

**The Christmas Story from Paul's Perspective  
Philippians 2:5-11  
Part Three**

When we are hurting and need help where do we tend to go? This obviously is not a very difficult question. If we are hurting and need help the person that we will tend to go to will be that person who we believe will be able to empathize with us and treat us with a heart of compassion.

Praise the Lord for these people! Unfortunately there are not a whole lot of them. But don't despair. There is a person who can empathize with us and who will deal with us compassionately and so much so that if we fact go to Him we will find relief no matter what our present situation might be. And this leads us back to our study.

This week we will be continuing to look at the Christmas story from the standpoint of Paul based on **Philippians 2:5-8**. Let me read these verses for you. **"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, (7) but emptied Himself, taking a form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."** Why have I represented this passage as a Christmas passage? It is because this passage details for us the unobservable facts concerning the birth of Christ in contrast to the gospels, which gives us the observable facts.

Notice that this section of verses began with a challenge. And what was it? Paul challenged the Church at Philippi in **Philippians 2:5** to **"have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."** In other words, he challenged them, like Christ, to have a heart of a servant.

But Paul was not satisfied with simply challenging the church at Philippi to have, like Christ, the heart of a servant, but he went on to describe how Christ manifested that heart as He very methodically and with purpose descended from the riches He knew in heaven to the rags He came to know on earth. And this of course led us to "the question" that we began to answer a few weeks ago.

What steps did Christ have to take in order to descend from riches to rags? And what was the first step? This was the first step:

The first step in Christ's descent from riches to rags was His willingness to give up His rights (Philippians 2:6). So where did we see this willingness?

Let me read for you **Philippians 2:6**. **“Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.”** Was Christ based on this verse willing to give up His rights? Absolutely!

Even though Christ was in the form of God or was in fact God, He did not demand His right to equality with God. In other words, He did not demand that the external display of His majesty would continue uninterrupted even though He, as a member of the Godhead, had that right.

So what was the first step that Christ took in His descent from the riches He knew in heaven to the rags He came to know on earth? The first step in Christ's descent was His willingness to give up His rights. So what was the second step?

The second step in Christ's descent from riches to rags was that He emptied Himself. Let us look at **Philippians 2:6** once again but this time I will also read the first part of **Philippians 2:7**. So what does it say? **“Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped [Now listen to the next phrase!], (7) but emptied Himself.”**

It is one thing for Christ not to regard equality with God a thing to be grasped or to have a willingness to give up His rights, and quite another thing for Him to actually act on it, but this is exactly what He did. He in his desire to serve others actually in fact emptied Himself.

So what does this mean that He “emptied Himself? When Paul said that Christ “emptied Himself,” he meant that Christ emptied Himself of Himself by not insisting upon His right to exact equality with God; or in other words, He died to Himself.

And this is what we, as the disciples of Christ, are also called to do. We as the Disciples of Christ are called to die to ourselves as Christ died to

Himself; or in other words, we are called as the disciples of Christ to empty ourselves of ourselves.

From the standpoint of the world this kind of approach to life might seem kind of stupid. But the truth is that this is truly the only way this life can be approached if we are going to find life and life abundant.

Let me once again read for you as I did last week **Matthew 10:39**. **“He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.”** And this is the truth.

Do we want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus? Then let us in our quest in service to others be willing to give up our rights, not just a few of our rights, but all of them so that when push comes to shove we might like Christ die to ourselves.

And if we do this we will have in effect take on the form of a bond-servant very much in the same way as Christ took on the form of a bond-servant when He willingly in His quest to serve others emptied Himself.

So let us go back to our text and read it one more time and see if this is not so, but this time we will go just a little bit further. So what does it say? **“Who, although He existed in the form of God** [or in other words, shared the very same essence with God], **did not regard equality** [or in other words, exact equality with God] **a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself** [or in other words emptied Himself of Himself, and then it says this], **taking the form of a bond-servant.”** So what exactly does this mean that Christ took upon Himself a form of a bond-servant?

Once again as we mentioned earlier in our study of this text: The word “form” (MORPHE) refers to the essential character of something, or in other words its essence. So what is the essential character or essence of a bond-servant? The answer is very simple. They have no rights.

When Paul says that Christ took on the form of a bond-servant, he is saying that Christ so completely stripped Himself of His rights that He took on the essential character of a slave (Mark 10:45).

Christ did not simply appear to be a servant; He actually was a servant. He demanded nothing for Himself. What do the Scriptures teach us? Listen to the words of **Mark 10:45**. **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

Christ certainly did not come into this world to promote His own personal interests. Rather He came into this world to promote our interests and the interests of His Father.

If we are disciples of Christ, or in other words if we are followers of Christ, this is something that hopefully we by the grace of God will seek to emulate.

This means when we come to church we will not come into this church on Sunday mornings to be served by the person to our left or by the person to our right or even by the person in front of us. Hopefully this is not why we come. Rather I would hope that we come in order to serve, not only our Lord but also our brothers and sisters in Christ who have gathered in His name.

