

# CHIEF

## MINISTRIES

September 201

Much of what we hear today, in the world and in prison are the complaints of those who demand their rights. Their rights have been violated - they deserve redress - they deserve payment. We rarely hear of someone who actually, voluntarily, humbly gave up their rights for someone less deserving.

Well.....there was someone who did!

There was indeed someone who literally gave up His legitimate rights for the benefit of people who didn't deserve any.

His name is Jesus Christ.

We arrive at the great paragraph in Philippians chapter 2 where the humility of Christ and the surrender of His rights is wonderfully described; *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>v6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>v7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>v8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>v9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>v10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>v11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11 ESV)*

This is the Mount Everest of truth.

Before this paragraph every false teacher stands in uncertainty and every cult in fearful pause.

For if this is true, all of them are false.

Now I could spend a month of newsletters on each descriptive phrase and still not begin to exhaust the implications.

We are actually given a rare look into eternity past at the Savior. We're given a rare look into eternity future where every human being will acknowledge the deity of Christ and His coming reign. In these few verses we see the great sweep of Christ's life....and we are admitted to the breathtaking purposes of God....they teach the deity of Christ; His preexistence; His equality with God the Father; His genuine humanity; His voluntary death on the cross; the certainty of His ultimate triumph over evil, and the preeminence of His reign.

What we just read is exactly what we still believe today - and the Apostles began delivering these truths after watching Jesus ascend through the clouds back to His father.

The Mount Everest of truth has been standing now for 2000 years. Some of it has already come true and the rest of it is going to come true one day.

Paul wasn't interested in delivering a lesson in theology - though he does. What he really wants to do is provide a lesson in humility. He has been describing humility in no uncertain terms if you remember from verse 3 and 4; *Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>v4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4 ESV)*

Paul is pleading with the Philippians to live in harmony, to lay aside their selfish desires and personal rights; their pride and desire for attention. And now.....his final appeal is to point them to the humility of Jesus Christ.

You see, an example, is the most powerful argument we could ever use. Jesus Christ is about to be shown to us as the greatest argument against selfishness and pride....and the most amazing example of humility and grace.

And what Paul does next is begin to quote hymn text. These verses are written with poetic prose. We don't have the original melody line, but it may very well have been one of the churches earliest hymns as they sang of their triumphant Lord. Many believe that Stephen was the author of this six stanza hymn.

What we do know is that this hymn text would have reminded the church, as we have done today in part, of the fact that one day, all people will vindicate the name of Jesus Christ and His gospel....and in the meantime, for the church, humility and self-sacrifice and suffering and even death are only temporary moments on the way to eternal life with our risen King. Hallelujah!

With that introduction, and in order to gather our thoughts as we attempt to scale Mount Everest - I want us to focus on the primary issue at hand – the humility of Christ. The self-sacrificing refusal to stand up for His rights and instead to lay them down for the sake of sinners like us who don't deserve any.

Namely you and me.

As we go through these stances, I'll outline them for you in points.

Point #1: The 1<sup>st</sup> right that Jesus Christ voluntarily surrendered was the right to live like God.

The right to live like God.

Notice verse 5: *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>v6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped (Philippians 2:5-6 ESV)*

In order for Paul to show us the breathtaking humility of Christ, he takes us back into eternity past.

And this becomes one of the strongest biblical statements concerning Jesus Christ deity that you'll find in all of Scripture.

**Who, although He existed** - stop there! That Greek verb is "to be" like Shakespeare's "to be or not to be".

Your translation might read it that way, "**Who, being in the form of God**". Only in this case the normal Greek verb "to be" isn't used here. Paul uses a stronger verb *huparchon*: and it's a verb used to make sure the reader understands they are describing the very essence of a person which cannot be changed - it is the part of a person which, in any circumstance remains the same.

It is their nature.

You could render this, "who, existing unchangeably in the nature of God."

Paul is effectively saying, "look, I know I'm about to give you the example of Jesus Christ becoming a man, but you need to understand that He existed in eternity past and will exist into eternity future as the very unchanging essence of His deity."

It is His nature.

**Who, being** – existing - in His unchangeable nature - **in the form of God**. Again, Paul uses a loaded word, translated **form** here. Jesus existed in eternity past in the **form** of God. The word is *morphe* and it refers to the outward display of our inner reality. So...Jesus existed in eternity past outwardly displaying His inward divine nature.

Paul tells the Colossian church that God the son is the image of the invisible God - **the firstborn of all creation**. Without taking the time to learn the Greek language. I mean doesn't everyone want to spend \$300 an hour learning Greek? Imagine it's worth eternity for some.

