

“The Humiliation of Christ” Philippians 2:5-8, Sermon Notes
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Saving Grace Bible Church
December 31st, 2017
Morning Worship Service

There’s an old Irish saying that goes like this, maybe you’ve heard it: “To dwell above with saints we love, Oh, that will be glory. But to dwell below with saints we know, well, that’s another story.”

Why is it hard for professing Christians, fellow church members to live in absolute harmony and peace?

Have you ever noticed that division and conflict in the church transcends history, denominations, continents, doctrinal statements, even philosophies of ministry?

Shouldn’t the church be the *last* place we would expect to find division and conflict? After all, we are supposed to follow the Lord Jesus Christ who taught:

“blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

“blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

“blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

So, theoretically speaking, believers should be humble, merciful, and peacemakers. But nevertheless, there is no church that is free from the danger of division and conflict, or what we could even call “fleshly tensions” within body life

And why is it so hard at times to dwell below with saints we know?

Well, it is very simply the fact that the church is made up of sinners. And sinners are naturally prideful

Pride is the root cause of all conflict and fleshly divisions in body life. And this ugly sin of pride can show up in many different ways

Pride can show up in majoring on minors. Exalting things and emphasizing things that are merely preferences or opinions

And clinging to those things so tightly that we are even willing to neglect the things that actually are important, things that the Lord has actually called us to

Maybe it shows up in relationships with personality cults where you will only be kind and serve those who are similar to you, whom you respect and admire, merely on a superficial level

Pride in the heart can show up in being devastated by criticism or an unwillingness to receive criticism

Pride can show up in relationships where it is consumed with the question of why no one ever serves me or reaches out to me

It can show up in anger and impatience with others. It can show up in having an inflated view of one's giftedness

It can show up in isolating oneself, either physically from the body, or emotionally in not developing close relationships with others

Pride can show up in being unteachable, refusing to admit you were wrong, or never asking for forgiveness

It can show up in jealousy and envy toward others in the body

It can show up in pettiness. Pride causes us to exalt little, irrelevant things by blowing them up to the size of epic proportions

We could keep going but you probably get the point by now. The church is up against a very powerful enemy, namely, *itself*

Contrary to what we might naturally think, the greatest threat to the church is not external. So many Christians today are passionately defending the church against external threats like liberal politicians, planned parenthood, or other forms of godlessness in our culture, but often times this is an unbalanced focus because the greater threats to the church go unnoticed

The New Testament is clear that *internal threats* pose the greatest threat to us. And these internal threats show up in doctrinal compromise or unchecked pride

If pride is the disease that can kill us, humility is the antidote, humility is the vaccine that protects us. Humility is what preserves the unity of the church

And if you want to turn to Philippians 2, this is the topic Paul picks up on. Notice verse 1, "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 *make my joy complete by being of the same mind*"

So, corporately, as a church, "think the same." "Have the same mind." What do you mean Paul? What does that look like practically?

Well, he gives us the manner of spiritual unity next there in verse 2: "maintaining the same love"

Extending consistent and sincere love to everyone in the body. Not only serving and loving those whom you like, not committing the sin of favoritism or partiality, but rather extending your sacrificial service consistently to everyone in the body

Notice what Paul says next in verse 2: "united in spirit, intent on one purpose." Common passion and a common goal. Everyone coming together and considering the greater good of the church and the promotion of the gospel above everything. This is one *corporate heartbeat*, so to speak. And then the devastating words in verse 3 as Paul continues to instruct the church on how to preserve unity:

Notice, "Doing nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regarding one another as more significant than yourselves, not merely looking out for your own interests, but also for the interests of others."

