

## Philippians 2:5-8

*“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 permanence of His reign.”* [James Montgomery Boice]

### 1. Jesus Christ voluntarily surrendered the right to live like God.

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 that part of a person which, in any circumstance, remains the same. It is their nature. This could be easily rendered, “Who, existing unchangeably in the nature of God.”

Jesus Christ existed in eternity past and will exist into eternity future as the very unchanging essence of deity. *Who, being*” = existing in His unchangeable nature = “*in the form of God.*”

The word translated as “*form*” is the Greek word “*morphe*” and it refers to the outward display of an 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.*” (*Colossians 1:15*) The Greek word “*prototokos*” is the word “*firstborn*” of creation and it doesn’t refer to someone who was first of creation to be born. The Greek word actually means that He preceded creation and is first over it all.

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 Jesus was born physically.

Verse 6, “*He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.*” The word Paul uses here for *equality* – is the word “*isos*” and it means exact equivalence.

- The word is used in mathematics for the isosceles triangle – a triangle with equal sides
- It is used in the field of science for isomers – which are chemicals that differ in certain properties or structure but are identical in atomic weight
- Jesus is distinct in His person from God the Father, but equally, eternally, divine
- Jesus claimed to be God and equal with God in *John 5:15-18* and *John 8:56-59*
- This is the glory of Christ – *equal* to the Father

**Vs. 6** – In verse 6 this Scripture is the demonstration of the incredible humility of Jesus in leaving His position and place of glory and splendor and descend to our planet. He is going to give up the right to live like God.

Remember the temptation of Jesus by Satan (*Matthew 4:3* – turn stones into bread – *Matthew 4:6* call on angels to catch Him from falling.)

At the end of verse 6, “*it wasn’t something to be grasped.*” The word “*grasped*” can be rendered, “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 do it with humility.

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

Verse 7, “*But emptied Himself.*” Theologians refer to this as the “kenosis of Christ – the emptying of Christ” taken from the verb “*kenow.*”

Rienecker, a linguist, writes, “*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.*”

## Philippians 2:5-8

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.

Repeatedly in the gospels we see Jesus challenged by the religious leaders for His miracles, or being accused of misconduct when He performed a miracle such as when the Jews accused Him of misconduct for healing on the Sabbath. Another example is when He was accused of casting out demons in the power of demons, meaning He was possessed by a demon. But that's the point . . . Jesus *gave up the right* to act out His attributes for His own benefit.

Paul describes this act of humility in verse 7, "*He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant.*" "*The form of a servant*" is the word "*morphe*" meaning the very nature and essence of a servant.

Jesus isn't just taking on the appearance of a servant; He's taking on the very nature of servanthood. 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. Paul uses the word "doulos" which is "slave."

Here's the importance of this concept – The sovereign assumes the status of a slave. A doulos, or slave, had no personal rights. They lived to fulfill the will of their master. They owned nothing; everything they had either belonged to their master or was borrowed.

The church in Philippi was struggling with the normal issues of personalities wanting power and prestige (they were grasping and clutching.) Jesus Christ is demonstrating that the measure of success is in how many people we, as Christians, can serve. In the first 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 us today. Here's one way Jesus lived like a bond-servant:

With His disciples, Jesus wrapped a towel around His waist and demonstrated that He indeed had come to be a Servant and to serve, so He washed His disciple's feet.

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
- An upper room in which to eat the Passover with His disciples
- A tomb in which He was buried

He borrowed everything!! He was the only person to walk the face of the earth with the right to have anything He wanted. Yet He never took advantage of His divine right nor did He ever claim special privileges. He surrendered the right to live like God and He surrendered the right to act like God.

Here is the main point. Verse 5, "*Have this attitude in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" This servanthood 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.

Paul is saying, "If Jesus Christ gave 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, and Jesus Christ.

What in my life do I need to let go?