

THE SEVEN DOWNWARD STEPS OF CHRIST

The Great Divesture of Our Lord



Philippians 2:5

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”

B r o o k y R S t o c k t o n

Seven Downward Steps of Christ

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Brooky R Stockton, Ph.D.

Pastor / Professor Theology, ret.

PO Box 884

Tijeras, New Mexico (87059)

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Dedication

To John and Nan Walden of Colorado Springs — faithful servants of the Lord; Founders of the Christian Home for Children.

Preface

When I was a young man finishing up college, our fellowship invited John Walden from Colorado Springs to speak at our Bible Study.

As young, idealistic college students we sang a song called, "I Wanna Be Like Jesus."

Afterward, Pastor Walden led us in a study of Philippians 2:5-12. After seeing the great divestiture of our Lord, His humility, and His submission to the death of the cross, all were stunned.

Our group never sang the song again nor did any of us dare pray to be like the Lord.

Q: Do you wanna be like Jesus?

Caution: Following Him means a step down.

Brooky Stockton, ret. pastor / teacher.



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Dr. Brooky Stockton

P.O. Box 1452

Tijeras, New Mexico – 87059

Introduction to the Seven Downward Steps of Christ

Philippians 2:5-12

The Great Divestiture of our Lord

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is one of the loveliest passages in the Crown Jewels of Sacred Literature because it reveals the humble mind of Christ.

It is my favorite, and the one that has impacted my life more than any other. It challenges me to think like Christ, to be swallowed up with greatness of His humility, and to adopt His humility.

Yet, in a world grasping for health and wealth, few Christians seem to value discovering the attitude of our Savior.

If I were to advertise a seminar on “How to Triple Your Money in the Stock Market this Year,” or “How to Develop Self-Esteem in your Child,” the auditorium would be packed. But, if I offered a seminary course on “How to Have the Attitude of Christ,” who would show up?

The Philippian church was a divided church occupied with personality differences. In troubled associations pride, self-interest, have replace love and sacrifice. Philippian 2:5-12 is the remedy for conflict, clashes, and clangs in marriages and relationships. Throw in the sweetness of Christ and feuds fail.

The problem is that modern men are into self-esteem and not Christ esteem. Who really wants to be like Jesus? Whoever met a teenager that said, "When I grow up, I want to be like Christ?"

They don't esteem what God esteems. Men want to be like sports heroes, movie stars, and be rich like John D. Rockefeller/

Nevertheless, let's take a look at the thinking of our Lord Jesus.

The Command: "**Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ**" is a command. It is not a suggestion.

The text begins with a present imperative enjoining us to continually strive to cultivate the mind of Christ; that is, to think like Him. Easier said than done!

By "**mind**" the apostle is referring to the thinking of Christ and the lack of selfish ambition in his walk through life. The command to esteem (to place first) the concerns of (2:3) and to look (scope out) out for the interest of others is an imperative. It is not a great suggestion or good choice, but a command.

The mind of Christ is illustrated with the seven downward steps of His humiliation.

1. Step One: A Selfless Attitude

Philippians 2:6

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God”

◆ **“Being in the form of God”** is a direct statement regarding the deity of Christ. The word “being” is from the Greek verb (huparchein) which is not the common Greek word for “being.” This word describes the immutable essence of a man and that which cannot be changed. It describes that part of existence, in any circumstances, remains the same.

Paul begins by saying that Jesus was essentially and unalterably Divine, very God of God sharing the glory and majesty of His Being.

He was more than good teacher or prophet. Our text confirms Jesus was truly of the same substance as God bearing His nature. A good teacher, you can ignore. Being Divine, no man can afford to neglect.

What is it like to be a king dressed in royal, violet-sapphire apparel, a golden crown, and shining light – light that brushes grey into the red-yellow-blue colors of dawn?

In eternity, in His Father’s Heavenly Palace, Jesus knew the glory, radiance, and honor of being the Son of God – of being the heartbeat of the stars. A rainbow of colors flashed before his angels like stage lights on a performer. Choirs with a hundred-thousand voices lent their talent to sing His praises. So bright was the flashing display of glory, seraphim covered their faces as if looking at a comet’s tail flashing with colors of the rainbow racing beneath the clouds.

In this golden eternal state, the Father commissioned His Son to surrender Heaven’s riches, to leave the beauty and comfort of heaven and descend to earth to be a man in order to save sinners from their sins.

Lacking in the Son was any sense of greed, covetous, selfish ambition, jealousy, competition, or aspiration. He chose the finite over the infinite; the limitation of man rather than the boundlessness of God; the cloudy perspective of humanity over the clarity of Divinity; the physical world marred by sin rather than the purity of Paradise; the smog of earth rather than the freshness of Heaven; service among sinners rather than being served by holy angels.