So you can see that Paul is not saying that in the church we are no longer individuals with our own convictions, preferences, and opinions. No, when he tells the church to “think the same way” he’s talking about a *mindset of humility*, literally, “a lowliness of mind”

So that when we have our own individual convictions, preferences, and opinions, we are to corporately think about them the same way – namely, in humility of mind

Humility is not thinking poorly about yourself. That’s pride because your focus is still on yourself. That’s merely the pride of self-pity

Humility, rather, involves thinking about yourself less. I also like C. J. Mahaney’s definition of humility: “Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God’s holiness and our sinfulness.”

It is through this mindset of humility that a church preserves unity. This is the safeguard against conflict and division. And this is admittedly a humbling and challenging call for us

Evidenced by the fact that none of us here this morning can raise our hand and say, “this past week I did nothing for myself, I did nothing out of self-focus. I was consistently setting my thoughts on Christ and the good of others”

“This past week I consistently prayed for people in the body, not only the ones I prefer, but also the ones who I don’t necessarily prefer to be around, I consistently and only thought of ways I can do good to them”

No, we all have the presence of pride remaining in us. So how can prideful sinners become humble saints?

Well, we need an example. We need to know what this mindset of humility lived out before us

We need an example of someone who *never* acted out of selfish ambition or empty conceit, an example of someone who in humility *always* considered others as more significant than himself

The Apostle Paul anticipates our need and that is the direction we now turn. He’s going to give us the supreme example of humility in the person and work of Jesus Christ

Over the past several weeks we’ve seen the glory of the Son, the superiority of the Son, the suffering of the Son, the submission of the Son

And now this morning, *the humiliation of the Son*

Let’s look at Philippians 2:5-8, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Theologian Bruce Ware said these words about this text: “In all of human history, never has a life been lived, or a mission accomplished, as was done in Jesus. There never has been a higher place

from which one has stooped; There never has been a lower position to which one has aspired; and there never has been a costlier obedience by which one has served.”

I believe we could confidently say this: If this passage does not produce humility in all of us, then nothing will

In other words, if our hearts have any pliability and softness whatsoever, we will be unable to walk away from this portrait of Jesus Christ still hanging on to any known pride

Notice again in verse 5 it begins with the mandate of humility reiterated, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”

That word for “have this attitude” is the same word for “be of the same mind” in verse 2

Think this way. Have this perspective, this conviction in you. If you are a member of the body of Christ you are commanded to have humility

And notice, just like any area of Christian obedience, humility begins *in the mind*. “Have this attitude”

You are commanded to constantly be developing attitudes of selflessness, you are commanded to be getting lost in the needs of others, prioritizing the body of Christ above yourself

And notice, this attitude of humility, this mindset, was “also in Christ Jesus.” There’s the standard. Not other people in the body

It’s always a sign your flesh is working when you are comparing yourself to others, measuring your godliness by others in the body

The standard is Christ. His attitude, his mindset, should be your attitude, your mindset

What’s the attitude, what’s the mindset? Well, this attitude will be explained to us in 2 pictures of the supreme humility of Christ Jesus:

The first picture of the supreme humility of Christ Jesus is his *divine humiliation*: It is God humbling himself *as God*

Notice verses 6-7, “who, although existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.”

Paul has taken us back here to one of the most fascinating time periods in history, if we can ever refer to it as a time period in history

In the Scriptures, we aren’t given a lot of *specific* information about the trinity before the creation of the world

But we are given a glimpse in this text, as it is clearly referring to the *preexistence* of Jesus Christ, before he entered human history in the act of the incarnation

And remarkably, here in this passage, we are getting a glimpse into the *mindset* of the Son of God before the manger

And the text simply says, notice verse 6, “he was existing in the form of God.”

“form” is not referring to physical shape, after all, that would be a strange thing to say considering the fact that before the incarnation the second person of the trinity had no physical appearance. God is Spirit and has no physical properties

This word is rather stressing *essence, identity, and status*. Christ existed in the status of being God, his identity, his essence was divine. (EDNT)

In fact, we get a clue as to the meaning of this word “form” in the next verse, verse 7, where Paul uses the same word to refer to Christ “taking the form of a slave.”

