

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes we feel that government officials sitting high up do not quite understand the struggles of ordinary people. Once in a while whether for show or for real some of these public servants do something special to prove that they care about the people they govern. In 2013 a group of 23 members of the Congress lived on food stamps for a week to protest over the proposed change in the welfare program to make it harder for poor people to receive the social benefit. So there they were dressing in nice clothes to shop at grocery stores like Aldi. They pinched pennies as they purchased a week's worth of grocery on a \$ 30 budget. They found that they even could not afford to buy essential items like milk, and they felt hungry when they went to bed. One state representative commented that she spent hours to debate what to buy and what to skip. She took a mid-week trip to the McDonald's as a luxurious break. One news reporter jokingly said that it would not be a bad idea to take the challenge as a way to lose weight.

Just like those politicians, our Lord Jesus Christ had to step down when He became a human to identify with us. Philippians 2 is a description of how Jesus humbled Himself and how He was exalted. The Philippian church was the first Christian church built in Europe. Paul and his coworkers established the church during his second mission trip. When you read this book you can sense the love of Paul for the Christians in the church. Paul commended the believers that from day one they and Paul enjoyed a partnership in the gospel. Comparatively speaking this church was quite healthy. If there is any hidden problem it is the issue of disunity. Paul tells us that some people preached the gospel out of conceit. In chapter 2 Paul encourages the Philippians to have the same mind and same love for each other. But how to achieve that? A pivotal statement is in **verse 5**: Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. By "attitude" Paul was referring to one's mindset. Therefore, the key for maintaining unity in the church is not to listen to this or that coworker. But that everyone should have the same mindset as Christ's. What follows from verse 6 to 11 Paul tells us what we can learn from Christ's example.

EXPLANATION

1. 基督的降卑 Humility of Christ

From this passage let us first consider the humility of Christ.

A. 神成為人 God Became Man

Our Lord Jesus Christ humbled Himself to become a man like you and me. Read again **verses 6 and 7**: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. These two verses are important in helping us understand the doctrine of dual nature of Christ. Jesus is fully God and fully man. The word "nature" is repeated in both verses. The term means an outward appearance that reflects the essence on the inside. Therefore, Jesus did not only look like God. He is God at all times. Also, He did not only look like a man when He came

to the earth. He actually became a man like us. Also, the verb “grasped” in verse 6 means to hold onto something. Paul was saying that Jesus did not seize His divine power when He became a man. Rather, He was willing to become nothing as described in verse 7. The Jehovah’s Witnesses twisted the meaning of verse 6 in order to fit into their theology that Jesus was never God. Their New World Translation Bible renders verse 6 this way: “who, although he was existing in God’s form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God” Therefore, they think that Jesus was not God and He had no intention to acquire God’s attributes to be like Him. The notion of “made himself nothing” in verse 7 helps refute this interpretation. If Jesus was not God in the first place then He had nothing to give up to become a man. Here we see the importance of interpreting a Bible passage in its context, rather than just picking individual phrases to expand our understanding of God. Going back to verse 7. How should we understand the phrase of “made himself nothing?” Commentators told us that we should not be mistaken into thinking that Jesus set aside some of God’s attributes when He became a man. One may argue that Jesus seemingly lost His ability to be everywhere at any time. A correct understanding is that Jesus did not exhaust His divine power for His own convenience. Jesus did not have to walk from place to place but He chose to do so. When He was arrested at the Garden of Gethsemane Peter wanted to resist the religious leaders. But Jesus says in **Matthew 26:53-54** that: 53 “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” Jesus could have used His authority to dispatch angels to protect Him, but for the sake of accomplishing the salvation plan He willingly submitted Himself to the arrest by the religious leaders. Jesus was God before He came into our world. However, when He was born through the womb of Mary, His earthly mother, Jesus did not cease to be God. While on earth, Jesus was fully God and fully man. This is what the Bible says and what Christians believe.

B. 神為人死 God Died for Men

Jesus, the Almighty God, not only became a man but He also died for all men. God became a man so that He could suffer physical death just like every man sooner or later may face. Paul says in **verse 8**: And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! The descriptions of “appearance as a man” in verse 8 and “likeness of a man” in verse 7 both point to the outward features. When Jesus was on the earth people clearly recognized Him as a man because He had all the qualities of a human on the outside. But not only did Jesus come as a man He willingly chose to become the lowliest of man. As you read from verse 7 to verse 8 you can see the downward progression as if Jesus were descending a staircase. He did but not only become an ordinary man, He chose to become a servant. That Greek word can also mean slave as the Chinese Union Version renders it. Jesus did not only become the lowliest of man, He even died in the most humiliated way on the cross. In the Roman world crucifixion was only reserved for non-Roman citizens and the most notorious criminals. Similarly, in the Jewish culture hanging on a tree was considered being curse by God. **Galatians 3:13** reads: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." No one in his sound mind can ever imagine that Jesus Christ would use dying on the cross to redeem us from sin. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 1:21** that the cross displays God’s wisdom: For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what

was preached to save those who believe. Jesus Christ, the one true God, came to die for men. Many people may think that God died for men is the dumbest idea. But this is God's truth based on the Bible. To Christians, the cross is a sign of our redemption. Those who accept that Jesus died for their sins on the cross and accept Him into their hearts as Lord will be redeemed from their sins. Jesus died for you. You can accept Him today and your sins will be forgiven.