*Prototokos*, is the word "first born" of creation and it doesn't refer to someone who was first of creation to be born - that doesn't make sense any way since he wasn't born in Bethlehem until the first century; quite a lot had been created before that; the Greek word actually means that he preceded creation and is first over it all.

So Paul is writing to the Colossian church that Jesus Christ is the outward image of the invisible God - preceding anything that was created and having sovereignty over all that is.

So the verse actually reinforces the eternal preexistence of Christ, not some false teaching that He had a beginning somewhere in heaven or on earth when He was born.

Paul reinforces that truth here in this text to the Philippians – He eternally preexisted in the form of God.

In other words, He outwardly manifested an inner reality - that He was equal with God. Now notice - and here's to Paul's primary point - look again at verse 6; *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped (Philippians 2:6 ESV)*.

By the way, Paul's not defending these amazing statements; he's just delivering them. You see to Paul, here in this context, it isn't just that Jesus existed from eternity past, it's that Jesus - who is the eternal image of God is about to give up all the rights and privileges related to deity.

Can you believe it? Is how he's writing here, "Can you believe that Jesus - although He preexisted from eternity past as God the Son with the inward nature of deity and the outward form of God - can you believe He didn't hang on to that kind of glory, and humbly set it aside - for you and me?"

That's the amazing thing and the amazing demonstration of humility in Jesus Christ incarnation! What blows the mind is that God the Son became a bondservant and dies for you and me.

Notice how Paul adds here in verse 6 - **He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.**

Again, this is another stunning declaration that should remove all doubt that Jesus Christ was equal with God the Father.

In fact, the word Paul uses here for equality is the word *isos* and it means exact equivalence. The word is used in the world of mathematics for the isosceles triangle - a triangle with equal sides; it's used in the field of science for isomers which are chemicals that differ in certain properties or structures but are identical in atomic weight.

So Jesus is distinct in His person from God the Father, but equally, eternally, divine.

Have you heard people say, "But wait, Jesus never really said He was God...He never said He was equal with God the Father."

And I want to respond by saying, "Have you ever read the New Testament?" The religious leaders wanted to kill Him because they clearly understood what He claimed to be.

For instance John 5:18 records; *This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. (ESV)*

This is the glory of Christ - **equal** to the Father. And He's about to demonstrate incredible humility in leaving His position and place of glory and splendor and descend to our dusty planet. He is going to give up His right to live like God. And He doesn't clutch the right He has to His glory - He releases it.

Jesus Christ had all the rights, honors and privileges of the Godhead - He lived in the unimaginable splendor of Almighty God - John describes His throne sitting on a sea of glass with lightning flashes around it and angels circling and singing, Holy, Holy, Holy.

Paul writes here at the end of verse 6 - *it wasn't something to be grasped*, or you can render it "clutched". He effectively opened His hands and allowed royal privileges to slip from His grasp.

The Son who has equal rights with the Father will literally give up His favored position with God the Father and God the Spirit and with humility descend the ladder from Heaven to Earth.

We want to climb the ladder....He voluntarily came down.

If you know anything about American automotive history, you know of a multi-millionaire genius named David Buick, who eventually lost his money and ended up in poverty or William Durant who forged a company he named General Motors by talking David Buick and a French race car driver named Louis Chevrolet into joining him. More than 50 men became millionaires by hitching their wagon to his creative genius. But like Buick, Durant eventually lost control of the company along with his fortune and he too went bankrupt. In fact, his last job was managing a bowling alley in Flint Michigan until his death around 70 years ago.

What incredible reversal of fortunes! They pale in significance when you consider the splendor of living like God in the luxury of eternity - but then, voluntarily releasing your grasp and descending from riches to rags to live and die for mankind.

Jesus Christ demonstrated His humility not by grasping, but by giving.

Point #2: Jesus Christ not only surrendered the right to live like God, He surrendered the right to act like God.

Paul goes on to write in verse 7, **But emptied Himself...**

**He emptied Himself:** Theologians refer to this as the "kenosis of Christ - the emptying of Christ" taken from the verb *kenow*.

The question is, of what exactly did He empty Himself? Did He cease to become God?

The original word translated "emptied" is *kenow*, can be understood to mean, "to empty ones' hands." In every other instance of the New Testament of this verb - "to empty" - it means to deprive something of its use. This verb is a graphic expression of His self-renunciation and His refusal to use what He had to His own advantage.

Jesus is literally giving up His right to act at will like the God He is! Which is exactly what you see happening in the gospel accounts of His life and ministry.

