

# Philippians XIV – The Humble Mindedness of Christ (*Phil 2:5-8*)

**Introduction** – The theology in these verses is immense and deep and beautiful. But it is given by Paul here for very practical reasons. Liberals hate theology and re-interpret the scriptures to justify their sin. We evangelicals, however, are also known to hate theology, because we claim that it gets in the way of unity and the importance of simply loving one another. But this passage, a theology of the Incarnation and the substitutionary death of the God-man, is what Paul is using to press us to love one another and grow in unity.

**The Mind of Christ** (v5) – Paul commands the community to ‘develop this mind-set in your fellowship, which is the only consistent mind-set for those who are in Christ Jesus.’ Paul is not commanding us to assent to the facts of the matter, or the logic of his argument. He is commanding us, as a body, to live with this mindset towards one another. We are in Christ. We are therefore to become more and more like Christ.

**Christ’s Humility** (v6) – Christ’s humility is not in the abstract. It has an object. He was humble towards the Father.

**“the form of God”** – This is not referring to God’s physical shape. This is referring to Christ’s nature, “...*the same in substance, equal in power and glory*” as the catechism teaches. Jesus was equal with God, and His claim to this was the reason the Jews sought to kill Him (John 5:17f).

**“robbery”** – or seizing and grasping after. While Christ was equal with God, His very nature meant that He did not have to grasp at this divinity, and so Christ was willing to give up His divine rights to glory and honor.

**Adam’s Story Again** – This whole section (vv5-11) should be thought of in relation to Adam. For it is portraying Adam in reverse (Rom 5:12-21). Adam was created in the image of God, but he grasped after equality with God (Gen 3:5) and fell. Jesus could rightfully claim that He was equal to God, but did not refuse obedience to God (v8).

**Christ’s Humanity** (v7) – It is in becoming a man that Christ comes to serve men. Echoes of the prophecy of Isaiah must be recalled (Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

**“no reputation”** – literally, “He emptied Himself”, but not by subtraction. He emptied Himself by adding the ‘form of a servant’. The Incarnation was an addition which veiled the glory of Christ’s divine nature.

**“form of a bondservant”** – Again, not referring to Christ’s physical shape, the point is that He really took on the nature of a man, even a man marred by the effects of the fall, although not a fallen man (Rom 8:3). The Son of Man came to be a *doulos*, a slave (Mark 10:45, Luke 22:27). His humility was not self-centered, but servant-centered.

**Christ’s Humiliation** (v8) – In obedience to His Father, and with love towards His people, Christ openly subjected Himself to shame and humiliation.

**“found in appearance as a man”** – Part of Christ’s humiliation was that, in appearance, He was just a man (Heb 2:17f). His sinless humanity and his deity were veiled from natural sight.

**“became obedient”** – Christ, the Lawgiver, was born under law and submitted to that law (Gal 4:4f). Christ came to undo the disobedience of Adam and to receive the judgment of God which Adam had brought down upon his people.

**Cursed Death** – The open shame of being crucified, publicly hung naked upon a cross to slowly die, is sometimes all men see. But the greatest humiliation was the curse of God placed upon Christ as He hung there (Gal 3:13f).

**Never Refuse the Towel** – And we, the body of Christ, must imitate Him (John 13:12-17).

**Living This Out** – The point of this passage is not to simply proclaim true theology, although theology is wonderfully proclaimed here, and many truths about Christ and our salvation are here for us. But the point is that we would have this same mindset in our community – the mindset that existed between the eternal Son and His eternal Father.

**Setting Aside Your Rights** – Jesus had a legitimate reason to exalt Himself, and He didn’t. We do not have a legitimate reason. Jesus voluntarily gave up a position due Him. We must not grasp for a position we are not due.

**Humility, Not Humble Talk** – Humility is not external demeanor. It consists of laying aside your ‘glory’, veiling what might be yours, and submitting to God without complaint.

**No Humility Without Christ’s Humility** – Understand, if we could love God and our neighbor without Christ’s death, Christ would not have died. Your struggle to obey and to love is evidence of the need for the events eluded to in this passage. When God grants faith to believe this, a person is changed forever – he is born again.

There would be no church if Jesus had not done this. There will be no church if we do not do the same.