the humility of Jesus Christ.

- I. Christ is the supreme example (v. 5).
- II. Christ is of the very nature of God (v. 6).
- III. Christ emptied Himself and became a man (v. 7).
- IV. Christ humbled Himself to the point of utter humiliation — to the very point of death (v. 8).
- V. Christ was rewarded — highly exalted by God (vv. 9-11).

I. *Philippians 02:05 Humility of Jesus Christ*

Jesus Christ is the supreme example of humility. As stated, this is one of the greatest passages ever written about Jesus Christ. Very simply, the passage says that Jesus Christ is God, yet He humbled Himself and became Man. Jesus Christ is the Person who dwelt in all the glory of perfection, but He humbled Himself and came to this corruptible world that knows little else other than selfishness, greed and death. Just imagine the enormous step down that Jesus Christ had to take to become a Man. It is utterly impossible to grasp the humility it took. Yet, this is exactly what He did and it is what we are to do. The very same *mind* that existed in Jesus Christ — that led Christ to give up everything He was and had — that very mind is to be in us. The only way the problems of the world can be solved is for every person to let the mind of Christ flood his mind. Consider the problems of...

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| • war | • hate | • anger | • arguing |
| • abuse | • prejudice | • selfishness | • pride |
| • cockiness | • haughtiness | • arrogance | • cursing |
| • indulgence | • extravagance | • greed | • stealing |
| • envy | • hunger | • homeless | • poverty |
| • disease | • jealousy | • homeless | |

The list could go on and on. How can these problems ever be solved unless we step down from where we are to where needy people are? Unless we step down and humble ourselves — step

down to where hurting people are — these problems will never be solved. Realistically, most people are not going to do this. Most people are not going to take all they are and have and get down to where the needs really are. But the Christian is to do this. This is the point of the present passage: Jesus Christ *set and focused His mind* upon humbling Himself. He took all He was and had and came down where we are and met our need. Now...

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (v. 5).

Take the attitude of Christ and let it flow through you. Let the attitude of humility and lowliness surge through your mind. Take all you are and have and get down where the needs really are. Do all you can to solve the divisiveness and cliques, grumbling and murmuring, selfish ambition and pride, desire for position and power, greed and selfishness, hurt and pain — both in the church and in the world. Humble yourself and do all you can to solve the awful problems that afflict the church and the world. Humble yourself as Christ did and become part of the solution instead of the problem. Look at the attitude of Christ. Lay hold of it as it is descriptively pictured in the notes that follow. Do not miss out on the opportunity of an eternity — the glorious privilege of possessing the very attitude of Christ Himself.

II. *Philippians 02:06 Jesus Christ, Deity*

Christ is of the very nature of God. This is critical to note, for it means...

- that Jesus Christ was not *like God*; He is God.
- that Jesus Christ did not just *achieve a high level of righteousness* when on earth, He was the very embodiment of righteousness.
- that Jesus Christ did not just *walk more perfectly* than other men walk. He was the very *picture (essence) of perfection*.
- that Jesus Christ did not become God when on earth, He has been God throughout all eternity.

Three points in this verse clearly show that Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is of the very nature of God.

1. Jesus Christ is of the *“being” of God*. The word *being* (huparchon) means existence, what a person is within and without. It is the very essence of a person, what a person is; that part of a person that cannot be changed. It is who a person is and all that he is.

This is a most glorious truth because it means that *Jesus Christ is God*. He is the very *being of God*.

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

2. Jesus Christ is *in the form (nature) of God*. The word form (morphe) means the permanent, constant being of a person. It is the very essence of a person, that part of him that never changes. It is the unchangeable being. Barclay points out that there is another Greek word translated “form” (schema). In contrast, it means the fleeting,

outward form of a person that is always changing. For example, a man is always changing (schema) in looks because of age and fashion. But his manhood (morphe) never changes. (*The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, p.44.)

This means a most glorious thing. Jesus is of the very essence and being and image of God. He is the divine, unchangeable God Himself. He dwells in the very perfection and essence of God; He possesses the very attributes of God Himself.

Heb 1:3 *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

Col 1:15 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

3. Jesus Christ is “equal with God” (Greek). The word *equality* (isa) means to be *on an equal basis with God*; to possess all the qualities and attributes of God Himself. Note also the word *grasped* (arpagmon). It is the picture of a thief seeking to snatch or take something that is not his. When Jesus Christ was on earth, He was constantly claiming...
- to be God
 - to be the Son of God
 - to have the nature of God
 - to be one with God
 - to be on an equal basis with God

Was He a thief? Was He robbing and snatching the title of God or was He truly God?

The answer is a most glorious truth. Jesus Christ did not have to rob or snatch at equality with God. He did not have to rob and grasp after the deity of God: He was already on an equal basis with God.

John 10:30 *“I and the Father are one.”*

John 10:32-33 *But Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” “We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”*

John 8:58 *“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”*

III. *Philippians 02:07 Humiliation of Jesus Christ*

Christ emptied Himself and became a man. Remember that we are dealing with the subject of humility — the fact that Jesus Christ took one great step down from heaven to earth. The step down was so great and so far that theologians do not call it *the humility of Christ, but the humiliation of Christ*. The Sovereign Lord of the universe — He who existed...

