

The Humbleness of Jesus

Today we come to the very heart of the book of Philippians. The verses before us display the very heart of God as revealed to us in the gospel. Some people believe this may even be an early hymn that the church sang together, but either way it is one of the most beautiful passages in all of Scripture, full of deep teaching about Jesus our Lord, but also filled with rich application for us as followers of Jesus.

What does it mean to humble yourself? The Bible says, “Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord,” and “He who humbles himself will be exalted.” But what does it mean to truly humble yourself? In this passage from Philippians Jesus shows us what true humility is and how far true humility will go.

Paul had just encouraged the Philippians to practice true Christian fellowship that is shaped by the gospel of Christ. Now he brings the message home by showing how much Christ did for us, how far Christ went for us in the gospel. He says that our attitude should be the same as that of Jesus who demonstrated such humble obedience in the gospel.

Today’s passage traces the incredible journey of our Lord Jesus from the glories of heaven to the horrors of the cross and then back to glory again. It is the most amazing display of humble obedience ever witnessed in heaven or earth. And God calls us to model our lives after it.

Verse 5 which simply says: “Have the same mindset as Jesus.” This brings us back to Paul’s words from chapter one: “For to me to live is Christ. There is so much wrapped up in that brief little statement, but here in verse 5 we see that it means not only to live for Christ now and to live with Christ later, but we are also to live like Christ, we are to be Christ-like. That is the good work that God began in you and is carrying on to completion. We are called to be like Jesus. And we are especially called to be like Jesus in his humble obedience.

That phrase “have the same mindset” means “to think or direct your mind” in a certain direction. God is directing you to allow the mind of Christ as

revealed in the gospel to form and shape you in your relationships with each other.

Verses 6-8 trace the descent of our Lord Jesus in his humble obedience to the Father.

We see that Jesus started at the highest place. Look at verse 6: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. This verse speaks of Jesus’ pre-existence as God. Long before Jesus was born at Bethlehem, long before he created the world, from all of eternity Jesus shared eternal glory with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus has always existed as God; he is in very nature God; he is equal to God. You can’t start any higher than that.

And yet, and this is the amazing part, he did not consider equality with God something to be used for his own advantage. Jesus was God but he did not use his position for his own selfish advantage. Once again, Jesus is setting the supreme example here where he did not even use his position as God for selfish purposes but rather to serve.

Jesus started at the highest place. And then he traveled to the lowest place. Verse 7 says, “He made himself nothing.” The phrase literally means that he emptied himself. He poured himself out in love for you and for me in humble obedience to the Father. He started at the highest place – he was equal to God with all the rights and privileges as God. But he made himself nothing. He gave up those rights and privileges in coming to earth as our Saviour.

Jesus became a servant. “He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.” The first step downward for Jesus was taking the nature of a servant.

The word servant can also be translated “slave.” And what is a slave? A slave is someone who has no rights. Jesus took the attitude of a servant or a slave, and he said to the Father: “Not my will but yours.”

Jesus is in very nature God. Now we see that he took the nature of a servant. This doesn’t mean that he stopped being God. He just added

servant to his resume. In taking the nature of a servant, Jesus did not cease being God, but rather gave up his rights as God to become a servant.

He willingly gave up all his rights and took the very nature of a servant. Jesus demonstrated this in a powerful way at the Last Supper when he removed his outer clothing, got on his knees and washed his disciples' feet. Paul says your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus. Rather than clinging to your own privileges and rights, you should humbly serve each other in love.

The first step downward for Jesus was becoming a servant, submitting himself to the Father's will and willingly giving himself in humble service to others.

Then Jesus humbled himself by becoming a human being.

The invisible God became visible. He took on flesh in full view of all. He became a man. Jesus did not cease being God when he became human, but rather his glory was veiled in human flesh. He laid aside his glory as God to become human. He was truly God and truly man.

Jesus became a servant. He became a human being. And finally he became obedient to death. This shows us how low Jesus was willing to go. He became obedient unto death.

This doesn't mean Jesus was just obedient up until the time he died, but that his death was part of his obedience. He was obedient even to God's command to die, to willingly give up his life for others.

Jesus became a servant. He became a human being. He became obedient to death. And finally, he suffered the humiliation of the cross.

Dying on the cross was the most humiliating and painful death of all. The cross in Jesus' day was not a decoration or a piece of jewelry. People shuddered at the thought of the cross. The word itself was avoided in polite conversation. The Romans hated those who died on the cross. The Jews considered them cursed.

To die on the cross was the most shameful, cruel, despised death of all. But for Jesus it was even worse, because it was on the cross that Jesus suffered the wrath of the Father and paid the full penalty for our sins. This was the final downward step for Jesus, the lowest rung on the ladder. Jesus was obedient to death – even death on a cross.

Notice the cross was Jesus' destination all along. All the other steps down the ladder were simply necessary steps to get him there. The cross was the heart of Jesus' mission, and it is the heart of the gospel. Apart from Jesus' death for us on the cross, there would be no salvation. Apart from Jesus' death for us on the cross, there would be no hope of eternal life. Jesus had traveled from the highest place to the lowest place. There was no place lower the Son of God could go than death on a cross.

Fortunately, the gospel does not end there. The gospel is the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. God did not leave Jesus in the grave but raised him from the dead and exalted him to the highest place.

Jesus humbled himself, but God exalted him. The journey down was all the things that Jesus did. But the journey back up is all the things that God the Father did. Jesus humbled himself; God exalted him.

It is always this way with humility and exaltation. You've got a choice. You can do the humbling, and let God do the exalting. Or you can do the exalting, and let God do the humbling. Jesus humbled himself, and he let God do the exalting.

There is no one and no thing higher than Jesus Christ.

Jesus was named "Jesus" at his birth, but at his exaltation he was given the name "Lord".

We learn that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Notice Paul says every knee will bow "in heaven and on earth and under the earth." This means that all personal beings everywhere – angels,

demons, humans, living and dead, will one day submit to Christ, bowing before his sovereignty and confessing him as Lord.

The word “confess” here simply means “to acknowledge something openly.” It doesn’t mean that everyone will be saved at the end of time, but rather that everyone will acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

Finally, this all brings glory to God the Father. There is no competition between God the Son and God the Father. The Father glorifies the Son, and the Son glorifies the Father. God, who is Lord, has the name Father in relation to Jesus, while Jesus the Son shares the name Lord with the Father. Everyone will acknowledge that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

There is no task too small to do for Jesus. When you choose the path of humble obedience as Jesus did, no task is beneath you when you do it out of love for Jesus and your neighbor. We are called to serve each other in love.

There is no obedience too difficult that God requires. Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. With Jesus as our example there is no obedience too difficult that God requires. And along with the command God will give you the strength to obey.

There is no reward so sweet as that which God gives. Jesus showed the ultimate obedience, and he received the ultimate reward. You can’t outgive God. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Jesus is the supreme example of humble obedience because he started from the very highest place, and he journeyed to the very lowest place. No one traveled further than Jesus on this road to humility because no one ever started as high or went as low as Jesus did.

God calls you to have the same attitude as Jesus. God calls you to step out of your comfort zone, let go of your rights, and humbly serve each other out of obedience to God. There is no task too small to do for Jesus. There is no obedience too difficult that God requires. There is no reward so sweet as that which God gives. Amen