That’s clearly not talking about his physical appearance. Christ did not look like a literal slave. He was a carpenter (Mark 6:3) who became a Rabbi

It’s rather a word to stress his identity, his status as a slave. (EDNT)

So, here in verse 6, Christ existed in a state of having all of the privileges and status and identity of being God. An unequivocal reference to his deity

Listen to John 17:5, as Jesus, now on earth, prays to the Father that this very status would be restored to Him: “Now, Father, glorify Me together with yourself *with the glory which I had with you before the world was.*”

That statement alone is enough to prove that Christ shared the full privilege and status of being God, in fact, it proved he was God. Why?

Because God shares his glory with no one. Listen to Isaiah 42:8, “I am the LORD, that is my name; *my glory I give to no other.*”

If Christ can say to the Father, glorify me together with yourself with the glory which I had with you before the world was, that means there is no status, no identity, no divine privilege Christ didn’t possess

He was continually existing in a state of being equal with God. And notice, this is exactly where Paul goes next in the second half of verse 6, “He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.”

So, you can see Paul’s flow of argument here: although Christ existed in the form of God, in the sense that he possessed the fullness of divine status and identity, any divine privileges and rights were rightfully his....

“But he did not regard “existing in the form of God” equality with God a thing to be grasped.”

Here’s the attitude on display for us. Christ did not regard. He didn’t think his being equal with God was something to be grasped, to hold onto firmly, is the idea behind that word

He didn't cling with a forcible grip to his divine status and identity. The word (ἀρπαγμὸν) can even mean "he didn't cling to his divine rights for his own selfish gain."

Now, already you can hear the echoes of verse 3 that we read earlier: "do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit."

Paul is now pointing us to the ultimate example of Christ, who did not regard his equality with God something to be used for selfish gain, something to grip hold of and cling to without consideration of others

Instead of clinging to his divine status and identity, what did he do? Notice the contrast in verse 7, "but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

There's the entire Christmas message summed up in one verse: God became a man. But we have to be careful when we describe exactly what happened here when God became a man

In fact, one article I read on this passage was entitled: "avoiding heresy and pursuing humility." And that's an appropriate title for this text because if we misunderstand what's happening here we can get into trouble when it comes to our Christology

What does it mean Christ emptied himself? This does not mean that Christ emptied himself the same way you and I might empty something. We can empty something by pouring something out, or consuming it, using it up

But if that were the case, Paul would be saying that when Christ became a man he emptied himself of his divinity, or even emptied himself of certain parts of his divinity

But that can't be the meaning for a few reasons: The first problem with that is it would mean that he ceased being God. And that's not what Paul is saying, which is obviously consistent with what the rest of the bible teaches

In His time here on earth, the Lord Jesus never ceased being truly God or ceased being equal in essence with the Father. Throughout His ministry He only reaffirmed those things. (John 5:18, John 10:30)

So, Christ does not empty Himself of His deity. Nor is this text even talking about surrendering the use of His divine attributes

Now, if we wanted to bring the 4 gospel accounts into play, we could say that Christ didn't ever stop possessing his divine attributes, but rather *voluntarily yielded up the independent use of his attributes during the incarnation*

But that's not what Paul's focus is here. Paul's focus is not to explain everything about the mystery surrounding the deity and humanity of Christ during the incarnation, but rather to highlight the supreme humility of Christ Jesus

And that's instructive for us because you always get into trouble with the Scriptures when you demand that the text answer questions that it isn't designed to answer

So, if Paul isn't saying he poured out or emptied some of his deity, what is he saying? Well, notice the text says that "he emptied *himself*," not that "he emptied himself *of something*."

So, the question is not: "What did Christ get rid of, what did he remove from himself?" The answer to that is, "nothing." Christ remained as he always had been

So, what is going here? Well, the word "emptied" (ἐκένωσεν) means to render void, to negate oneself

In fact, I think the NIV and ESV get at the idea: "he made himself nothing." Or the KJV, "he made himself of no reputation."

