

Philippians
Part 6
Adopting Christ's Attitude

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of **DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Starter Question

- From Sunday's sermon, what did you *like best*, or what *caught your attention most*—and *why*?

Observation—*What does it say?*

- Read Philippians 2:5-11. In what will Christ's voluntary humiliation result (v. 10-11)?
Which of the following groups will confess that Christ is Lord? ☐ the saved? ☐ the lost?
- Read Philippians 2:5 and 12-13. According to v. 12, what is believers' response to Christ's humility?
According to v. 13, **why** do we respond as we do?
- Read Philippians 2:14-16. According to v. 14, what **two** things are we commanded to stop?
When we reject these behaviors, what will characterize our lives (v. 15-16a)?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- The Greek word rendered as "grumble" (v. 14) means "to express one's discontent, to complain," while the Greek word rendered as "dispute" (v. 14) means "to argue about differences of opinion."
Why do you think God would command us **never** to express discontent or argue about differences?
- What **assumptions** about **God** undergird such a command?
What assumptions about **us**? What assumptions about **circumstances**?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- Does commanding us **never** to express discontent or argue about differences seem **reasonable** to you?
Does this seem **achievable** to you? Why or why not?
Does it even sound **desirable** to you? Why or why not?
- Christians often protest—"We're *not supposed to be a doormat!*" Google AI describes a "doormat" as someone who allows others to take advantage of them, often at their own expense. Was Jesus a doormat?
In what ways should and shouldn't we be doormats? Support your answer scripturally.

Sermon Summary Text: Philippians 2:5-16

In our study today, we're going to look at a fundamental tenet of the Christian faith, it is called the doctrine of the incarnation. It's the unique belief of the Christian faith, that the eternal, infinite God of the universe became a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. Paul draws upon this deep teaching as a solution to a problem that had arisen in the Philippian church. There were divisions in the church. We see in Philippians 2:2-4 that what Paul wanted was unity. He knows that where there is pride, there will be selfishness and infighting. Where there is humility, there will be selflessness and peace. The supreme example of humility is found in the Lord Jesus. Paul takes the doctrine of the incarnation, God becoming man, and he brings it to bear on the practical human problem of conflict.

In v. 5-6, Paul proceeds to describe how the incarnation reveals Jesus' humble attitude and its profound impact on others. Why does Paul refer back to Jesus' existence in eternity past? It is because he wants us to know that the humble, self-sacrificing, self-denying, self-giving behavior of Christ on earth, merely revealed what He had always been like. Paul is saying that at the deepest level of His being, Jesus has the "essential nature and character of God." He is fully divine. When Paul refers to Jesus' equality with God, he is referring to the glory and honor which are Jesus' innate divine prerogatives. These two phrases in verse 6 which talk about...

(1) Jesus being "in the form of God" and (2) Jesus having "equality with God" are among the strongest expressions of Christ's deity in the New Testament. Paul is clearly declaring that by nature, Jesus was God. However, in verse 6 we see that for Jesus, being equal with God did not mean personally taking advantage of His divine privileges – but instead using them to bless others!

In v. 7, Paul says that Jesus "emptied Himself". Of what did Christ empty Himself? Two main answers have been offered by theologians as to what it means that Christ emptied Himself. (1) He emptied Himself of the "form of God." That is, He emptied Himself of His divine attributes, which is to say that He ceased to be God in the incarnation. He laid aside His deity. But over and over again the New Testament affirms Jesus' deity. (2) He emptied Himself of His "equality with God." That is, He emptied Himself of the prerogatives of deity, which is to say that He stripped Himself of all divine privilege. I prefer a similar translation favored by respected biblical commentators: "He (Jesus) poured himself out, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men." The thought rather is that in His incarnation, He put Himself totally at the disposal of others (cf. 1 John 3:16). It's important to note that the humbling of the incarnation wasn't something imposed upon Jesus, He chose it! His choice was an expression of His selfless humility.

In v. 7-8, we learn that to understand the incarnation, we need to focus not on what Jesus laid aside, but rather on what He took on. Paul is telling us that in the incarnation Jesus added the nature of a human slave to His divine nature. He poured Himself out into a common servant. He took on the form or nature of a lowly slave. In His preexistent, prehuman state, Jesus enjoyed all the rights and prerogatives of deity. But in the incarnation, He exchanged His high, rich, heavenly existence for an infinitely lower and poorer earthly existence. Perhaps the perfect picture of this humble state is found in John 13, where we see Jesus assuming the role of a common household servant, washing His disciples' feet. He had always possessed a divine nature, but in the incarnation He took on, for the first time, a human nature (v. 7). Paul intentionally did not say "in the form of men", but he used the term "likeness" that suggests a degree of hesitancy and caution. Jesus is distinct from mankind, in some important ways. First, He was sinless (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus' humanity was different in that His humanity was "the genuine, uncorrupted article!" Jesus differed from all other individuals by virtue of His consistent obedience to God the Father.