His miracles were never for His own comfort - they were always for the benefit of others. In fact, most often His miracles made His own life more difficult. But that's the point. Jesus gave up the right to act out His attributes for His own benefit.

He could have smashed His way through history. He could have pulled rank any time He pleased. He could have manipulated everything to His own liking. The weather, His carpentry work, the family business! Yet, He was willing to grow to manhood in an insignificant form named Nazareth. He was willing to be a carpenter with no halo wrapped around His head or Superman suit beneath His robe. In fact He was so ordinary, that when He announced who He was, even His half-brother and sisters did not believe Him....the Messiah? Not a chance! Him?... God? No way!

Will He stand up for His divine right and eliminate all opposition and vindicate His claim?

No....The kenosis - the incarnation - was a voluntary deprivation of the exercise of who He was.

Verse 7, **He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant.** There's that word again – *morphe* - the very nature and essence of a servant – You see Jesus isn't just taking on the appearance of a servant – He's taking on the very nature of servant hood!

Paul is careful here to communicate that Jesus didn't give up His Divine nature; He added another nature to His Divine nature.

Jesus didn't just become a man – He, the Sovereign Lord chose to become the lowest class of man, in fact Paul uses the word *doulos* here. Unfiltered, that means slave.

A *doulos* had no personal rights, they lived to fulfill the will of their master, they owned nothing, everything they had either belong to their master or was borrowed.

The church in Philippi was struggling with the normal issues of personality, power and priority - the grasping and the clutching. The way of the world would have told them - "That's the way to live! The measure of success is determined by how many people serve you!"

Jesus Christ is demonstrating that the measure of success is in how many people you serve.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, among other duties, a slave was required to carry other people's burdens. To carry their load; to do their heavy lifting...He's still serving you and me today.

Did Jesus really live like that? Have you read the Gospels? Jesus borrowed: a place to be born; a place to sleep; a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee; an animal to ride into Jerusalem upon; a house to sleep in; a room in which to eat with His disciples; a tomb in which He was buried; He borrowed everything!

He was the only person to walk the face of this earth with the right to have anything He wanted. Yet He never took advantage of His divine right nor did He claim special privileges.

He surrendered the right to live like God and the right to act like God.

Now the last thing Paul wants the church in Philippi - and us - to conclude is something like, "Well, isn't that wonderful of Jesus? Isn't he amazingly humble?"

He is...but that's not the application. Go back to verse 5 where Paul began: have this attitude in **You** which was also in Christ Jesus.

This isn't just for Jesus. This is for you...and me....this is for the church.

This is the way we are all to live. To voluntarily surrender our rights for the sake of others - and for the glory of God.

In his book on Friendship, Ted Engstrom wrote of a wife who demonstrated this kind of selfless, gracious, loving servant hood.

Her husband had been paralyzed later in life. The author included a letter that this paralyzed man wrote to his grown son, describing the example of his mother's servant spirit. He writes:

Son, few men know what it's like to receive appreciation for taking their wives out to dinner when it entails what it does for us. For us it means that she has to dress me, shave me, brush my teeth, comb my hair, wheel me out of the house and into the garage; take the pedals off my chair, stand me up, then turn me and sit me down in the seat, then twist me around so that I'm comfortable; fold the wheelchair, put it in the car, go around to the other side of the car, start it up, back it out, then get out and close the garage door, get back in and drive to the restaurant; then she gets out of the car, unfolds the wheelchair, opens the door, spins me around, stands me up, seats me in the wheelchair, pushes the pedals out, closes and locks the car, wheels me into the restaurant, then takes the pedals off the wheelchair so I won't be uncomfortable. We sit there and have dinner - which means she feeds me one bite at a time throughout the entire meal. When it's over, she pays the bill, pushes me out to the car again and reverses the same tedious routine. When it's all over and finished and we're back inside the house, she'll look at me and say, "Honey, thank you for taking me out to dinner."

I never know quite what to say.

Words are hard to find in the face of genuine selfless servanthood.

Paul is saying, look, if Jesus Christ can give up these incredible divine rights....who are we to hang on to ours?

Selfless, humble attitudes overflow into selfless, humble actions of grace and love.

And we grow just a little bit more into the image of the Son of God, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Come....grow with me.....

## ***Chief***

*If you want to know more about CHIEF Ministries or would like to be a part of this, please go to [www.chiefministries.com](http://www.chiefministries.com) and [www.chiefshouse.org](http://www.chiefshouse.org)*

*Christ's*

*Heart*

*In*

*Every*

*Felon*