How did he do this? The text tells us exactly what is meant, it's a participle of means: "he emptied himself *by* taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

In other words, he made himself nothing by *adding humanity to himself*. Subtraction by addition

The text doesn't say he ceased to be God, that he changed from one thing to another. He stopped being God and became a man instead. This is not referring to an idea of exchanging

No, *without ever abandoning who he has always been*, he added humanity to himself. That is the nature of the emptying

Now, let me attempt to illustrate this with the understanding that all analogies and illustrations about God, the trinity, the incarnation, they all fall short in some way because God is incomparable. He is in a class of his own. So it is impossible to find a perfect analogy or illustration for this

But that doesn't mean we can't be helped by them to some degree. So with that understood, probably the most helpful illustration I saw as I looked through resources on this passage was from Mark Twain's novel, "The Prince and the Pauper."

The Prince and the Pauper is a story about Edward, the young son of King Henry VIII, who temporarily exchanged places with Tom, a pauper or poor boy in London

The boys switch clothes. Tom now looks like Prince Edward and Prince Edward now looks like Tom

Tom goes to the royal court and experiences the respect and privileges of a young, royal Prince, while Prince Edward goes to Tom's house and experiences the hardships and miseries of not only living in a state of poverty, but also dealing with Tom's drunken and abusive father

But during that time, when Prince Edward dressed like Tom and assumed Tom's life, he surrendered none of his true identity. He never stopped being the Prince of Wales, and could have exercised his power as such at any moment he wished

But his royal status, while fully possessed the entire time, was veiled. His royalty could not be expressed as long as he had chosen to submit himself to life as a pauper

Now, imagine if the Prince were to "cheat" so to speak, when things got difficult. There he is in the middle of the night, he's starving and can't sleep so he sends a secret messenger to the palace guards and has them sneak him food and money so he could get some relief from his suffering

Once that happens, the prince would never be able to truthfully say, "I know what it's like to live as a pauper, I truly became a poor boy."

Because Tom could come along and say, "You don't know what my life is like, you don't know what it's like to really live in poverty, because when it gets really hard for me, I don't have a royal security blanket. I can't call the palace guards and have them sneak me food and money in the middle of the night. You have no idea what it's like to be me."

And Tom would be absolutely right in saying so. Because, whenever it got hard for the prince, he would just take advantage of his royal privilege and status and therefore the entire experiment would be pointless

So, in order for the prince to truly experience life as a pauper, he must give up his status and identity and privilege as a Prince, and subject himself to the *exact same* circumstances and limitations of a pauper

The prince in this story emptied himself, not by ever changing the fact that he was the prince, but by adding poor boy clothes and poor boy identity and status, in such a way that he *genuinely* lived as a poor boy

That's the picture of Christ here in Philippians 2. He made himself nothing, not by ceasing to be God, but by adding humanity to himself in such a way that his glory was veiled. Though truly God, he was also truly a man, lived as a man, and identified as a man

And while it is important to insist and defend the deity of Christ, it is equally important to insist and defend the genuine humanity of Christ

Have you ever noticed how the writer of Hebrews stresses the genuine humanity of Christ? You can jot down Hebrews 2:17 and Hebrews 4:14 for future reference

But if Jesus never became a genuine human, in every way we are human, first of all he could not be the mediator between God and man because a mediator must represent both sides equally

Second of all, he would be of no help to us in our moment of temptation and suffering. If he became human, but throughout his time on earth, when it got really hard he just snapped into God-mode, briefly took advantage of his divine status and privilege, so he could get over the hurdle, then in reality he never really lived as a man

He never really fulfilled the law of God on our behalf, he never was tempted in every way we have been. Why?

