

## THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

“The Deity of Christ”

Philippians 2:5-7

### Review

1. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian church from his prison in Rome (1:12, 13). He sent greetings to them (v. 1, 2), prayed for them (vv. 3, 4), thanked God for them (v. 5), believed God for them (v. 6), and was grateful for their mutuality with him (v. 7).

2. The prayer of Paul for the Philippian saints is a model (1:8-11). His prison experience (v. 12) he viewed as: 1) For the furtherance of the Gospel (vv. 12, 13). For the preaching of Christ (vv. 14-18). 3) For giving meaning to life and death (vv. 19-26). 4) For providing instructions in Christian conduct (vv. 27-30).

3. Then Paul by the Spirit’s inspiration, exhorts the Philippians to exercise unity and loving care one for another (2:1-4). The highest example of self-forgetful regard for the concerns of others is demonstrated in the condescension of Christ in His incarnation and death at the Cross. This is clearly the impact of the words: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (v. 5). Note:

a. The instruction. This is in the verb. Whether this is active or passive is not the issue because the same thought is given. A certain mind set is to be exercised. The present tense points to continued action “keep on thinking this.” The idea of contemplation is patent.

b. The direction. The prepositional phrase is significant. The Philippians were to activate the thought process “in yourselves.” Do something with the example!

c. The exposition. It is the demonstration of self-abnegation “which was also in Christ Jesus” which is important. It is what He did and the Philippians should follow the same.

4. So what did the Lord do which was so exemplary? He gave an incredible example of self-humiliation. How did He do it? These are the steps.

1. By EXISTING “in the form of God”

a. His “existing”  
The verb employed here ( ) is not the more usual one ( ). It suggests a much fuller meaning and as a participle denotes continued action. It expresses continuance of an antecedent state or condition (cf. Ro. 4:19; 2 Cor. 8:17 for this verb with aorists).

b. His “in the form of God”  
This is a powerful phrase and appropriate to the preincarnate being of Christ. Prior existence is clearly indicated. The idea of shape must be dismissed from one’s mind. Rather, it connotes that expression of being ( ) which carries in itself the distinctive nature and character of the being to whom it pertains. It notes what

is permanently identified with that nature and character. It is identified with the essence of a person and while not identical with the essence itself, is identified with it as its natural and appropriate expression, answering to it in every particular. To summarize, that Christ “was in the form of God” is to say He existed as essentially one with God.

2. By THINKING “it not robbery to be equal with God”

What is referred to here is not 1) a robbery act, 2) a piece of plunder, but 3) a prize, a thing to be grasped ( ). Christ did not think (aorist) or regard His divine equality as a prize which was to be grasped at and retained at all cost’s. Being equal with God was a dignity which belonged to Him as the pre-existent Christ. It was a possession He had by right and title. It was this incredible situation which was not regarded by our Lord as an opportunity for self-exaltation, but for self-abasement. This is the argument of the Apostle in the previous verses (2:1-4).

3. By MAKING “Himself of no reputation”

It has been noted that the diversity of opinion prevailing among Bible students regarding the meaning of this phrase (emptied Himself ) is enough to fill students with despair and to afflict them intellectual paralysis. Certain things are clear: He did not divest Himself of His divine nature. His personality remained the same. His self-emptying did not mean self-extinction. He was not changed into a mere man. He was not unable to assent equality with God. Since the text does not specifically state of what Christ emptied Himself, one must be compelled to stop short of something definitive. However, the word ( ) is obviously selected as a peculiarly strong expression of the entireness of Jesus self-renunciation and in order to throw His pre-incarnate glory and His incarnate humiliation into sharp contrast.

4. By TAKING “upon Him the form of a servant”

In a sense, this is the “how” of our Lord’s kenosis (emptying). Taking on the form of a servant logically and temporarily coinciding with the emptying. There is no mention of any abandonment of divine attributes, the divine nature, or the form of God. But there is an incredible paradox. He emptied Himself by taking the nature or form (same word as in v. 6 ) of a servant or slave. He remained, as always, in the form of God. He was Lord and Ruler of all, but He accepted the nature or form of a servant.

### Summary

Four marvelous steps indicate how the Lord Jesus Christ is THE inexpressible example of self-humiliation. It is to this the Philippians are called (2:1-4). What the Spirit though Paul asked them to do. He calls you and me to perform. So be it.