- in eternity and perfection
- in glory and majesty
- in dominion and power

...stepped down and became a man. But more than this: He who was the Lord and Master of the universe — who deserved all the honour and service of all living creatures — took upon Himself the form of a servant. He became the Servant of men — not only of God, but the *servant of men*. Imagine!

- => The Lord whom we are to serve, came and served us.
- => The Lord whom we are to love, came and loved us.
- => The Lord whom we are to adore, came and adored us.
- => The Lord whom we are to wait upon, came and waited upon us.
- => The Lord whom we are to minister to, came and ministered to us.
- => The Lord whom we are to seek, came and sought us.

The great distance between the majesty of Christ in heaven and the humiliation of Christ upon earth can never be measured. Our understanding of the distance would amount to no more than a small bucket of water compared to the great ocean. But we are commanded to let *the same attitude of humility* flow through us; therefore, we must study the deep humility of Jesus Christ and do our best to grasp and practice it. Two statements in this verse need diligent study.

1. Jesus Christ made Himself nothing; that is, He *emptied Himself*. The word *nothing* (*ekenosen*) means to completely empty. It is the picture of pouring water out of a glass until it is empty or of dumping something until it is all removed (Barclay. *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, p. 44). The very picture of being completely empty stirs a feeling of just how far Christ went in humbling Himself for us. What was it that was poured or emptied out of Jesus Christ when He left heaven and came to earth? (This is what theologians call the *kenosis theory*.) Note that this passage does not say. It only says that Christ *emptied Himself*. Other Scriptures, however, give some indication. (See Mk. 13:32.)
 - a. Christ did not lay aside His deity when He came to earth. He could not cease to be who He was: God. No person can ever cease to be who he is. A person may take on different traits and behave differently; a person may change his behaviour and looks, but he is the same person in being, nature and essence. Jesus Christ is God; therefore, He is always God — He always possesses the nature of God (See Jn. 1:1-2.)
 - b. Christ laid aside some of His rights as God:
 - => He laid aside His right to *experience only the glory*, majesty, honour and worship of heaven. In coming to earth as a man, He was to experience anything but glory, majesty, honour and worship. Men would treat Him far differently than a heavenly being.
 - => He laid aside His right to *appear only in heaven* and to appear only as the Sovereign God of heaven. In coming to earth as a man, He was, of course, to appear as a man on earth.

Mathew Henry has a brief but excellent statement of the fact:

“He emptied Himself, divested Himself of the honours and glories of the upper world, and of His former appearance, to clothe Himself with the rags of human nature” (Mathew Henry’s Commentary, Vol. 6, p. 732f).

As stated above, Jesus Christ emptied Himself of certain rights: the right to *appear only in heaven* and to *experience only the glory of heaven*. This is exactly what Jesus Christ Himself said when He was about to be crucified and return to heaven. He was praying to the Father when He said:

John 17:5 *“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”*

=> This is also the point of other Scriptures.

Heb 2:16-18 *For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Heb 4:14-16 *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

2. Jesus Christ was “*made in human likeness.*” The word *made* (*genomai*) means to become; a definite entrance into time. It is not a permanent state. Jesus became a man, but it was not to be a permanent state. It was only for a time, a particular period. In the fullness of time He made a definite entrance into the world as a man.

Thought 1. Note that Jesus Christ did not come to earth as a prince or some great leader upon earth. He did not come to receive the homage and service of men. He came as the humblest of men, as a servant to serve men. “He was brought up meanly, probably working with his supposed father at his trade. His whole life was a life of humiliation, meanness, poverty and disgrace; he had nowhere to lay his head, lived upon alms, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, did not appear with external pomp, or any marks of distinction from other men. This was the humiliation of his life” (Mathew Henry. *Mathew Henry’s Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 732f).

John 13:4- 5 *So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

Luke 22:27 “For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”

2 Cor 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Phil 2:7 But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

IV. Philippians 02:08 Jesus' Utter Humiliation: Death

Christ humbled Himself to the point of utter humiliation — to the very point of death — “even death on a cross.” Note two significant points.

1. Jesus Christ humbled Himself to the Father. He was obedient to God the Father. It was the Father's will for Christ to come to earth and to die for the sins of men. And Christ did it; He obeyed God the Father.

John 10:18 “No one takes it [His life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

John 14:31 “But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me [go forth and die]. Come now; let us leave.”

Rom 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Christ] the many will be made righteous.

Heb 10:9 Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second.

2. Jesus Christ humbled Himself to men. He willingly allowed men to kill Him. He did not have to bear such hostile humiliation and rebellion, but He did. Just picture what is involved in the death of the cross.
 - => Christ humbled Himself to die.
 - => Christ humbled Himself to come out of the spiritual and eternal world (dimension) into the physical and corruptible world in order to die.
 - => Christ humbled Himself to lay aside His eternal glory and majesty and become a man for the purpose of dying.
 - => Christ humbled Himself to suffer rejection, denial, cursing, abuse, arrest, torture and murder at the hands of rebellious men — whom He had originally created for the joy of eternity — rebellious men whom He had come to save.
 - => Christ humbled Himself to take all the sins of men upon Himself and to bear the weight and suffering of them all.

