

Philippians 2:5-11

Verse 5:

--**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.** . . Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to live as humble, sacrificial, servants by illustrating the attitude or mindset of God as seen in Christ Jesus. Jesus is our Example.

--This is a remarkable section of Scripture, but it is important for us to remember that Paul's emphasis is to show what Jesus' life, death, and resurrection tell us about God's selflessness—not explain all divine mysteries.

--There are those who fear moralizing the work of Christ, which is a valid concern. That said, in the Bible, Christ's life and work on the cross are used to encourage us in many ways. Salvation is the center of it all, but to ignore the various nuances of Scripture because they are abused at times is to miss something important.

--We can never do what Jesus did, or be exactly who He is, but we are not supposed to. He is our example and the image we are being conformed into! There are numerous Scriptures that point to Christ as our example: **(Mt. 11:29; Jn. 13:12-17; 34; 17:18; 21:19; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6; 1 Peter 2:21-23).**

1 John 2:6: He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Verse 6:

--Paul begins his description of Christ's work in showing that Jesus was ***in the form of God***. The Greek word for ***form*** is—*morphe*—of God, or as Gordon Fee defines: *that which truly characterizes a given reality*. It is more than the outward appearance and speaks of inward nature or essential equality. *This is a direct statement of Christ's eternal deity!*

--You can see similar references to *morphe* as the inward nature of things in Scriptures such as: **Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 3:10.**

--Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, was always in the *morphe* of God **(Jn. 1:1; 8:58; 17:24; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15-17; 2:9; Heb. 1:3).**

--Paul begins with Jesus' eternal state and moves to the incarnation to magnify the greatness of His humility and sacrifice. Similar to: ***For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).****

--Though Jesus was ***in the form of God*** He ***did not consider it robbery to be equal with God...***

--Even though Jesus was equal with God, He didn't retain with a firm grasp something that was rightfully His, against those who had no right or claim upon it. *Like a child saying, *Mine!**

--The idea is that Jesus didn't exploit His deity. In fact, it was very much because He was God that we see Him seeking our good at the greatest cost.

--Jesus clearly claimed equality with God and those in His day hated Him for it.

John 5:18: Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 10:30: I and My Father are one.

King (Joy Way): "He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, thought it not forgery to use His signature."

--Paul's point here is despite Jesus equality with God, He did not hold that right to our harm.

Verse 7:

--**But** . . . Jesus revealed the divine attitude of humble selflessness by putting something off, then putting something on, and then doing something with it!

--Jesus **made himself of no reputation**. Some translate this: He *emptied himself* or *made himself nothing*.

--What did Jesus empty Himself of? Obviously, not His deity! He surrendered the manifestation of external glories (**Jn. 17:24**), heavenly riches (**2 Cor. 8:9**), and heavenly knowledge (**Lk. 2:52**). We don't understand all this means! It is a great mystery still (**1 Tim. 3:16**)!

--**taking the form (morphé) of a bondservant**. . . Paul's direct point is that Jesus poured Himself out, not necessarily *of* something but *into* something. Jesus poured out *Himself*. Where? Into the humble life of a slave!

--Jesus didn't play at being a man. He took the true nature—*morphe*—of a servant.

Luke 22:27: For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.

--His life was one drink offering to the Father. There never was, and never again will be, a life of such fearful and awesome selflessness lived on the face of this earth. His divinity was displayed in the nature of a servant.

--All of this reveals divine selflessness and humility. Jesus remains the example for the Philippians and for us: *God is self-giving and not self-grasping*. What Jesus let go of and emptied Himself into was the exact opposite of selfish ambition, strife, or vain-glory.

--Jesus didn't just serve—He is a servant—One who pours out His life in love to God and others. In Jesus, The Servant, we see the perfection and glory of service.

Tozer (God Tells the Man Who Cares): "The ideal Christian is the one who knows that he is free to do as he wills and wills to be a servant. This is the path Christ took, blessed is the man who follows Him."

