

CHRIST — THE TRAITS OF HIS LIFE IN US

PHILIPPIANS 02:01–04

Introduction

The Philippian church was a strong church — a very strong church. When a church is strong, it is always full of vision and planning, and it is always working out a strategy to carry forth the gospel. A strong church launches ministry after ministry and programme after programme. It is never still and never complacent — neither the minds of the people nor the hands of the people. Because of this, there is always the danger of differences of opinion: differences in vision, desires, concern, emphasis and interest. There are always different ideas as to which ministry or project should be undertaken and supported and a host of other differences.

The point is this: the more strength and activity a church has, the more attention it must give to unity. Why? Because a strong church has more minds and bodies working, and where more people are working more differences are bound to arise. Consequently, the members must give more attention to unity.

Paul knew this; he knew that he had to put the Philippian church on guard. The church had to protect itself against disunity and division. This is the subject of chapter two: The Steps to Unity (2:1-18).

The first step to unity is Christ — allowing His life to be lived out in us. In particular there are seven traits that will hold the church together and keep it unified.

- I. The trait of encouragement (v. 1).
- II. The trait of love (v. 1).
- III. The trait of fellowship in the Spirit (v. 1).
- IV. The trait of compassion (v. 1).
- V. The trait of concern for one another's joy (v. 2).
- VI. The trait of humility or lowliness of mind (v. 3).
- VII. The trait of controlling self-interest or concentration on self (v. 4).

I. *Philippians 02:01 Encouragement*

There is the trait of *encouragement* (paraklesis). The word means many things throughout Scripture; but in the present context it means encouragement, comfort, solace, exhortation and strengthening. Note that this trait is a characteristic of Christ Himself. The very beat of His Spirit is to encourage, comfort and strengthen believers to be one in spirit and busy about the ministry of His church. Christ wants no murmuring, no grumbling, disturbance or weakening of the unity within the church. The Spirit of Christ is to take the disturbed or upset person and...

- console him
- comfort him
- encourage him
- strengthen him

Now glance at the charge of verse two:

=> “Being like-minded” — be just like Christ: console, comfort, encourage, exhort and strengthen each other.

Let absolutely nothing interfere with the spirit of unity in the church. But note, we are not only to help those who are disturbed, we are to let the comfort and encouragement of Christ flow in us when we are disturbed. When disturbed, we are to let Christ comfort us; and when others are disturbed, we are to comfort them. Just imagine the spirit of unity that would flow through a church if all the members would let the encouragement of Christ flow through them. There would be no murmuring, grumbling, disturbance — no disunity whatsoever.

John 14:18 *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

1 Th 5:11 *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

Isa 40:1 *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

II. **Philippians 02:01 Love**

There is the trait of love. There is a *comfort* (paramuthion) of love that is in Christ. The love of Christ stirs a person to keep the unity with other believers. The word “love” is *agape love*, the love that is selfless and sacrificial. *Agape love* is the love of the mind, of the reason and of the will. It is the love that goes so far...

- that it loves a person even if he does not deserve to be loved.
- that actually loves the person who is utterly unworthy of being loved.

Agape love is the love of Christ, the love which He showed when He gave and sacrificed Himself for us. We did not deserve it and were utterly unworthy of such love, yet Christ loved us despite all.

Imagine the spirit of unity that would exist within a church if every member would let the love of Christ flow through him. There would be no bitterness, anger or strife — no action that would hurt another person whatsoever. If the person was wrong and deserved punishment, the church’s members would sacrifice and give themselves for him. Note verse two:

=> “Have the same love” — the same love Christ had for you.

Thought 1. This is the answer to unity: the Lord’s spirit of love! How desperately the church needs its members to let the love of Christ flow through them to each other!

John 13:34-35 *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

John 15:12 *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”*

Rom 12:9 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

1 Th 3:12 *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

1 Pet 1:22 *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

III. *Philippians 02:01 Fellowship in the Holy Spirit*

There is the trait of fellowship in the Spirit. Once a person has trusted Jesus Christ as his Lord, God’s Spirit does two significant things to him.

=> The Holy Spirit enters the believer’s heart and life to comfort, guide, teach, equip and use him as a witness for Christ.

=> The Holy Spirit creates a spiritual union between the new believer and other believers. He melts and moulds the heart of the believer to the hearts of other believers. He attaches all their lives together, and they become one in life and purpose. They have a joint life sharing their blessings and needs and gifts together — all focused upon their Lord and His purpose.

The mind of the Holy Spirit is set upon unity and fellowship — all centred around Jesus Christ and His mission. The church and its believers are to have the same mind. There are to be no discordant elements whatsoever in the church: no talk about differences; no sharing of bad news; no gossip, rumours, cliques, nothing whatsoever that would tamper with or disturb the fellowship of the Spirit in the church. Again, quickly glance at verse two:

=> *“Being one in spirit”* — keep the unity of the Spirit, the fellowship of the Spirit.