Because you and I don't have the option. When life gets hard, you and I can't take advantage of our divine status and privilege, *because we don't have any*

So if Jesus, had the divine palace guards sneaking him resources, so to speak, his incarnation would have been pointless. Just like Prince Edward's experiment to live as a pauper would have been pointless

We could rightfully come along to Jesus and say, you don't know what it's like to live as a man, I don't have that option

This is why we have to affirm the genuine and true humanity of Jesus. Because Jesus *can indeed say*, "I know what it is to live as a man."

And he can not only say, "I've been tempted in every way you are and yet I never sinned, he could also say, "I've been tempted in many ways you *haven't* been, I've endured greater temptation than any man before or after me because *I never gave him*

You and I have never experienced the full onslaught of Satan's temptation, and the temptation of our flesh. Because we give in and the temptation stops

Jesus, never gave in. Every time he was tempted, he endured it in the fullest strength and never sinned. Every temptation he faced, he faced the full brunt of it

And that's why you can go to him to find grace and mercy in your time of need

Now, back in Philippians 2:7 before we move on, there's one last thing I want to highlight here: Notice who is doing the emptying in this verse? Who made Christ nothing?

The text says, "*he* emptied himself." "*he* made himself nothing." This speaks of the *voluntary* humility of the Son

In other words, if the Father was holding a divine gun to his head, forcing the Son to do something against his will, that could hardly be held up as a standard of humility

Liberal theologians like to call our view of the gospel, "divine child abuse" for this very reason. But that accusation could only stand if the Son was not voluntarily subjecting himself to this humiliation

That accusation could only stand if the Son did not love and want to redeem sinners as much as the Father did

But that is not the case. *Christ* made himself nothing by surrendering the preincarnate glories that were rightfully his, surrendering his status of being worshipped by the heavenly host

He had only infinite riches, infinite happiness and pleasure in the fellowship of the trinity, completely free from any pain, any poverty, any temptation, any discomfort, any mistreatment, any effects of the curse

He had every right, in fact it would have been just for him to have continued existing in the form of God, and yet he did not consider his divine riches as more significant than accomplishing salvation for sinners

Though God, He became a man. But not just any man. Notice what Paul highlights first here in verse 7: "taking the form of a bond-servant, literally "a slave."

Remember, *form* is not referring to his physical appearance, but rather his identity and status

Christ went from existing as the eternal God with all rights and privileges, to the temporal, human slave

A slave in the ancient context had no rights, they were without any advantages, no privileges of their own, a slave existed *merely* to serve his master

This alone speaks to the supreme humility of Christ because it demonstrates that he didn't come as a human and identify as an emperor or a king, or governor, he didn't come as a successful person in society, no, he came as one who has the lowest position, no glory, no honor.

Jesus came as one who was in total subjection to the will of another. That's why he is referred to as a slave

But a slave to who? A slave in what sense? Well, we read several passages last week when referring to the submission of the Son. Let's just review one of them: (John 5:19, John 5:30, John 8:28)

John 6:38, "for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me."

Jesus' identity and status, his form, so to speak, during the incarnation, was one of a slave because he existed as one who did not live for his own will, but the will of another

Which by the way, is a description of all genuine believers. One example you can jot down is 1 Peter 2:16 where we are referred to as "slaves or servants of God."

Servants are certainly free to have their own opinions, their own preferences, their own convictions. But servants are never free to elevate any of those things above the will of their master, or above the will of other servants

Imagine what this mindset alone would do for a church? Every individual has this mindset: I can personally have all the opinions and preferences I desire, I am even free to feel strongly about those things, but when it comes to body life, I recognize I am merely a servant with no rights and no will of my own so I will humbly die to myself in order to serve others and my master

In fact, when it comes to the church, the more we view ourselves as individuals with our own will and rights, the more prone we will be to conflict and disunity. Because we'll try to force our own preferences and opinions on everyone else

But the more we view ourselves as servants who are part of a body, the more freely we will be able to die to our own significance and preferences for the greater good of God's people

Christ made himself nothing by becoming a slave in order to benefit the people of God. This is the attitude, the mindset we are commanded to have

The next phrase there in verse 7 further explains the idea, "and being made in the likeness of men."

