

“He Humbled Himself”
(Philippians 2:5-8)

I. Introduction.

A. Review.

1. We saw that after the Fall, the Lord did not leave all men to perish.
2. He sent a Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, One who would come and do what was necessary to guarantee to His chosen ones the blessings of the Covenant.
3. To do this, He gave Him the power of three offices:
 - a. Prophet: He came armed with God’s Word to declare God’s will for our salvation.
 - b. Priest: He came to offer Himself to make atonement for us and to pray for us.
 - c. King: He came with authority to subdue us, our enemies, and to rule over us.
 - d. As we’ve seen, these were offices He was already exercising as God even before He came, and as the Christ, when He came and after He returned to heaven.

B. But in order to actually accomplish this salvation, Christ first had to humble Himself.

1. This evening, we’ll consider two things about Jesus Christ from our text: First, how great He really is, and understanding this, second, how much He humbled Himself to save us.
2. Then second, how His humility is the example we are to follow.

II. Sermon.

A. To understand the humiliation of Christ, we must first see how great He is.

1. Paul writes, “He existed in the form of God” (v. 6).
 - a. The word forms means to share in the internal nature and external form of something.
 - b. This is simply a way of saying He was the same as God.
 - c. Since the Bible says there is only one God, this must be the same God as the Father, though they are different persons.
 - d. This was His state prior to His incarnation.
 - e. And we will see that that He continues to be God after the incarnation.
 - f. God cannot change, therefore He who was God will ever continue to be God.
2. Being God, He is equal with the Father in every way.
 - a. He is equal, or the same, in Being, power/authority, glory.
 - b. He has all the attributes of God – omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal, independent, unchangeable.
 - c. He is the infinite, eternal and glorious God from all eternity.

B. This is the One who humbled Himself.

1. He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself” (v. 6).
 - a. He did not hold onto this equality: He did not grasp it – not grasp after it, as the Jehovah’s Witnesses think, as though He aspired to be God.
 - b. Now this doesn’t mean He emptied Himself of His divinity, but of His reputation.
 - (i) He could not empty Himself of His Godhood.
 - (ii) That would be impossible.
 - (iii) There are certain things God cannot do, and this is one of them.

- (iv) God cannot cease to be God.
- c. When He humbled Himself, He didn't actually give anything up, but took something:
- (i) He took the form of a bond-servant.
 - (ii) He had the nature and form of God.
 - (iii) But He took the nature and form of a bond-servant.
 - (iv) He was made in the likeness of men (of sinful flesh, as we saw in Romans 8:3, which means He appeared as an ordinary fallen man, not a perfect man).
 - (v) He actually became a human being, with flesh and soul.
 - (vi) He took to Himself an entire human nature.
- d. He didn't even come as a great man.
- (i) He wasn't born in a palace, living a rich life, but as a poor man, the Son of a carpenter (one poor, but spiritually rich).
 - (ii) If God were to come as a man, how would we think He would?
 - (iii) The Magi from the East looked in Jerusalem, the capital city, where kings would normally be (Matt. 2:1-2).
 - (iv) But they found Him in Bethlehem, not in the stable, but in a house, a very mean dwelling (vv. 8-11).
 - (v) Being the infinite and eternal God, He became a man, a bond-servant, one under the Father's authority, to obey Him, to bring salvation.
 - (vi) Paul writes in Galatians, 4:4-5, "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."
 - (vii) Jesus "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7).
 - (viii) This stoop would be humbling enough – like a man becoming an amoeba, only infinitely more humbling. But He went further.
2. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (v. 8).
- a. He who was equal with God, humbly submitted Himself to God.
- (i) He was born under the Law, under the obligation to keep it, to justify Himself and those He represented.
 - (ii) He also submitted to the miseries of this life: the sinfulness of others, the sinful persecution of others, and possibly even sickness.
- b. But His greatest act of humiliation was when He submitted to take His peoples' sins on Himself, becoming a curse, and being executed in their place.
- (i) The fact that God would become a man to die in the first place would be infinite humility.
 - (ii) But He didn't die of old age, or even of disease: He died suffering God's wrath for our sins.
 - (iii) He was made a curse by being hung on a cross. The Scripture says, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).
 - (iv) He died in our place on that cross. The death He suffered was the death we

deserved.

- (v) And of course, He was buried and continued under the power of death for three days.
 - (vi) If we were talking about a mere man, death and burial wouldn't be too surprising.
 - (vii) But when this One happens also to be God, it is absolutely amazing!
- c. The infinitely glorious and blessed God became a man, a bond-servant, suffered in this life, became a curse and suffered God's wrath on the cross, suffered hell there, and then was buried and in the grave for three days.
 - d. This is infinite condescension.

III. Application: Now what should we do in light of this? Paul tells us. He says, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (v. 5).

A. We should first of all thank Him that He did these things, for salvation would be impossible apart from His humiliation.

- 1. We couldn't bring salvation down to ourselves.
- 2. God had to give it.
- 3. But look at the price He had to pay.
- 4. There was no other way, but He was willing to pay it.

B. But secondly, out of thankfulness, we should humble ourselves, die to ourselves, pick up our crosses and serve Him with all that we have to serve Him with.

- 1. Jesus has shown us the way to true greatness.
 - a. He who would be first, must be last of all.
 - b. Let me read to you a story from the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus uses His own example to exhort His followers to the same.
 - c. In 20:20-28, we read, "Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.' And hearing *this*, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'"
- 2. As long as we strive to be best, to be noticed, to be at the forefront, the Lord will hold us back, will humble us, until we are ready.
- 3. But if we humble ourselves and become the servant of others, He will make us great, not necessarily in the eyes of others, but in His eyes, which is most important.
- 4. May the Lord give us the grace we need in Christ to strive after this greatness, after the likeness of His humiliation. Amen.