

*Lesson 7*  
**The Mind of Christ**

Philippians 2:1-8

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Today I will attempt to do an exposition of one of the most amazing and profound passages in all the Bible. My very best attempt at sound preaching will be but a puny effort, for there are no words to describe this passage. Perhaps you would do better, after this sermon, to go home and, on your knees, pour over the sacred words yourself. I assure you, when you get off your knees, you will have a deeper adoration and appreciation for the person and work of Christ.
- B. By way of background, the Philippian Church had very few problems. There was no doctrinal heresy or immoral conduct. However, if the Devil cannot reach Christians one way, he will try another. In the church at Philippi, there were some insipient forms of fighting and feuding among the congregation so that their testimony to the world was being hindered. In 1:27, Paul appeals to these Christians to stop wrangling and “stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.” Christian unity is not an option but a necessity if the local church is going to make an impact upon the world for Christ. NOTE: As much as we Christians intellectually know we should be striving for unity, many of us are not doing much about it. We somehow rationalize that our critical attitude is all right, our negative spirit is acceptable, and our gossip is not so bad as long as we are doing it against someone else but not he to us. Unity comes when there is one mind, one spirit, one heart and one bond in the gospel cause. Fighting within the local church destroys the power of Christ in the midst of His people, and the outside world mocks Christ because of the carnal actions of Christians.

II. THE MIND OF CHRIST AND CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE 2:1-4

A. Appeal for Unity (1-2)

1. ***If (since) you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,*** -- The “if” seems as though there is some doubt about these virtues but the Greek leaves no room for uncertainty, for it should be translated, “If and it is true” or “Since it is true.” There is encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness and compassion because of a Christian’s spiritual union

with Jesus Christ. Because the Christian receives encouragement from Christ, he can encourage others. Since the Christian is comforted by Christ's love, he can comfort others in love. Since the Holy Spirit brings a bond of fellowship to all Christians, they can strive for unity and achieve it. Since in Christ we Christians have found tenderness and compassion, we can show these virtues to others, motivating us to establish unity in the church. NOTE: This is a plea by the Apostle Paul for these Philippians to be the kind of church the Lord wanted them to be, and try to be the kind of church Paul had planned for them to be. Our treatment of others is always a measure of our sense of having been blessed by God. The more we understand God's love towards us in Christ, the more we will show love to others. Jesus taught this same truth to Simon, the arrogant Pharisee, who could not understand why he would allow a prostitute to minister to Him. In Luke 7, He said, "He who is forgiven little loves little." The point is obvious: to the degree we understand our own spiritual need and appreciate all God has done for us in Christ, we will be able to humble ourselves before one another, loving as Christ loved us. If we regard ourselves as having been forgiven little, then we will be stingy in our forgiveness of others.

2. ***Then make my joy complete*** -- Paul was happy with the salvation and spiritual growth of the Philippians but he would be overjoyed or jump for joy when he heard and saw the Philippian Church had true unity. NOTE: What kind of church pleases God and man? A church where there is harmony, love and fellowship among the Christians. This can happen in a small church or a large church because it is a matter of attitude not circumstances.
  
3. ***By being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.***  
-- The local church which pleases God must have a spirit of oneness, unity and harmony. This is a oneness around the gospel or the work of Jesus Christ. If all are submitted to Christ, there will be submission to one another. Paul is calling for unity of thought, unity of feeling, unity of Spirit and unity of purpose. NOTE: The thrust of Howell Branch Fellowship, must be the propagation of the gospel, by each and every member in Orlando and the four corners of the earth.

We have all heard the saying, "Idle hands are the Devil's tools." This can apply to spiritual activity as well. Christians soaking in God's Word and not giving it out will become the Devil's tool, for they will develop a stagnate and critical attitude. Christians should be very active in spiritual works such as praying studying the Bible, teaching, visiting, witnessing and socializing. Today, Christians are too busy doing everything but the Lord's work. Being too busy for God's work is a sin!

B. Appeal for Humility (3-4)

1. ***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*** -- The congregation which pleases the Lord

must have a spirit of humility; that is, all selfish interests and human pride must be subjected to the interests and welfare of another Christian. D. L. Moody said, "Selfishness is tearing others down and vain conceit is building ourselves up." The word "humility" really means "lowliness of mind." In lowliness of mind, Christians are to consider others better than themselves. How do we interpret the thought of "better?" Obviously, some Christians are smarter than others, some are more educated than others, some are more talented than others. Are we to ignore these facts? No, because Paul is talking about "importance." The NASB translates this, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each one regard one another as more important than himself." We are to view every other Christian as more important to the body of Christ than we are. It is very difficult to say, "That person is better than me" when he may not be in various ways, but we can say, "That person's interests are more important than mine." NOTE: Each Christian must realize that all he has is by the grace of God and if he is in any way superior to another Christian, it is all God's doing (**1 Cor. 4:7: For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?**). Each Christian is to think of himself as the least important Christian in the church. This is what real humility is. Humility is not, "Ah, shucks, I'm really nothing. I'm nobody. I'm a worm." NOTE: A mind of humility is giving up personal rights and wants for the rights and wants of others. So often we hear Christians say or imply, "I have my rights and I'm going to cling to my rights no matter what any other Christian does or says!" That is not a mind of humility.