IV. *Philippians 02:01 Compassion*

There is the trait of compassion. Compassion is the trait that stirred Christ to reach out for us. Compassion is the force that drives Him to keep after us time and again — even if we are in rebellion and stand opposed to Him. We may be cantankerous; we may even curse Him and take up arms against His movement. But His compassion drives Him to stay after us so long as we live.

If we allowed His compassion to flow through us, can you not see what would happen in the church? What would happen if we were driven by compassion to go after those...

- who have been hurt?
- who have been disturbed?
- who differed?
- who were critical?
- who withdrew?

The list could go on and on. But just think how many would have already been reconciled back into the fellowship of the church if we had been compassionate and gone after them. Just think how much less trouble would have happened if we had reached out in compassion when a difference first appeared.

The point is this: we are to let the compassion of Christ flow both in and through us. His compassion will comfort us when we differ and are disturbed; it will stir us to reach out in compassion when others differ and become disturbed. The compassion of Jesus Christ flowing in and through us keeps the unity of the church. It will also keep our minds together — keep them focused upon the needs of a world that must be reached and ministered to in compassion.

Rom 15:1 *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*

Gal 6:2 *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.*

Heb 4:15-16 *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.*

1 Pet 3:8 *Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.*

Psa 103:13 *As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.*

Isa 63:9 *In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.*

V. *Philippians 02:02 Joy*

There is the trait of joy. The believers in a church are to be concerned for each other's joy. And note: the one thing that brings joy to a church quicker than anything else is unity.

Phil 2:2 *Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.*

Paul's point is simple but direct: his joy in Christ would be fulfilled by only one thing — the unity of the Philippian church. The leaders and members of a church usually have joy in Christ, but their joy can be fulfilled only if unity exists between them. Joy is always disturbed when there is criticism, dissatisfaction, grumbling, murmuring, cliques,

opposition and a host of other divisive negatives. We are to worship, plan, organize, programme, build, staff, finance, minister and serve in the joy of Christ. But the only way we can do that is...

- to be like-minded • to have the same love
- to be in one spirit • to be in one purpose

John 15:11 *“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”*

John 16:24 *“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”*

Rom 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

1 Cor 1:10 *I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.*

2 Cor 13:11 *Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

Eph 4:3 *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

VI. Philippians 02:03 Humility — Lowliness of Mind

There is the trait of humility or lowliness of mind. Note two significant points.

1. A strong and active church will always have two problems to stick their ugly heads up: *selfish ambition and vain conceit*.
 - a. Some people are just going to be *selfish* with others. They are not mature in the Lord, not yet; therefore, they give in to...
 - talking about differences • jealousy • envy
 - desire for position • loving flattery • forming cliques
 - desire for recognition • opposition

If they do not get their way or what they want, they strive against the church or other members. The result is disunity and divisiveness, one of the most terrible crimes within the church to God.

Phil 2:3 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*

2 Tim 2:14 *Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.*

2 Tim 2:24 *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

James 3:14 *But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.*

Prov 3:30 *Do not accuse a man for no reason — when he has done you no harm.*

Prov 20:3 *It is to a man's honour to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.*

Prov 25:8 *Do not bring hastily to court, for what will you do in the end if your neighbour puts you to shame?*

Prov 26:17 *Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own.*

- b. Some people are going to *display vain conceit* within the church. Vain conceit means empty glory. Some people just want the attention, the recognition, the position, the flattery, the praise, the honour. They want people seeking their advice and counsel and opinion. They want to be on the major committees and acknowledged as a leader of the church.

Mat 23:12 *“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

Luke 22:24 *Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.*

John 5:44 *“How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?”*

Prov 17:19 *He who loves a quarrel loves sin; he who builds a high gate invites destruction.*

Isa 14:13-14 *You said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”*

Oba 1:4 *“Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the Lord.*

2. The spirit that must prevail in a strong church is that of humility or lowliness of mind. In fact, the only way a church can remain strong and be blessed by God is for its people to walk in a spirit of humility (see *Humility*, Ph. 2:3).

PHILIPPIANS 02:03

HUMILITY (TAPEINOPHROSUNE), LOWLINESS OF MIND (TAPEINOS)

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. **Philippians 02: 03***

To offer oneself as lowly and submissive; to walk in a spirit of lowliness; to present oneself as lowly and low-lying in mind; to be of low degree and low rank; not to be high-minded, proud, haughty, arrogant or assertive.

Note: a humble person may have a high position, power, wealth, fame and much more; but he carries himself in a spirit of lowliness and submission. He denies himself for the sake of Christ and in order to help others.

Men have always looked upon humility as a vice. A lowly man is often looked upon as a coward, a cringing, despicable, slavish type of person. Men fear humility. They feel humility is a sign of weakness and will make them the object of contempt and abuse and cause them to be shunned and overlooked.