Now, you'll notice Paul uses the phrase: "in the *likeness* of men" and that might tempt us to think that Christ was not a genuine human being. He was just in the *likeness* of men, *similar* to a man, but not really

But this phrase is actually necessary because it guards the mystery of Christ's incarnation from the extreme of saying that Christ identified with men in an *absolute sense*

Meaning, He retained nothing of his divine form and equality with God and was in every single way human, *including a sinful nature*

But we know that Christ *did* retain his divine form and equality with God when he became in the likeness of human beings, and we also know that Christ was sinless in his perfect obedience

So that's an extreme that this phrase can guard us from. He was made in the likeness of human beings, He was human in every way, but He was not *merely* human, nor was he a *sinful* human

He was identical to us in our humanity in many ways, but not every way. He is uniquely the God-man

Now, before we move on from this verse, there's a deathblow to our pride we can't miss

Let's think about what this text is saying again: Christ made himself nothing by becoming human, and not even a sinful human, merely by becoming human he stooped to the lowest position

What does this say about us when we are proud and arrogant about ourselves or our accomplishments as humans?

There's that word back in verse 3 Paul uses, "do nothing from selfish ambition or *empty conceit*." Empty conceit means ungrounded arrogance. Irrational pride. Puffed up without reason

What is man, what are man's accomplishments worth when the greatest act of humiliation in the history of the universe is Jesus Christ humbling himself to become like us, and oh by the way, a much better version of us, a sinless version

And therefore, what grounds would we have for ever being proud? First, you never do anything better than Jesus anyway, and even if you did, you're still just a human being. And Jesus made himself *nothing* by becoming one of us

The irony should humble us. We spend so much of our lives attempting to exalt ourselves, raising ourselves up in an attempt to become God, evangelizing others so that they will worship us the way we want to be worshipped

While God himself, the only one who had a right to exalt himself, the only one who is worthy to be worshipped, humbled himself and came down from heaven to become one of us

This should melt the layers of pride off our hearts

This also tells us that you are never more *like* Christ when you deny yourself comfort, privileges, and honor that *may or may not* be rightfully yours, for the sake of others

Notice, Christ had *genuine* rights and privileges that he could have clung to. He was existing in the form of God

You and I frequently cling to privileges and rights that are merely allusions, things that we perceive we deserve, perceived rights, when in fact we don't really lay any claim to them

Also, notice that Christ stooped to serve those who were *actually beneath him*. They were not his equals. He stooped to serve not only human beings, that would have been a supreme act of humility in itself, but *sinful* human beings, whose hearts were filled with hostility toward him

The call on our lives pales in comparison to that. We are called to merely humble ourselves in order to serve our equals. *Fellow sinners!*

In other words, when you have to humble yourself to serve others, there's not really that much stooping to do. The only stooping we have to do is get off of our own self-made platform that we should have never been on in the first place

In reality, our humble service extends horizontally. You are merely considering another person, who deserves hell just like you do, and is as unworthy of heaven as you are, you're merely called to consider them as superior to yourself

Christ's humbling extends vertically. He stooped, he came down to those who were actually beneath him

This is His divine humiliation: Christ stooping from the position and status of God to humanity

Next, he stoops from humanity to death. This is the second picture of the supreme humility of Christ, His human humiliation in verse 8, "and being found in the appearance as a man,

This means He was recognized by all as a man. Everyone who observed Christ assumed what was true about Christ – namely, that he was a genuine human

No one ever questioned the humanity of Christ during his incarnation. How, in the state of being man, notice verse 8, "he humbled himself."