--Jesus had eternally been in the *morphe* of God, but He took the *morphe* of a slave. And so Paul is establishing God's attitude of humility and love in willingly taking on the essential qualities of a slave. *We like to be partial servants. . . we don't like being treated like slaves or assuming the reputation of one.*

--God the Father and God the Son shared the same will, but Christ lived out that perfect will in human flesh. Despite our sinful human world. Against our inhuman enemy.

--In fact, the very act of taking on the form of a servant proved Jesus was God, for no creature has a right, or even the power, to change the place God has given it in creation.

--What did Jesus' service look like? ***Coming in the likeness of men. . .***

--Jesus was always God, but now He became something He was not—a man! He most often called Himself the *Son of Man* and not the *Son of God*.

****Romans 8:3: For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh...****

--Mankind was made by God in the likeness of God (**Gen. 5:1**), but now we have God come in the likeness of men. He was a real man, but not a mere man.

****John 1:14 & 18: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. . . No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared him.****

--His ***coming in the likeness of men*** was through a virgin birth! He was a baby, the Maker of all things, taken up and laid down at the will of others, particularly a young Jewish girl named Mary.

****Galatians 4:4-5: But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.****

--This is the great mystery of the Incarnation. It is truth, revealed by God.

****1 Timothy 3:16: And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.****

--What did that look like practically?

Verse 8:

--***And being found in appearance as a man. . .*** the Greek word for ***appearance*** here is not *morphe* but *schema*—which relates to the outward fashion or nature of something as seen in: **1 Cor. 7:31; 2 Cor. 11:14; 1 Peter 1:14; etc.** (The inner and outward natures related to by the Greek words *morphe* and *schema* can be seen in **Romans 12:2** as forms of both words are used.)

--Jesus was in the *schema* of a man—initially taken as a regular man by all who saw Him.

****John 4:29: Come see a man which told me all the things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?***

****John 6:52: The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?****

****John 10:33: The Jews answered Him saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."****

--Yet even in this **appearance** it seems that He was **found** of some. Jesus is **the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)** and is **the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person (Heb.1:3)**.

--The god of this world is trying to blind men seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus! Do we see Him as He is? Flesh and blood cannot reveal Him to us!

--**He humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death. . .**

--Part of Jesus' humility included human obedience to the will of God. Adam attempted to gain likeness to God through disobedience, but Christ proved His likeness by obedience.

Romans 5:19: For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

--Christ's obedience is very important to us as imperfect sons and daughters. We fail when we do what is wrong and when we don't do what is right. Christ was perfectly obedient inwardly and outwardly!

--In Jesus' process of life obedience, He faced more difficulty in the will of God than any of us ever will! Notice I said difficulty in the will of God.

Hebrews 5:8-9: Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

--Paul's emphasis is on the extent of Christ's obedience. In the end, Christ chose to surrender His life rather than His obedience. Jesus had no partial-obedience, like King Saul. He accepted the cup from His Father's hand. Obedience was glorified in His person.

--Jesus obediently—which means willingly and knowingly—chose the path leading to death.

--**Even the death of the cross. . .** Not only was Jesus obedient unto death, but to the most horrible and degrading form of death ever devised by man. The death of the cross.

--Paul ends with the sharpest imaginable contrast: God in human flesh on a cross.

Lewis (Letters to Malcolm): "There is indeed one mental image which does not lure me away into trivial elaborations. I mean the Crucifixion itself; not seen in terms of all the pictures and crucifixes, but as we must suppose it to have been in its raw, historical reality. But even this is of less spiritual value than one might expect. Compunction, compassion, gratitude—all the fruitful emotions—are strangled. Sheer physical horror leaves no room for them. Nightmare. Even so, the image ought to be periodically faced. But no one could live with it. It did not become a frequent motif of Christian art until the generations which had seen real crucifixions were all dead."

--The cross was an offence and stumbling-block. It was shameful. To the eye of man, Christ's death on the cross seemed meaningless, cruel, and the least likely type of death for one who honored God and always pleased Him. The whole point is: *If He humbled Himself so deeply to serve us—in willing obedience to the Father—what should we do for others?*

Verses 9-11:

--The story doesn't end with Christ's death!

