

HUMILITY IN THE DEATH OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION: Last week we began to look at the fact that *humility* should not merely be viewed as **shame because of sin** or **feelings of unworthiness**. Why? Because humility is a *positive* trait—a *virtue*—that was seen in the life of Jesus!

First, we saw humility in the *nature* of Jesus. In Mt 11:29, Jesus said “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek [meaning gentle and mild] **and lowly in heart:** [meaning **humble**].

Not only did Jesus say He was meek and humble, He also made numerous statements of His “not I, but the Father” attitude. Here are just a couple:

John 5:30 “I can of mine own self **do nothing:** as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I **seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father** which hath sent me.”

John 6:38 “For I came down from heaven, **not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.**”

Second, we saw humility in the *example* of Jesus.

--We saw His humility in *servicing others* when He washed the disciples’ feet. That task—usually done by the *lowest* of servants—was not too lowly for Jesus! And by this act, Jesus reminded them—and us—that we ought to serve *one another*. We should not think of ourselves as being too “high” to do certain things.

John 13:13-17 “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; **ye also ought to wash one another's feet.** ¹⁵ For I **have given you an example**, that ye should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.”

Let what Jesus is saying here sink in for a moment. If you have the attitude that you are too *high*—too *important*—to do something, you are basically thinking that you are “*greater* than your Lord.” That is the *last* attitude *any* of us should have!

--We also saw the humility of Jesus in His *dependence* of the Father—as seen in His prayer-life—and His *submission* to the will of the Father. The goal and heartbeat of Jesus while on earth was to **always do what pleased** the Father. Should that not be our heartbeat, too?

This morning I want us to look at humility in the *death* of Jesus. Please turn to Philippians 2:5-11. Title is simply this: *Humility in the Death of Jesus*

Notice again v 5 “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:” We have in this verse...

1. The Exhortation to follow Christ’s example (v 5)

Paul was exhorting them to have the same mind—the same attitude—that Jesus had. He goes on to explain that humility led Jesus to **give up His very life**, but before we look at that I want to point out a couple of things that we can pick up from the Greek, but don’t see quite so well in the English.

A. The force of the exhortation

God through Paul is telling the Philippians that they are to have the attitude—the mindset and thinking—of Christ. But what is the **force** of his exhortation; how **strong** is he urging them to do this? It is in the imperative mood in the Greek, meaning it is a **command**!

It is not just a good idea...and it is not just a suggestion! It is not optional; it is something they were being **commanded** to do!

B. The frequency of the exhortation

We also know from the Greek that it is in the **present** tense, meaning it was something they were to **continue** to strive to have. They were not just to have this attitude once or once in a while. They were to have it **always**!

C. The “for” of the exhortation

Who does this command apply **to**? Who is it **for**? Turn back to Phil 1:1. We see here that Paul is writing to “**all the saints in Christ Jesus** which are at Philippi, **with the** bishops and deacons:” Paul is not just telling the **church leaders** to have this attitude—He is telling “all the **saints** in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi...”

Who are the saints? They are obviously people who are **alive** in the church at Philippi—not someone who is **dead** and has been declared a saint by a church or denomination! The word “saint” means someone who is “consecrated, holy, upright, set apart by God.” In other words, Paul is writing to **God’s children**—those who are in God’s family because they have been born again!

But it is not just a command for the children of God that lived in **Philippi** at that time—it is also **for us now!** And God expects us to have the same attitude of humility that Jesus had!

Now back to chapter 2. As we come to verses 6-8, a few **disclaimers** are in order:

- 1) This is an incredibly deep and rich portion of Scripture that contains a tremendous amount of theological truth. We have the Incarnation...and the Kenosis...and the Condescension...and Humiliation of Christ, as well as His Exaltation in verses 9-11.
- 2) Some of it is difficult to understand and because of that, much has been written about these 3 verses.
- 3) And because it is so deep—and so much has been written about it—it is easy to feel like you are only **scratching the surface** when you try to explain it or preach on it.

I like what **Steven Cole** said about this passage; notice the quote on your sheet: “Although many volumes have been written on these verses, the basic thought is quite simple and clear: That Jesus Christ **voluntarily left the highest position in the universe** and went to the very **lowest position on earth** in order to rescue... from God’s judgment... people **who did not in any way deserve it**. There can be no greater example of lowering oneself than what Jesus did on our behalf.” If that doesn’t deserve an “**Amen**,” I don’t know what does!