H. A. Ironside used to tell a story that is appropriate to the rights question. When he was a boy of only eight or ten years of age, his mother took him to a business meeting of Christians. Two men were having a quarrel -- he didn't remember what it was about -- but one of them stood up and pounded on the desk and said, "I don't care what the rest of you do, all I want is my rights." sitting in the front row was a dear old Scottish man, somewhat hard of hearing, who cupped his hand behind his ear, leaned forward and said, "Aye, brother, what's that you say? What do you want?" The fellow said, "Well, I just said that all I want is my rights, that's all." And the old Scot replied, "Your rights, brother, is that what you want, your rights? If you had your rights, you'd be in hell. The Lord Jesus didn't come to get his rights, he came to get his wrongs. And he got them." The fellow who had been bickering stood transfixed for a moment. Then he sat down and said, "You're right. Settle it any way you like."

2. ***Each one of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*** -- The local church which pleases God has a spirit of helpfulness; that is, each Christian is interested in every other Christian and will desire to be a help. Now Paul tells us what humility is: it is looking after the interests of others rather than our own interests. NOTE: Notice carefully Paul does not say we Christians should never look out after our own interests. He never says we are to abandon our interests, never thinking about self. We ought at times to think about ourselves -- "not only to your own interests" -- but the question is in what order? God first, others second and me last. The secret to harmony and unity is not found in pursuing our own interests, but in looking out

for the interests of others. Unity is only possible through humility as we deal with our pride and our desire to pursue our own selfish advantage.

After being married for over 50 years, a man revealed the secret to his successful marriage. He said, "Well, the wife and I had this agreement when we first got married. When she was bothered about something, she jus' tell me and git it off her chest. And if I was mad about somethin', I was to take a long walk. I 's'ppose you could attribute our successful marriage to the fact that I have mostly led an outdoor life." This man was committed to unity!

NOTE: If we are looking after the interests of others, we would have very few conflicts. What is strife? It is conflict of interests. Two parties wanting their rights, their way, their desires, their goals. Why conflict in the local church? Because Christians are doing their own thing which ultimately results in a spiritual collision. We cannot collide with another Christian if we put his interests first. NOTE: Each Christian has the same position before God, each is loved equally by God and each is equally precious to God. Christians differ only in personality, cultural status and IQ. But, even these are from God, so we can't boast about them. God wants us to use these things to glorify Him and to serve others. We are basically what we are and that cannot be changed. Our personality can be refined and mellowed by the Holy Spirit but not changed. NOTE: Christians also differ in spiritual gifts and each Christian needs the gift of the other Christian. One time I heard a man speak and he opened his sermon with the words, "Every Christian is in some way my superior." That hit me like a ton of bricks, for it is true. Every other Christian has something to teach me.

### III. THE MIND OF CHRIST IN EXAMPLE 2:5-8

- A. Exhortation to Christians (5): ***Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*** -- The KJV says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ." Paul will use Jesus Christ as the supreme example of humility, and we Christians are to show that kind of humility of mind. Christians cannot copy Christ in His redemptive acts but can follow or copy the example of Christ in His attitudes in carrying out His redemptive acts. NOTE: Verses 6-8 contain some heavy theology, but we must notice that Paul never divorces doctrine from the practical. Paul did not say, "We have had enough of this practical stuff, now lets get doctrinal." Paul does not teach theology (doctrine) just to fill people's minds with facts but gives theology to direct our lives and to change our way of living.
- B. Example of Christ ( 6-8)
  1. ***Who, being in very nature God,*** -- Christ, in His preincarnate state, was the second person of the Trinity who always existed in essence and nature as God.

Jesus Christ had the same qualities or attributes of God because He was one in essence or substance with God. This is saying that Christ is, was and will be God from eternity to eternity.

2. ***Did not consider equality with God something to be grasped***, -- Jesus Christ from all eternity was equal with God because He was God. The Lord Jesus was co-eternal and co-equal with the Father, sharing the glory of the Trinity (***John 17:5: And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.***). The glory of the Triune God was His. The eternal Son, in his sacrificing spirit, did not feel that He had to grasp tightly to this glory but was willing to set it aside. NOTE: Jesus Christ willingly and voluntarily set aside His glory for a purpose far more important than His own interests and that was to redeem men from sin.
  