The one who could have rightfully claimed the highest position in human history and justly received supreme honors all of his life, instead deliberately sought the lowest position and submitted himself to extreme humiliation

How did he humble himself? Notice the text says, "by becoming obedient..." Humility involves submitting your will to the will of another

Pride says, "my will be done." Pride is manifested in *human autonomy*. Elevating your will above the Lord's and other people

Humility says, "thy will be done." Christ humbled himself by becoming obedient... And as we read in John 6:38 earlier, his obedience was to the Father. Jesus Christ, although equal with the Father, came under the authority of the Father and subjected himself to his will

This is very instructive for us because it shows us that submission does not equal inferiority. We are not called to submit to those in authority because we are inferior to them

Wives, I know husbands, to our shame, can certainly make it difficult for you to submit at times. And I know that if *we* were called to come under our own leadership we would realize just how hard it is to submit to us

But remember, you're not called to submit to your husband because you are inferior to him

Your submission to your husband is not even indicating that he is smarter than you, more talented, wiser, or more spiritual

Perhaps this picture of Jesus will help you if you are struggling in that area:

Christ was the eternal, divine, sinless Son of God, equal with the Father, yet He submitted himself to the Father's will

And we can broaden the principle for all believers: Humility voluntarily and joyfully comes under the God-ordained authority structures in your life

It is Christlike to submit yourself to the will of another and offer yourself completely, without limit. Notice what the text says: Verse 8, Jesus humbled himself, "by becoming obedient *to the point of death.*"

Humility yields limitless obedience. Humility doesn't ask the question, "how much is enough?" What's the minimum commitment level I need to have in order to still be a Christian?

No, humble obedience is limitless

Practically speaking, this means there is no person it won't serve, no activity or area of service too low, no, the obedience of humility will die to its own personal glory and significance

Now, if Paul ended here, it would have been sufficient to humble us and convict us and give us a lifetime of work to do, but notice that last phrase there in verse 8, "even death on a cross."

Because we have domesticated the cross, it has become so familiar to us that we are not shocked by it when we say the word or read the word "cross."

But "death on a cross" would have evoked horror in the ears of those in the ancient context. It was the Roman Empire's way of torturing and putting to death the most heinous criminals

We don't really have a modern-day equivalent to this, perhaps the closest thing you could get to in modern era would be the hanging of criminals, or the execution of criminals by a firing squad. You could even say the gas chamber or lethal injection

In either case, what type of criminals receive the death penalty? Who goes on death row? Only the worst of the worst. There is no more severe punishment in the judicial system than being given the death sentence

Of the various forms of Roman execution, crucifixion could be used only for slaves, rebels, and anarchists; it could never be used for a Roman citizen, apart from the express sanction of the Emperor

Here is a Roman official and politician, Cicero, in 63 BC: "Let the very name of the cross be far away not only from the body of a Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears."

Crucifixion was so shameful and cruel that the word itself was avoided in polite conversation, if you happened to think of the cross in your mind you would immediately turn your mind away from it

In fact, if you were Jewish, the cross was doubly offensive because those who were crucified were considered cursed by God. (Galatians 3:13). Only the worst and most notorious sinners ended up on the cross

So, why is this significant? Because it shows us that Jesus voluntarily left the highest position in heaven and went to the very lowest position on earth

This is the climax of the Son's supreme humility. In stooping all the way down to not just earth, not just humanity, not just death, but the most shameful death possible

A death so shameful that the vast majority of *sinful men* would never even experience

The cross should shock us. And Jesus' death on a cross should shock us from another angle as well

Charles Spurgeon said this about the cross: The cross is the danger signal to you, it warns you that if God spared not his only Son, he will not spare you. It is the lighthouse set on the rocks of sin to warn you that swift and sure destruction awaits you if you continue to rebel against the Lord. Hell is an awful place, or Jesus had not needed to suffer such *infinite agonies* to save us from it."