Let’s consider now... **2. The Excellency of Christ’s Example (vs 6-7)**

Why or how was Jesus’ example the greatest example there has been—or ever **will be**—of humility?

A. Because of who Jesus was (v 6)

Vs 6 begins with “Who.” “Who” is the “who”? We know from the end of v 5 it is “Christ Jesus.”

i. Jesus was God before He became man

In the middle of vs 7 we see Jesus taking the form of a **servant**; in the end of the verse we see Him **being made** in the likeness of man. But **before** that, in vs 6, Paul states “**being** in the form of God”

Notice it says “**being** in the form of God.” He was **already** in the form of God—there was no change required for Him to **become** God like there was for Him to become man.

What does “in the form of God” mean? Of **form**, Greg Herrick wrote: “It corresponds with the essential attributes a thing possesses without which it could not be what it is. Thus insofar as Jesus partakes of the **form of God**, He partakes of all the essential attributes of deity (cf. [John 1:1](#)).” (Bible.org)

Simply stated, Jesus was God... and existed as God—in heaven—**before** He came to earth and was made in the likeness of a man! So being in the form of God refers to the **eternality and deity** of Christ.

We also see the **deity** of Christ in the phrase “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” The challenge of this phrase is that it is translated from a Greek word that is used only **once** in the NT.

--One way to look at it is like this: it was **not robbery**—it was not Jesus taking something that didn’t belong to Him—to be considered equal with God. Why? Because He **was** God!

--Many suggest a more acceptable translation is this: He did not regard **equality with God** as something to be **grasped**; something to be hung unto and retained—and so He “let go of” the independent use of His attributes when He left heaven to become a man.

ii. Jesus remained God after He became man

Please know that Jesus did not **cease to be** God when He became a man! We don't have this particular truth in **this** text—nor do I have the time right now to prove it—but **Hebrews 13:8** should settle it “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

If Jesus **stopped** being God when He became man, it would mean He **changed**.

If Jesus **changed**, He is not the same “yesterday, today, and forever” and this verse would be a **lie**. Suffice it to say that this verse is **true**—and that Jesus Christ **was** God, **is** God, and forever **will be** God!

The excellency of Jesus as an example of humility is also seen in...

B. What Jesus gave up (v 7a)

Vs 7 “But made Himself of no reputation” comes from the Greek word “*ken-o-o*”—where we get the word “kenosis” from—and means He “emptied Himself.”

But what did Jesus **give up**? What did He **empty Himself** of? As discussed last week—and mentioned just a moment ago—Jesus did not cease to be God when He came to earth. He did not **empty Himself** of His attributes that make Him God—He just volunteered to limit His **independent use** of those attributes. That is not all He gave up, though.

He gave up the **glory** of Heaven to live in obscurity on earth.

He gave up the **riches** of Heaven to live in poverty on earth. MacArthur points out that everything Jesus had on earth was **borrowed**—except maybe the clothes on His back! He borrowed a **manger** to be born in, borrowed a **boat** to cross the sea, borrowed a **donkey** to ride into Jerusalem, borrowed a **room** to hold the Passover because He didn't own a home, and He even borrowed a **tomb** to be buried in!

Think of that—the maker and owner of **everything owned** virtually **nothing** while here on earth!

C. What He took on (v 7b)

Middle of vs 7 “...took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” I find it interesting that Paul refers to Christ being a servant **before** He was made in the likeness of men. Shouldn't it be the other way around? Didn't He become a man **first—then** became a servant of men?

Then I had this thought: What if being a servant refers to being a servant of God—not a servant of **men**? He certainly was a servant of God when He came to earth “Lo, I am come to do thy will O God” (Heb 10:9a). And part of His serving God was coming to earth **as a man**. At any rate, He certainly became both!

Last week I mentioned the thought of how difficult it must have been for Jesus as God to **depend** on the Father while on earth when He was **equal** to Him. What may have been even more difficult for Jesus would be to be **stuck** with the **limitations** of a human body!

--Jesus never had to **learn** anything in heaven—but had to learn how to walk and talk on earth!

--Jesus was never **tired** in heaven—but He was so tired one day that He fell asleep on a boat!

--Jesus was never **hungry or thirsty** in heaven—but He experienced both while here on earth.

Look at **Ps 113:5-6** “Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, ⁶Who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!” The Psalmist was amazed that God would humble Himself enough to **behold**—to **look at and consider**—the things of heaven and earth.

Should it not **amaze us** that God **became flesh**—like one of us—and dwelt among us?

First, the **exhortation** to follow Christ's example. Second, the **excellency** of Christ's example.