And this very same attitude should also prevail when we go home this afternoon. This very same attitude should prevail when we go to work or school tomorrow. This servant attitude should always prevail if we in fact are walking in the footsteps of Jesus and have in fact like Him taking on the **“form of a bond servant.”**

And again, how do we take on the form of a bond-servant? We must like Christ so completely strip ourselves of our rights that we take on the essence of a slave.

If we do this for the sake of Christ will we regret it? Absolutely not! Again what did Christ say to His disciples in **Matthew 10:39**? **“He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”** This is the truth.

Will a true disciple of Christ ever regret following in the footsteps of Jesus by emptying themselves of themselves and taking on the form of a servant? No!

But don't think that this decision to follow in the footsteps will be without a price. There will be a price to be paid. And this leads us to the third step that

Christ took in His descent from the riches He knew in heaven to the rags He came to know on earth. So what is the third step in Christ's descent?

The third step that Christ took in order to descend from riches to rags was He was made in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:7). Let me read again for you **Philippians 2:6-7** but this time I will read the entire verse 7. So what does it say? **“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.”** So what was the third step in Christ's descent? Christ was made in the likeness of men.

So what does this mean that Christ was made in the likeness of men? The word “likeness” is a very interesting word. Paul could have said that He was made a man, which in fact was true, but this is not what Paul says. Rather he says He was **“made in the likeness of men.”**

The word “likeness” (HOMOIOMA) denotes that which is like something, a “resemblance.” Why did Paul choose this word? Was he trying to say that Jesus was not really a man? And answer would have to be absolutely not! What do the Scriptures tell us?

Listen to **Romans 5:12-15.** **“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned – (13) for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. (14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (15) But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.”**

When Paul said that Christ was made in the “likeness of men,” he was not saying that Christ was not a man. Rather he was saying that though Christ was 100% man He was also 100% God (Romans 5:12-15). Theologians call this the “hypostatic union.”

So was the uniqueness of Christ's person being 100% God and 100% man apparent to those who might have seen Him? No! It was not apparent at all. We know this because after Paul implied at the end of **verse 7** that Christ was not only 100% God but also 100% man by his choice of the word **"likeness"** he went on to make very clear at the beginning of **verse 8** that His appearance was very much like that of any other man. Isn't this exactly what we see at the very beginning of **verse 8**? What does it say? **"Being found in appearance as a man."**

Though Christ was both 100% man and 100% God, it was His humanity that was on display during His incarnation and not His deity (Philippians 2:8).

Did Christ, taking on the form of a bond-servant, pay a price? Of course! In taking on the form of a bond-servant resulted in Him being made in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man. And when this was done it opened Him up to all the temptations, trials and troubles that we ourselves suffer excluding none). In fact, the Bible is clear that Christ was tempted in all points as we have been tempted and yet was without sin.

Was Christ human, 100% human? Absolutely! This is what made it possible for Him to take our place on the cross and fully satisfy the debt we owed to God and this is what makes it possible for Him even today to be our faithful and merciful high priest.

Is what I just shared with you really true? Absolutely! Let us first of all consider the impact of Christ offering up His human body on the cross of Calvary as payment for our sin.

Let me read for you **Hebrews 10:11-14**. **"Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; (12) but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, (13) waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. (14) For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."**

Because Christ was both 100% God and 100% man, He was able through His death to make us right with God both now and forever (Hebrews 10:11-14).

Forever! And how could this be? The answer is simple. Christ in His humanity was able to offer Himself up as our substitute, and because of His deity His substitution on our behalf was acceptable to God because His offering was in fact perfect. This is why the writer of Hebrews was able to say, **“He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”**

But this is not all. There is another reason why it is important for Christ not only to be 100% God but also 100% man.

Because Christ is both 100% God and 100% man, He is presently able as our great high priest not only able to sympathize with our weaknesses but to supply for our needs (Hebrews 4:14-16). Let me read for you **Hebrews 4:14-16. “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (15) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”**

At the beginning of this message I asked you: When you are hurting where do we tend to go? And what is the obvious answer to this question? We will go to the one who we believe will be able to empathize with us and manifest to us a heart of compassion. And who is best able to do that? There is only one answer to that question. The person who is best able to do that is Christ.

And why is this? It is because in His descent from the riches of heaven to the rags of earth He took on the form of a bond servant and was made in the likeness of men and was found in appearance as a man thus being able not only to be our perfect and efficacious substitute but also our merciful and gracious high priest.

Are you hurting this morning? Are you feeling alone and without strength, perhaps apprehensive and fearful? If this describes you and you are in fact a disciple of Christ I would encourage you, I would implore you, to go to Christ to find grace to help in the time of your need.

May God give us the grace to understand that Christ, as 100% God and 100% man, is not only able but also willing to help us in the time of our need if we would simply come to Him.