- => Christ humbled Himself to bear the judgment and condemnation and punishment of sin for every man.
- => Christ humbled Himself to suffer the awful experience of having God the Father turn His back upon Him.
- => Christ humbled Himself to suffer the terrible justice and wrath of God against sin.
- => Christ humbled Himself to bear the pain of suffering for sin eternally. Christ is eternal; therefore, His death is ever before the face of God. (Just imagine! It is beyond our comprehension, but the Lord's eternal agony is fact because of the eternal nature of God.)

The discussion could go on and on, but the point is well made by Scripture. Jesus Christ not only humbled Himself to become the servant of men, He humbled Himself to suffer the ultimate degree of humiliation:

- => Jesus Christ became sin for men and died as their sin before the just wrath of God.

In a sense, hanging there upon the cross Christ was not even a man; He was sin, the very embodiment of sin. In some way He embraced all the sin of the world and died for the sins of men.

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Pet 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

Thought 1. Remember the point of this passage: the fact that we must let the humility of Jesus Christ flow in and through us. We are to be humble — to walk in humility before each other — to go to the extreme of humility, even if it means humiliation before each other. Why? So that the church can be unified. Unity is to prevail among us. We are to live and breathe unity. There is to be no discord in God's church:

- no divisiveness
- no self-seeking
- no grumbling
- no prejudice
- no murmuring
- no negative truth
- no criticism
- no downing of others
- no jealousy
- no air of superiority
- no personal ambition

But note: the only way we can ever know such unity is to let the attitude of Christ captivate our mind. We must study, think and learn the humility of Christ. We must let His humility flow in and through us.

Phil 2:03-05 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

V. *Philippians 02:09–11 Exaltation of Jesus Christ*

Christ was rewarded — God highly exalted Him. Christ had humbled Himself in obedience to God the Father, and because He was faithful in being humble, God rewarded Him by exalting Him ever so highly. The point is well made: God will reward and exalt any believer who will walk as Christ walked — humbly before Him and men.

Note how highly God has rewarded and exalted Christ.

1. God has highly honoured Christ. God has given Christ a name above every name. Right now, the name of Jesus Christ is cursed all over the world. In fact, at every passing tick of the clock, the name of Jesus Christ is being cursed thousands of times by hordes of people all over the world. But note: not everyone curses His name. Some of us love His name. To us His name is the most glorious name ever uttered by human voice, for His name is...

- the name that forgives our sins.

Luke 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

- the name that gives us access into God's presence.

John 16:23-24 "In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

2. God has given Christ supreme power and authority. God has destined every knee to bow before Christ — the knees of everything in heaven and earth and under the earth. Nothing shall be exempt. The day is coming when every creature in *all the worlds and dimensions of being* shall bow their knees in subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 1:22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

Isa 45:22-23 "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear."

1 Pet 3:22 Who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand - with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

3. God has given Christ supreme worship. God is going to see to it that every creature confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father:

=> every nation, tongue and language => every person, mind and body
=> every race, colour and shape => every belief, creed and religion
=> every man, woman and child => every king, leader and authority
=> every professional worker and labourer

Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is exactly who He claimed to be: the Son of the living God. Every creature is going to worship Him as Lord, the Lord God of the universe.

Rom 14:11 It is written: "‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’"

Rev 5:12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"

Rev 15:4 "Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Thought 1. The point is clear: God will exalt the man who humbles himself and works for the unity of the church.

Mat 18:4 "Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Luke 14:10 "But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honoured in the presence of all your fellow guests."

Luke 22:26 "But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves."

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

1 Pet 5:5-6 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Isa 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says - he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Prov 29:23 *A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honour.*

Isa 66:2 *Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.*

Micah 6:8 *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. ■*

PHILIPPIANS 02: 11 LORD (KURIOS)

Lord means master, owner. Jesus was called *Lord* from the very first of His ministry (Mt. 8:2) and He accepted the title. He even called Himself Lord (Mt. 7:21). The word had been a title of respect throughout history. During the Roman empire it became the official title of Roman emperors. It was also a title given to the gods. The Hebrew title Adonai is translated Lord (Gen. 15:2), so is Jehovah (Mt. 1:20-22; 2:15; 3:3; 4:7, 10; 11:25; 21:9; Mk. 12:29-30; Lk. 1:68; 2:9). Both titles, Adonai and Jehovah, are translated Lord in Mt. 22:44. Jesus Himself called God the Father, "Lord" (Mt. 4:7, 10). But the title is more often given to Jesus. There is no question that Jesus is recognized as Lord, being identical with the Old Testament Jehovah and Adonai (Mt. 3:3; 12:8; 21:9; 22:43-45; Lk. 1:43; Jn. 14:8-10; 20:28; Acts 9:5). When Jesus is called Lord, it means that He is Master and Owner, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the only true God. He is Jehovah, Adonai, God Himself. □