--This reality of Christ's exaltation was essential for this suffering and embattled community of believers in Philippi and is still essential for all obedient, suffering servants today.

--God's promises of heavenly vindication are a necessary reality and exhortation for all believers! (1:6; 9-11; 27-28; 2:14-16; 3:10-14; 17-21; 4:5)

--Jesus was clear with His disciples about the laws of humbling and exaltation.

Matthew 23:11-12: *But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant, and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

--Most commentators immediately forget the obvious point here—we see something of God's character in Christ's exaltation! It is His joy to reward humble Christ-likeness with glory.

Hebrews 12:2: *Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

--Who is more deserving of reward than Jesus?! There was a day when I finally read this, and didn't just understand that Christ was exalted, but wanted Him to be exalted! When we see Him, the great impression will be: *He is so worthy!*

Verse 9:

--**Wherefore**—Because of Christ's humble obedience to the Father's will, His ultimate humility is also worthy of the highest glory!

--Paul does something unique in the Greek (*hyperypsoo*) for **highly exalted**. It seems to be a word that Paul made up and is used only here in the NT—used of Jesus Christ. Jesus is *super-exalted!*

--Again, it was as the Son of Man, and not the Son of God, that Jesus was exalted. The Son of God could not be exalted any higher than He already was, but the Son of Man could be. The likeness Jesus took on entered into the glory of what had refused to grasp in emptying Himself.

--We may be exalted one day, but only Christ is super-exalted—above all men and angels!

--What **name** is being referenced here? Either the name of Lord, which was a title God reserved for Himself ***Isa. 45:18-25***

Isaiah 42:8: *I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.*

John 5:23: *That all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*

--Or, this is literally a reference to a future name by which we will know Jesus Christ in His glory. Names are a part of the revelation of unrevealed character (**Rev. 2:17; 19:12**).

Verse 10:

--that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth. . .

--The Jews saw the gospel as separate from the OT and therefore, the message of a false god. But Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the fulfillment of OT prophecies, and so the apostles preached Jesus (Savior) Christ (Messiah or Anointed One) as Lord in the book of Acts.

--Even today, He must be confessed as the Lord Jesus Christ for anyone to be saved!

****Acts 2:36: Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.****

****Romans 10:9: That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.****

--All created intelligences will bow before the Lord Jesus Christ. This too, is part of Christ's reward. He will be King of all, either willingly or unwillingly. The Bible is clear that refusing to recognize Jesus Christ as Lord here on earth is to court eternal damnation.

****Acts 10:42-43: And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.****

Verse 11:

--To **confess** means to *say the same thing about*. So, to confess Jesus Christ is to say about Him what God says about Him—what He says about Himself—what the Holy Spirit has revealed about Him in the Word of God.

--There will always be those who deny or change God's testimony of Christ!

****2 Peter 2:1: But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.****

****Jude 4: For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.****

--All of heaven and earth will bend to His reality.

****Tozer (Man: The Dwelling Place of God): "But something less is among us, nevertheless, and we do well to identify it so that we may repudiate it. That something is poetic fiction, a product of the romantic imagination and maudlin religious fancy. It is a Jesus, gentle, dreamy, shy, sweet, almost effeminate and marvelously adaptable to whatever society He may find Himself in. He is cooed over by women disappointed in love, patronized by pro team celebrities and recommended by psychiatrists as a model of a well-integrated personality. He is used as a means to almost any carnal end, but He is never acknowledged as Lord. These quasi-Christians follow a quasi-Christ. They want His help but not His interference. They will flatter Him but never obey Him."****

--The Lord Jesus Christ becomes our Example in self-sacrificing love, in brief suffering, and in eternal glory. ***Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.***

*Fee (Paul's Letter to the Philippians): *"Here is the epitome of God-likeness: the pre-existent Christ was not a "grasping, selfish" being, but one whose love for others found its consummate expression in "pouring himself out," in taking on the role of a slave, in humbling himself to the point of death on behalf of those so loved."**