Jesus humbled Himself to become a man. He even became a slave and died for us. We can consider others better than ourselves and we can look out for the interest of others only when we imitate the humility of Christ. Many of you may be the boss in your family or at work. Are you willing to humble yourself to serve others in a lower position? In our church there are some menial work that few people may volunteer to do. Do you see that as an opportunity to serve your brothers and sisters? When you see trash on the pews or food on the floor do you have the urge to pick them up, or you just think that someone else will do it? When you are assigned to serve in the nursery or kitchen do you do so with joy or grudge? In a team ministry do you only aspire to serve in a prominent role? Recently at the coworker orientation I encouraged the new Trustees and Deacons that they should not ask their coworkers to do what they are unwilling to do. Jesus came in the form of a humble slave. That is the example we should model after – at home, in the work place and at the church.

2. 基督的升高 Exaltation of Christ

Paul told us that the key for maintaining unity in the church is to have the same mindset as Christ's. Jesus humbled Himself and became a man. He died for you and me on the cross to redeem us from sin. That is not the end of the story. Three days later He was risen from the dead. From a humble slave Jesus was exalted by God the Father.

A. 主的稱號 Given Title as Lord

At the exaltation of Christ, Jesus was given a new title. Paul says in **verse 9**: Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. What was that exalted name given to Jesus? If you look down to verse 11 you will notice that it is the name "Lord." Rather to say that it is a new name for Christ it is His new title. To the Romans, Caesar was their lord. Therefore, by claiming another figure as lord and worshipping him would be looking for trouble in one's life. But that is exactly what Christians declare, that Jesus is the only Lord in their lives. Paul says in **Romans 10:9** that receiving Jesus Christ as Lord is a critical step for one's salvation: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. To Christians in any era such confession carries the same weight of submitting one's sovereignty to Christ. To the Jews, the title "Lord" is how they address Jehovah God. They see God's name as so sacred that they dare not call God by His name. Therefore, by calling Jesus "Lord" a person with Jewish background is claiming Jesus as God. For example, Peter says to a Jewish audience in **Acts 2:36** that: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Peter was saying that by calling Jesus Lord they recognized that the person who died on the cross was no ordinary man, it was God Himself. Nowadays people misuse the name of God and trivialize Him as if He were a friend sharing the same hobby. But when you

address Jesus as your Lord it means that you see Him as the Master of your life. If He is your Master than you are just His servant.

B. 主的尊榮 Given Glory as Lord

Since Jesus received the title as Lord in His exaltation He was also given the glory that is due His name. Paul tells us in **verses 10 to 11**: 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The phrase “in heaven and on earth and under the earth” encompasses every being ever existed in history, dead or alive, Christians or non-believers and it even includes angels and demons. The scene that every knee should bow and every tongue confess before the Lord is a direct quotation of Isaiah. Jehovah God says in **45:22-23** of the book that: 22 “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. 23 By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.” This scene prophesied by the prophet Isaiah will one day be fulfilled in Christ. God gives us a glimpse of this glorious image through the vision John saw in **Revelation 19:5-6** - 5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying: “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!” 6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.” One day everyone would bow before Jesus Christ and confess Him as Lord. This is the glory Jesus will receive in heaven.

However, while our Lord was still on the earth He did not seek after His own glory. Rather, He gave glory to God the Father. Jesus told the Jews who opposed Him in **John 8:50** that: I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. Jesus did not succumb to the criticism of His adversaries but He submitted Himself to the Father and left all the evaluation of His works to this righteous Judge. Jesus also fully understood that the way to exaltation was through the cross. There was no other way because that was the reason why He came to the earth. In **John 17:1** Jesus prayed to the Father, saying: “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” What was the “time” Jesus talking about? It was the time for Him to be crucified. Soon after Jesus prayed in John chapter 18 He was arrested, judged, beaten and nailed to the cross.

Jesus was exalted by the Father after His ascension. He was given the new title “Lord” and was given the glory as Lord. In the whole process Jesus submitted to the Father. Jesus did not seize after His own glory. He waited for the Father to restore the glory He deserved. Through this Paul told the Philippian believers and us that we too should learn to let go of our glory. We can easily become self-centered if we put unnecessary emphasis on our face. When people commend us we may become flattered. When we are being criticized we are paralyzed. If we strive to be more like Christ both extreme attitudes are unbiblical. Having served in the church all these years I can honestly tell you that no matter how bad you did there are always people cheering you up, and no matter how well you think you did there are always people finding fault. So what should you choose to listen? The conclusion is that you cannot live by popularity votes like the politicians. You may not get the recognition you believe you deserve, or you may receive unfair criticism. What is the big deal? Our Lord Jesus Christ had experienced it all, and much more. That is the

example Jesus asked us to follow. We just keep on doing everything with a faithful heart to the Lord. Just like Jesus did we leave the final verdict to our righteous Judge.

CONCLUSION

The key for maintaining unity in the church is to have the same mindset as Christ's. If we are walking in the truth, then his or her opinion does not matter, Christ has the final say in everything. He is our Servant King. Jesus Christ humbled Himself to come as a man so as to die on the cross for us. He was exalted and was given the title "Lord" and received the glory He deserved. The title for this message today is borrowed from a song with the same name – Servant King. The lyrics of stanza 1 of the song read: From heaven you came helpless babe, entered our world, your glory veiled; not to be served but to serve, and give Your life that we might live. Then stanza 4 goes like: So let us learn how to serve, and in our lives enthrone Him; each other's needs to prefer, for it is Christ we're serving. The chorus echoes the theme that Jesus Christ is our Servant King: This is our God, the Servant King, He calls us now to follow Him; to bring our lives as a daily offering, of worship to The Servant King. He alone deserves our worship.