

## Philippians 2:5-11

When a person believes and is baptised into Jesus Christ that person is united with Christ. He dies with Christ and is raised with Christ. He puts to death the old life and is raised to the new life in Christ. He shares Christ's life.

When writing to the church at Philippi, Paul appealed to the members to have the mind of Christ that they have in Christ Jesus. There had been some grumbling and questioning in the church and worse. There had been a falling out between two significant women. He was calling for unity and a genuine love for each other across the church community and was particularly asking the church to help these two women to agree together.

Well what was Paul asking for when he appealed to the church to have the mind that is the mind in Christ? What sort of attitude are we to have if we are in Christ? To work this out he quotes Philippians 2:5-11. This may have been an early church confession of faith or hymn. Whether it was or whether it is Paul's own composition it matters not. What does matter is understanding Paul's exhortation to humble service in Christ. He takes us through four steps to action.

### **First Paul was asking them to reflect on who Christ was.**

Christ was both the agent and heir of all creation whether that creation was visible or invisible or whether it was in heaven or on earth. Christ was also the sustainer of all life. Further, he was the eternal one. He, in fact, was fully God. He enjoyed an unbroken fellowship with the Father and Holy Spirit (Col. 1:15-17,19, John 1:1-5). He was the eternal Word of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity.

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**Secondly Paul was asking them to reflect on what Christ had done.**

Although he was God he was prepared for our sakes to yield his position and status of equality with God. Unlike Adam he did not grasp at the status of equality with God. Rather he gladly and willingly became a man. He took on all the frailties of being a human creature. He subjected himself to all the processes of discipline, growing, learning and suffering. He assumed the feelings of sorrow, tiredness, hunger and thirst. He used no miracles to deliver himself from any creaturely characteristics. He emptied himself of all deity.

However his humility did not just consist in the embracing of the human state but he also became the bondservant or slave. He embraced all the misunderstanding and grief that came with it. He persevered with the dullness of his disciples to spiritual things. He exposed himself to the apathy, exploitation and greed of the crowds. He bore the opposition, insults and persecution of the Jewish leadership.

And further he chose to serve God with all the implications that had to follow from a rebellious world. He did it without regret or reserve. All other men and women have to die but Jesus chose to obey and to die in obedience to God and for humanity. He experienced the agony of Gethsemane, beating and mockery of the Jews and the lashes and crucifixion of the Romans beside the hellish burden of man's sin.

The humility of Christ is all the more remarkable when we compare Christ with Adam and indeed all people in Adam. Christ is God, the agent of creation. Adam is man, the object of creation. Christ is willing and became man. Adam is resentful and wanted to become God. Christ readily obeys God's will but Adam defiantly violates God's commandment.

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### **Thirdly Paul was asking them to live out Christ's humility**

How incredibly humble is this Christ who will obey the Father and serve humanity. But friends we are united with Christ in baptism and share his life and mind. He does not just leave us an example to follow. We dwell in him and thus share his life and mind. Our calling is to adopt his attitude of humble service no matter what it costs. We too, in Christ, must take up our Cross.

### **Fourthly Paul was asking them to share Christ's exaltation**

Christ's humility and death were glorious and shown to be so by God. God endorsed the service and death of Christ by raising him and exalting him above every other name on earth, in heaven or under the earth. Humble service is the principle of the creation God made. The Christ has demonstrated it and God is validating his demonstration by exalting him to the highest authority in all creation.

Jesus has been given all power. Jesus rules in heaven. He is King over all that is above us. Jesus rules on earth. Jesus is King over all that is around us. Jesus rules under the earth. Jesus is King over all that is beneath us. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords ..... And why? Because he is the Servant.

And this is how we are empowered to serve. Not only are we united in his death but we are also united in his resurrection and exaltation. We not only share Christ's mind, which humbly serves but also his resurrection power, which enables us to serve.

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### Conclusion

As we conclude our reflection on Paul's passage to the Philippian church it is hard not to think of Jesus' words to his disciples as they argued about who would occupy the chief seats in the Kingdom.

<sup>42</sup> And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:42-45

It is even harder not to think of Pilate's intended insult when he placarded the crucified Jesus as King of the Jews because it is precisely in his serving to death that Jesus is so demonstrably shown to be the King of glory.