Because of all this, men ignore and shun the teaching of Christ on humility. This is tragic:

=> for a humble spirit is necessary for salvation (Mt. 18:3-4).

=> for God's idea of humility is not weakness and cowardice.

God makes people strong, the strongest they can possibly be. By humility God does not mean what men mean. God infuses a new and strong spirit within a person and causes that person to conquer all throughout life. He just does not want the person walking around in pride. He wants the person to do what the definition says: to offer himself in a spirit of submissiveness and lowliness; not to act high-minded, proud, haughty, arrogant or assertive.

Humility is to be developed. Scripture tells us how:

Mat 11:29 *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

Mat 18:3-4 *And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Mat 23:12 *“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

Rom 12:16 *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

Eph 4:1-2 *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

Phil 2:3-4 *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.*

Col 3:12-13 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

1 Pet 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

Contrary to what the world thinks, humility reaps unbelievable benefits. A close study of the above verses shows this.

1. Humility results in a person coming to Christ and learning of Him. It leads to self-evaluation, an honest and courageous evaluation. When a person looks at Jesus Christ, he sees what he should be and it motivates him to become what he should be. He sees where he needs improvement and he is driven to fill in the gaps.
2. Humility results in conversion, assuring our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.
3. Humility results in our being exalted by Christ in that glorious day of redemption.
4. Humility results in healthy relationships and in community and social benefits (see Rom. 12:16; Eph. 4:1-2; Phil. 2:3-4; Col. 3:12-13; 1 Pet. 5:6). For example...
 - It acknowledges and boosts others
 - It leads to better relationships
 - It encourages and helps others
 - It motivates others to grow and do more

Christ demands that His followers walk in humility. Practicing humility demands two things.

1. Humility requires an honest evaluation of oneself. Barclay points this out (*The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*, p. 39). Humility comes from knowing ourselves, just who we really are. It comes from an honest appraisal of ourselves. It takes courage to look at ourselves and it takes honesty to see ourselves as we really are: basically self-centred, a bundle of self-admiration and self-love. We tend to dramatize ourselves. We tend to see ourselves unrealistically. We see ourselves...

- at the centre of action.
- as the hero of some spectacular rescue.
- as the great politician marching to victory.
- as the renowned sportsman saving the game in the last second or bagging a record catch.
- as the beauty queen dazzling the crowds.
- as the labourer of brilliance.
- as Prince Charming or Cinderella sweeping others off their feet.

We are always at the centre of the picture. Humility begins to come when we honestly face ourselves and admit our self-centredness. Self-centredness weakens and limits relationships and achievements. Humility reaches its height when we lose our lives in the cause of Christ and welfare of others.

2. Humility requires courage. It takes courage to be honest about our self-centredness, and courage to convert or to change by coming to Christ as a small child (Mt. 18:3-4). It takes courage to become Christ-centred and people-centred and to give ourselves to the cause of Christ and others.

Rom 12:16 *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

1 Cor 8:2 *The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know.*

Gal 6:3 *If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

1 John 2:16 *For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world.*

2 Sam 22:28 *You save the humble, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them low.*

Psa 10:2 *In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak, who are caught in the schemes he devises.*

Prov 11:2 *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.*

Prov 13:10 *Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.*

Prov 16:18 *Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Prov 21:4 *Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin!*

Prov 26:12 *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

Prov 28:25 *A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the Lord will prosper.*

Isa 5:21 *Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.*

Isa 24:4 *The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish.*

Oba 1:4 *Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the Lord.*

Hab 2:4 *“See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright - but the righteous will live by his faith.”*

Zep 3:11 *On that day you will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. □*

VII. **Philippians 02:04 Humility**

There is the trait of controlling self-interest or what Barclay calls concentration on self (The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, p. 40). Very simply, a Christian believer must forget himself. He must quit looking upon his own things, his...

- ambition
- position
- wants
- being bypassed
- not being recognized
- not being honoured
- not being given the position
- being overlooked
- desires
- being neglected
- being ignored

Believers are to concentrate upon Christ and His ministry to people and reaching the world with the glorious gospel of salvation. They are not to be focused upon self. The world is too needful and too desperate for any believer to be focused upon himself. Every believer is needed to reach the lost and lonely, the shut-ins and helpless, the hungry and cold, the sinful and doomed of his community and city, country and world. Every believer does not need to be thinking on his own things, but on the things of others. He needs to be out...

- visiting
- listening
- sharing
- planning
- transporting
- helping
- counselling
- clothing
- ministering
- advising
- feeding
- teaching

Mat 19:21 *Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

Mat 25:43 *“I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.”*

Luke 9:23-24 *Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.”*

1 Cor 10:24 *Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*

1 Cor 10:33 *Even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.*

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 2:4 *Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ■*

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...

- | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|------------|
| • 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. □