Second, Jesus differs from others in that He is also God. Verse 8 tells us this was the verdict people drew when they saw Him. His appearance, or outward form, was altogether human. But this word *σχῆμα* (appearance) alludes to something more within His human frame. His true humanity veiled His deity! Without the eyes of faith, no one can see beyond the veil of His humanity. At the end of verse 8, Paul draws our attention to Jesus' resolute obedience to His Heavenly Father. A lot of people are willing to serve others if it doesn't cost them anything. However, if there is a price to pay, they suddenly lose interest. Paul reminds us that Jesus humbled Himself to the point of laying down His life for the benefit of others (Isaiah 53:12).

Jesus is our example of humility and submission to God's will. His actions have real-world practical consequences (vv.9-11). The Bible tells us that when Jesus returns, we will reign with Him. And in that day "every tongue will be forced to confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." With that in view, Paul brings his teaching on the incarnation to its intended application in verses 12-16. He says, "Work out your salvation in fear and trembling" (v. 12). Even this working out of our salvation is done in dependence upon the Holy Spirit who lives within us (v. 13). Lay aside your rights and live for others (v. 14). Paul wants us to live as lights in a dark world (v. 15). Like Jesus, we need to pour ourselves out in the service of others, as we hold fast to the Word of life (v. 16).



*Bob and Sue's future
is indeed looking bright!*

*Yours can too~
just click here!*



Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

Christ is the center of our faith, and Philippians 2:5-11 is the epicenter of the debate over Christ! We are commanded to have Christ's attitude, so what does it mean that he "emptied" himself?

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form (**morphē**) of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied (**kenosis**) Himself, taking the form (**morphē**) of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness (**homoīōma**) of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance (**schēma**) as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow*, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

* This is a quote from Isaiah 45:23, talking about God. Here it is applied to Jesus. So, Jesus = God!

- "Form" (v. 6) is the Greek word *morphē*, which refers to the **inner nature** of something—the essential, unchanging character of something; what it is in and of itself.
- "Likeness" (v. 7) is the Greek word *homoīōma*, which means "the state of being similar to something".
- "Appearance" (v. 8) is the Greek word *schēma*, which refers to **outward form**.
- "Emptied" (v. 7) is the Greek word *kenosis*, which means "to make void", "to nullify", or "to make of no effect". Jesus' kenosis involved the complete removal or elimination of elements of high status or rank by the elimination of all privileges or prerogatives associated with that status or rank.

"Form" (*morphē*) does **not** mean that Christ only **appeared to be** divine and to be a slave. The clause, "though he **was** in the form of God" speaks about Christ's preexistent state—ie, Christ **already was** of divine nature **before** he "emptied" himself. By definition it is impossible for the eternal, immutable God to cease to exist as God. Even in his state of humiliation the Lord Jesus could say, "I and the Father are one." Even as man, he could legitimately claim that to see him was to see the Father. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the incarnate Son's deity was revealed visibly, as he allowed the expression of his own divine essence to shine forth.

To ask, "**Of what** did Christ empty himself?" is a mistaken question. **Christ himself** is the object of this emptying; Christ nullified **himself**, Christ **made himself** of no reputation! Christ nullified **himself** "by taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men". Christ made **himself** of no reputation precisely **by** taking on a human nature. He emptied **himself** not by pouring out portions of his deity (which is impossible since God is immutable) but by **adding** to himself full and true humanity. His was an **emptying by addition, not by subtraction**. While the Son of God fully **possessed** his divine nature and prerogatives, he did not fully **express** them. He surrendered the preincarnate glories from which he came, submitting himself to misunderstanding, denials, unbelief, false accusations, and every sort of reviling and persecution. As God the Son, he had every right to exercise his divine prerogatives at will, yet he surrendered himself to the will of the Father in everything. His internal divine glory was still present, though temporarily veiled by him being in the form of a servant. No conceptualization of the kenosis can be consistent with Scripture if that concept makes it impossible for Christ to assert **equality** with God (v. 6).