3. ***But made himself nothing***, -- This really says Christ emptied Himself. What did He empty Himself of? He did not empty Himself of all or some of His attributes as the liberals say or He would be less than God, which would contradict this passage and other passages in the Bible which state that Christ is God. The Lord did not give up the possession of His attributes but the expression of them. When He emptied Himself, He veiled His glory and voluntarily restricted the independent use of his attributes. It was absolutely necessary that Christ put certain limitations on Himself because He had become a man. NOTE: Christ stripped Himself of the robes of glory, and covered Himself with the rags of humanity. Why? So that He could redeem men from sin and bring them to God. Milton said,

*“That glorious Form, that light insufferable*

*He laid aside: and here with us to be,*

*Forsook the courts of everlasting day,*

*And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.”*

4. ***Taking the very nature of a servant***, -- The eternal Son laid aside His glory to become a man. He became the God-Man, the one mediator between God and man (***1 Tim. 2:5: For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...***). As a man, he experienced all that men experience – he cried, rejoiced, felt pain, hungered, thirsted, knew temptation and even died. He was a man in every sense of the word; yet He was a special man in that He was the God-Man sent as a servant (slave) (***Mark 10:45: For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.***). NOTE: Christ, as a servant, surrendered His human will to the Father and was in constant submission to the Father’s will. NOTE: Christ took a human body, spirit and soul into union with His divine nature; yet he remained what He always was the eternal Son of God.

5. ***And being found in appearance as a man***, -- Jesus Christ was a man but He was free from sin. He was like man but did not have a sinful nature. NOTE: Jesus Christ was perfect and could not err. The liberals say that when He became Man, He subjected Himself to the human liability to error, as all other men. I find it impossible to associate mistakes with Deity. Limitations, yes, voluntarily assumed; but not errors.
6. ***He humbled himself*** -- Oh what humility it took for the Son to leave His eternal palace and become a man. For Christ to be made flesh was more humility than for angels to be made worms. It would be like taking a beautiful diamond and throwing it into a pigpen. NOTE: It would have been wonderful if Christ would have been a king among men, sitting on a throne. That would have been humiliation, from the eternal throne of God, even if He had been the most highly honored among men. But being a man, He still humbled Himself. He became a poor man; He became a hated man. They tried to kill Him. He still further humbled Himself and suffered poverty. He had nowhere to lay His head. They had to borrow a manger for Him in which to be born; they had to borrow a grave in which to bury Him. He was not only a man. He came down to the lowest strata of society. He became a despised man. How often have we sung "Ivory Palaces"

*"Out of the ivory palaces into a world of woe.*

*Only his great eternal love made my Savior go."*

7. ***And became obedient to death—even death on a cross!*** -- Submitting His will to the Father, Christ, knowing full well all the implications of His horrible, ignominious death, gladly went to the Cross to die. God became man and died for sinful people. How could it happen, we do not know; that it did happen we are assured. Charles Wesley said it well, "Tis mystery all! The immortal dies!" Why did he die? He died to redeem sinners from sin and hell. When He went to the Cross, He had every person who would trust Him in mind. He knew them by name. He gladly humbled Himself, leaving eternal glory, to die a humble death. Why? Because He loved all those who would ever trust Him as a personal Savior. NOTE: There was no other way to redeem men. This was God's way and Christ was a humble servant, giving His life a ransom for many. There had to be a perfect sacrifice, an atonement of infinite value. This could be accomplished only by a person who was both God and man, who was without sin and yet was truly a man, representing the human race. Only Christ could atone for sin. NOTE: Such humility! As a man, He was mocked, scoffed at, spit upon, beaten and nailed to a Roman stake. That was the depths of humility Christ underwent to save men. If anyone ever had the right to demand his rights, our Lord did. But he set His rights and interests aside that He might further the interests of others. That is true humility. As another poet said,

*“Was it the nails, O Savior, that bound Thee to the Tree?  
Nay twas Thine everlasting love, Thy love for me, for me.”*

The poet E. H. Swinstead said,

*“Though he was rich, so rich,  
Yet for our sakes, how poor he became!  
Even his garments they parted  
When he hung on the cross of shame.  
All that he had he gave for me,  
That I might be rich through eternity.”*

#### IV. CONCLUSION

A. Saved. What is the point of this whole illustration of Christ for us Christians? Christians are to have a humble, submissive, self-sacrificing spirit towards one another, for Christ is the supreme example of humbleness. Because Christ came to serve and not be served, we Christians are to serve and not be served.

#### B. Unsaved

1. For you here without Christ, do you realize what Christ did there on the Cross? Do you realize Christ left heavens glory to redeem sinners like you?
2. You can realize this and become a child of God by placing your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.