If this humbling is what it took for the wrath of God to be satisfied for our sin, then may it be far from us to willingly live in our sin that put him there

This is the second picture of the supreme humility of Christ Jesus – his human humiliation. Not only did he stoop from God to man, and not to just any man but to a slave, but he also went from man to death, and not just any death, but the most humiliating and agonizing death, reserved only for those whose crimes were so heinous and guilt so obvious

You see there was nothing beneath Jesus. If there's a task that you are too good to do, if there are people who are too bad for you to serve, or people who you are too proud to humble yourself with, if you live your life with the perpetual mindset that you are better than other people, then you need to camp out right here in this text and ask yourself:

If my life is so filled with pride, do I really know this Christ? Can I truly say I live my life to follow the personification of humility, Jesus Christ?

C. S. Lewis said this: "In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that, and, therefore know yourself as nothing in comparison, you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you."

Some live their lives perpetually looking down as if other people are beneath them. Looking down as if they are the standard by which all things are to be judged

Others, who know Christ, are perpetually looking up as a way of life, consistently focused on Christ and the things above

They are the ones who have cultivated this mindset of humility. And you say, “How do I know if I have cultivated this very attitude of humility that was in Christ Jesus?” What will be some evidences in my life?”

You’re going to have gratitude in your life. You’re going to be thankful for other people in your life instead of bitter or complaining about them

You’re going to maximize your own sin and minimize other people’s sins. Because you are devoting so much energy and focus in battling your own weaknesses, you won’t have the time and energy to be consumed with others’ weaknesses

You’ll be patient with others. You won’t be angry or irritable because you know how much patience and mercy the Lord shows you on a daily basis and you can therefore freely extend that treatment to others

You’ll be joyfully submissive to those in authority in your life

Instead of getting defensive when criticized, you’ll be thankful for reproof and recognize it as a grace of God in your life

When you talk about others or to others, your words will be gracious, your words will encourage, they will build others up and not tear them down

You’ll serve with no desire to be noticed or recognized, and when others are recognized instead of you, you’ll rejoice

You’ll be quick to admit when you are wrong, quick to ask for forgiveness. And you’ll be quick to grant forgiveness when wronged

You will delight in meeting needs in the body, you’ll always be thinking about more strategic ways to serve others

You’ll flex to the context of other people’s circumstances. Meaning, you’ll rejoice when they rejoice. You’ll enter into their joy and be genuinely happy for them, *even what they are experiencing is something that you desperately want*

And you’ll weep when they weep. You’ll enter into their suffering and be genuinely grieved and saddened for them

Those are just a few evidences. Imagine a church full of individuals like this. A church where every individual has this mindset: “I’m the greatest liability, the remaining pride in my heart is the greatest threat to this church.”

And I am in no way saying that our church here is full of pride and conflict and division. I would say that this season of ministry is a healthy season

But the same was true for the church in Philippi. Philippi was certainly one of the healthier churches in the New Testament. But that didn't prevent Paul from instructing them to excel all the more

In fact, take a look over at chapter 1. He spends the first several verses talking about how exemplary they have been in their sacrificial ministry and love

But then notice what he says in 1:9, "And this I pray, that your love may *abound still more and more* in real knowledge and all discernment..."

Paul says, "you love one another. I'm not calling to you to *begin* loving one another. I'm calling you to *abound* in your love for one another. To continue to find greater and more strategic expressions of your love for one another."

And the same is true for us this morning. Manifestations of pride and selfishness are not running rampant in this body, but that is not a reason to take the foot of the gas. That is a reason to excel all the more in our humility and love for one another

Because pride is lurking in all of our hearts and therefore it's easy to be proud, it comes very natural to me

If someone were to ask me, "how does one become proud?" I would say, "just do nothing and you will be prideful."

On the other hand, if someone were to ask me, "how do I become humble?" The answer is simple: Know the person and work of Jesus Christ, because it is impossible to be growing in your knowledge of Christ and still be proud

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