Third, let's notice... **3. The Extent of Christ's Example (v 8)**

What is the **extent** of Christ's example? How **low** did His humility take Him? How **far** did He stoop?

Look at vs 8 “And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, **even** the death of the cross.” Jesus became obedient **unto death**, but it wasn't an ordinary death, was it? There is an emphasis on **how** He died: “**even** the death of the **cross**.”

How horrible was death of the cross? To the **Jews**, to be hung on a tree was to be **accursed** of God.

Let's think about... A. The **Curse** of the Cross

We know from **Galatians 3:13** that Paul equated “hanging on a tree” with the **cross**:

“**Christ** hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, **being made a curse for us**: for it is written, **Cursed** is every one that hangeth on a tree:”

Crucifixion was used by the Persians in the 6th century B.C. and was perfected by the Romans. It was reserved for slaves, the worst kind of criminals, and soldiers who had defected. Very **rarely** was a Roman citizen crucified; foreigners were usually the victims.

--It was the cruelest...most disgusting...humiliating...and most **painful** form of death at that time. Hung **half naked**—if not totally naked—on a wooden cross in a **prominent** place in the city to be jeered and mocked at by all who went by. Nails driven through the hands (most likely wrists) and feet, dying a **slow death** of suffocation that took anywhere from **6 hours to a couple of days**.

--The **worst kind of death** for the **worst kind of criminal** is the way Jesus died! **Karen** shared with me recently that she had taken some of her grandchildren to the **Passion Play** in Camp Douglas a couple of years ago. If I remember right, she said it was **Kylie** who was deeply affected by the treatment that was given to “Jesus”—even though it was a **play**. She blurted out: “Make them **stop**, Grandma. Why won't they **stop**!”

Jesus **could have** stopped it, couldn't He? **Mt 26:53** “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” That was in the **garden**, before the fake **trial**...and the **beating** ... and the **whipping**...and the **crown** of thorns...and the **nails**...and His **death**.

Why **didn't** He stop it? He Himself tells us why in **Mt 26:54** “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” So what Scriptures did the cross fulfill? What did it accomplish?

Why did God humble Himself to become a man...then even lower to become a servant...then lower still to be killed...then lowest of all to die the shameful death of a cross? **Why?**

Because of the.... B. The **Cure** brought by the cross. There was a **purpose** behind the cross; it was in the **plan of God** and brought about by the **will of God** and resulted in the **glory of God**—and **salvation** for us!

It is interesting to me that Paul does not elaborate here on what the cross accomplished for us. We do have it elsewhere, though, so please take your Bibles and turn to Gal 3.

Look at v 10 (read). Simply put, Paul is saying if you are “of the works of the law”—if you are trying to get to heaven **by being good** and rule keeping—you are cursed; meaning **doomed!** Why? Because you fail to **continually** keep **all** the commandments **all** the time!

James 2:10 “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in **one point**, he is guilty of all.”

Now v 13, a verse I referred to earlier. “Christ hath redeemed **us** from the curse of the law...”

What is the curse of the law? The **curse of the law** is the future **doom** we face—eternal separation from God forever in hell—because we are sinful and unrighteous and unholy.

Christ hath **redeemed us**—He has provided a way for us to **escape** that curse.

How? By being made a **curse** for us. **When?** When He died on the cross. **Why?** Because He loved us!

To recap: God humbled Himself...by becoming a man...so He could come to earth...to live a perfect life...then die a horrible death...to pay the debt **He required**...the one that **we owed**...so that **we** could be forgiven and become **His children**...and **dwell with Him** in heaven!

No wonder Charles Wesley wrote: “Amazing love! How can it be! That thou my God shouldst die for me!” Isn't that amazing? Jesus became a curse **for us**—to remove the curse that was **on us!**

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” What a tall task—and yet that is what God commands us to do! If Jesus can humble Himself like that for us, we should be willing to humble ourselves for Him. **PRAY**

So there we have it—the greatest act of humility this world has ever seen or will see. So what does God want us to do in light of what we have heard from His Word today?

1. First and foremost, what are you counting on to get to heaven? God provided the way—the only way—to have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. He left heaven in the person of His Son...to pay the payment that He required—and that you owed—so that you don't have to pay it. If you reject His payment—He will reject you!
2. Second—for those that are children of God—what about you? Jesus voluntarily left the highest position in the universe and went to the lowest position on earth to rescue us. Do you love Him? Do you serve Him? Are you striving to have the attitude that He commands us to have?