

Philippians 2:5-11

A Hymn celebrating Christ for the Church.

Introduction. In the church at Philippi there was disunity which effected their fellowship and witness. Paul challenges them to work together with one mind. They were also in danger of putting the law ahead of the Gospel (see also the church at Galatia), and claiming perfectionism and living selfishly. The church is the focus. Note the pattern of Christ's pre-existence, humility, obedience and exaltation.

V. 5 *'In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus'*. Jesus' unique role as Lord and Saviour cannot be imitated by his disciples but his humility and obedience to his heavenly Father can be followed. The church is called to be 'like Christ (Rm. 8:29) and long that he be 'formed in them' (Gal. 4:19).

V. 6. *'who, being in very nature (form) God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage'*: The focus is on Christ's humility, but his divine nature is made explicit. Christ chose not to use his divine nature to avoid normal human limitations, suffering and pain. However, he does not lose his divine nature.

V. 7. *'rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness'*. This was Christ's own choice and it was a real incarnation (God the Son coming among us, Jn. 1:1ff). Christ chose to take up the nature (form) of a servant to become a real human the man Jesus, while paradoxically still divine.

V. 8. *'And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!'*. Jesus' key work of humility and obedience climaxed in the cross. Elsewhere Paul spells out the significance of the death of Christ on the cross, see Rm. 5:8, *'While we were still sinners Christ died for us'*, and Rm. 6:23, *'the wages of sin is death'* (Read on!). See also Gal. 3:10ff.

V. 9. *'Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place...'*. Through his obedience Jesus is 'exalted', his divine status affirmed. 'Highest place, name above every name' = the divine name.

Vv. 10-11. *'that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...knowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord'*. Jesus honoured as Lord = the OT and NT reference to God. Jesus Christ's humble service of self-sacrifice gives glory to God the Father.

Reflection/Response. How do we as a church express love and unity which reflects the humble obedient example of Jesus Christ?

How do we honour Jesus as Lord in our witness to others? BB