

The Ultimate Example of Self-sacrificing Humility – Philippians 2:5-8

Introduction, Outline

- Scripture reading: John 13:1-17; Philippians 2:1-8。
- Introduction: When is the first time you realize that pride, selfishness and self-centeredness is a serious problem? In Christ, you can conquer the sin of pride and selfishness to become a humble, self-denying person, for Christ Jesus is your ultimate example.
- Review: Humility is vitally important to church unity ! (2:1-4)
- Outline:
 - Title: The Ultimate Example of Self-sacrificing Humility
 - 1. Our Example to Follow — The Mind of Christ Jesus (v5)
 - 2. General Principles from Our Example — Self-humbling, Self-emptying, Not Self-grasping (three main verbs from vv 6-8)
 - 3. Specific Details of Our Example — Self-humbling to the Absolute Extreme (vv 6-8)
 - 3a. Starting Point of Self-humbling — Being the Most High God (v6)
 - 3b. First Step of Self-humbling — Taking Upon True Humanity (v7)
 - 3c. Second Step of Self-humbling — Living a Perfectly Obedient Life (v8a)
 - 3d. Third Step of Self-humbling — Dying Even on the Cross (v8b)

Our Example to Follow—The Mind of Christ Jesus (v5)

- “Attitude”: Not emotion, but thoughts and mind. The same word is used as “mind” in verse 2. We are to exercise our mind, intentionally thinking what Jesus Christ thinks, even when our emotion doesn’t feel like it.

A church life in unity starts with the mind, the key is how we think and not what we do. We have to make Jesus’s mind our mind. Only then, we can live out a church life of unity from the inside out.

General Principles from Our Example — Self-humbling, Self-emptying, Not Self-grasping (three main verbs from vv 6-8)

- “a thing to be grasped”: Jesus did not give up His position of being equal with God as a fact, but he did not grasp this position for His own gain. That is, He did not use the authority of this position as ways to bring Himself benefit, but He put aside all the benefits voluntarily.

Is there anything that you grasp tightly in your life? Any benefit you think you deserve, and you become bitter and complain if you didn't get it? Self-grasping is the sinner's nature. The first words out of a child's mouth are often "mine, mine!"

- “But emptied Himself”: Like emptying a glass of water, leaving nothing behind, Jesus saw Himself as nothing, grasping nothing for Himself, by taking the form of a slave, pouring out His life to serve man.

This is the positive side, and “not regard.....to be grasped” is the negative; together they show the mind of Christ. The key is to “regard”. Paul asks us to “regard one another as more important than yourselves” (v 3). Christ regards Himself nothing, as a slave, lowlier than all! How do you regard yourself?

- “He humbled Himself”: The word is originally used of slaves of the lowest social status. Verse 3 asks us to have humility and here is the example of Christ's humility——not any external circumstances that make Him humble, but He voluntarily chose to humble Himself. Sometimes we say “I am humbled by such and such,” often by some bad things in life which happen so we may see our true state and cause us to be humble. But Christ's mind is to voluntarily regard Himself as a lowly slave to serve others!

The expression of Christ's humility is “becoming obedient”。 In connection with last week's message, genuine humility is not self-debasing, but: 1、 God-centered obedience in all things (v8) ; 2、 Others-first mindset that prioritize others' benefit over one's own. (v3)

Self-humbling to the Absolute Extreme (vv 6-8)

Starting Point of Self-humbling — Being the Most High God (v6)

- “existed”: present tense in original Greek, expressing a continual state. Not something that could stop or was added later, but always existing —— Christ always exists in the perfect form of God from eternity past to eternity future. Jesus is fully God forever, whether before His incarnation, during His earthly ministry, or after His ascension.
- “form”: Not outward appearance, but internal essence. God is spirit, meaning He has no visible form. The word “form” here refers to essential attributes — righteousness, holiness, love, mercy, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, aseity, eternity.....All these essential attributes of God are fully and eternally in Christ!
- “equality with God”: “equality” is plural in original Greek, meaning equal in every aspect: equally righteous/holy、 equally loving and merciful、 equally eternal、 equally omniscient 、 omnipresent、 omnipotent, etc.....

Theological point: In His incarnation, Christ did not lose any aspect of the form of God. God's essence cannot change as an eternal, transcendent spiritual being. Christ only added a human form to His divine form. Two different essences co-exist in the same person Jesus, which is an unfathomable mystery to us.

First Step of Self-humbling — Taking Upon True Humanity (v7)

- “emptied Himself”: In His incarnation, Christ gave up: 1、 Divine glory (John 17:5); 2、 Independent authority as God (Matthew 26:39); 3、 Independent use of divine attributes (Matthew 24:36); 4、 Inseparably intimate relationship to His heavenly father (Mark 15:34).
- “taking the form of a bond-servant”: The Creator humbles Himself to become a creature, “For all things are Your servants.” (诗 119:91) Furthermore, the particular form of slave Jesus took is “being made in the likeness of men” in order to serve man.

Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve”

Hebrews 2:14, 17 “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

As the most high God, Jesus gave up all these divine privileges for us, becoming flesh to serve us, shouldn't we then deny ourselves, give up the rights we think we deserve, to serve each other and seek the benefits of others?

Second Step of Self-humbling — Living a Perfectly Obedient Life (v 8a)

- “becoming obedient”: Speaks of a process, not some one-time obedience, but unintermittent continual obedience, which is God's requirement for every man. When we have failed miserably, Christ has provided the righteousness we need for salvation, through His perfect lifelong obedience even to the point of death.

Isaiah 50:4 (a messianic prophecy) “The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.”

The Gospel of John especially emphasizes the life-long obedience of Jesus: 4:34; 5:19; 5:30; 6:38; 8:28-29; 9:4; 12:48-49; 14:31.

Third Step of Self-humbling — Dying Even on the Cross (v8b)

- “to the point of death”: The ultimate test for obedience is suffering. When there is no price to pay, obedience is not hard. But when obedience means suffering, loss, or even death, there goes obedience for many. However, Jesus' obedience is complete, all the way to the end.

Jesus' death is an act of active obedience, not as a passive victim:

John 10:18“No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative.”

Matthew 26:53“Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ”

As the perfect man, he does not deserve to die; As the almighty God, He has the power not to die; but, in order to save believers, He became obedient to the point of death!

- “even death on a cross”: Obedience may be easier if the manner of death is more honorable, such as a heroic death on a battlefield; or faster, such as a beheaded martyr. But the cross is open humiliation and slow torture, the cruelest way to die. The Bible says “cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”! God’s beloved Son, the supreme One, not only endured the hostility of sinful men on the cross, but also bore the righteous curse of God for sinners. This is truly humility to the extreme!

Although many in history have died on the cross, or in other bloody cruel ways, *not a single person* is qualified to die for the sin of others or to bear the righteous curse of God for others. Only Christ the perfect sinless Son of God is fully accepted by God by His righteousness accomplished through *His perfect life in human flesh*. Only He is qualified to humble Himself to *such a lowly state*, to bear God’s righteous wrath on the cross with a painful death and pay in full all the sins of all believers throughout all generations!

Summary

What a humble servant! Christ humbled Himself, from the highest place that no one can attain to, to the lowest bottom that no one can reach. This is all because of His obedience to God and His devotion to serve His people. Is this the Christ you know? Is He your savior? Then you must “have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus”! He is your ultimate example for you to imitate for all your life!