Perhaps, the most stunning thought is that Jesus is a man and will be a man for all eternity – a King with nail pierced hands – a slaughtered Lamb – a Risen Savior who was not ashamed to call us “brethren” (John 20:17).

“**Mind**” (phroneo) refers to the basic orientation, bent, and thought patterns of one’s thinking processes, rather than to the intellect itself.

When announcing this in the present tense (continuous action, lifestyle), active voice (personal decision of the will), and imperative mood (command not suggestion), Paul calls us to be self-less like Christ; to adopt His values and live life from His perspective; to be a tree that surrenders its blossoms to spread beauty everywhere; to be a sculpture that chooses not to build his own monuments, but to build marvels for others; to stop talking about self, and to listen to the needs of others; to be a candle that burns in the darkness; to illuminate goodness without asking for thanks; to be a light burning in the sky so others can find their way.

Self-interest and setting aside time for personal needs is not wrong; but, pursuing personal gain like a greedy squirrel at the expense of others is not going to help anyone through a cold winter.

We must give up the “scarcity” mindset and ask God to give us treasures from His storehouse in order to relieve the stress of those on the treadmill of life. Success in life is not those with the most stuff, but those who give the most so others don’t have it so rough.

“Bits & Pieces” illustrates the futility of greed in Leo Tolstoy’s story about a peasant farmer who was not satisfied with his portion in life. He wanted it all. One day he received a generous offer. For 1000 rubles, he could buy all the land he could walk around in a day. The only catch in the deal was that he had to be back at his starting point by sundown. Exhausting himself in a mad dash marathon to cover as much territory as possible, the farmer realized he was far from home. In the afternoon, he picked up his pace. Sweat rolled down his forehead. His heart raced. As the sun began to sink below the horizon he came within sight of the finish line. Gasping for breath, his heart pounding, he called upon every bit of strength left in his body and staggered across the line just before the sun disappeared. He immediately collapsed, blood streaming from his mouth. In a few minutes, he was dead. Afterwards, his servants dug a grave. It was not much over six feet long and three feet wide. (“How Much Land Does a Man Need?”)

At a Christian-Passover Service no one is allowed to fill their own cup with wine. All are treated as kings and queens; that is, another Christian must fill their glass.

A great man is a selfless man. Men fall because their internal compass shifts: from duty to indulgence, from sacrifice to consumption, from the transcendent to the trivial.

Let us be selfless like Christ — a Son Who left His Father’s warm house to work in a cold field; to be self-less like Christ — a shepherd leaving the ninety-nine to seek the one lost sheep; like Christ who poured Himself out so others never thirst; like the rain — falling on every field without asking which crop deserves to grow.”

Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2. Step Two: Divestiture

Philippians 2:7

“He Emptied Himself”

◆ The KJV reads, “But made himself of no reputation . . .”

Contrast Paul’s presentation of Christ with modern man’s fascination with self, tattoos, and presumptions. Modern man is absolutely fascinated with self; “self-image,” “self-esteem,” “self-realization,” and “selfie” pictures. There is even a publication called “Self Magazine.” — a journal about women, by women, and for women that reaches 20 million women each month.

Divestiture comes from the verb “emptied himself” (kenosis). Thus, theologians have developed “Kenosis Theories” that raise questions about what Christ gave up when He became a man.

Some wrongly conclude that He gave up his deity; that is, in becoming man, He gave up His intransient attributes like omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence.

Others infer that our Lord did not know that He was the Creator of the world, or that He did not realize who He was until His baptism. Such speculations boggle the mind.

Most conservative theologians reason that in becoming man, Christ did not give up His deity as much as He gave up the glory, splendor, and honor associated with deity. He did not give up His Divine attributes as much as He assumed the nature and status of a man. This is called the hypostatic union. Christ was truly divine and truly man.

While on earth, our Lord did not cease to be God; but, He lived life without adorning himself with the majesty and physical manifestation of the Divine nature.

For a glimpse of that which He divested Himself, consider the amazing events on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Let's look at an illustration from *Today in the Word*, April 3, 1992. A reception honoring musician Sir Robert Mayer on his 100th birthday, elderly British socialite Lady Diana Cooper fell into conversation with a friendly woman who seemed to know her well. Lady Diana's failing eyesight prevented her from recognizing her fellow guest, until she peered more closely at the magnificent diamonds and realized she was talking to Queen Elizabeth! Overcome with embarrassment, Lady Diana curtsied and stammered, "Ma'am, oh, ma'am, I'm sorry ma'am. I didn't recognize you without your crown!" The queen graciously replied, "It was so much Sir Robert's evening that I decided to leave it behind."

When Messiah came to earth, he left his crown (glory) behind. In becoming man, there was no regret and no envy of the Father by the Son.

Orthodox Christians reason this way:

Kenosis, from the Greek for "emptying," describes Jesus' voluntary act of setting aside the privileges and outward expression of his divine glory to become a man and taking the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7)

It was a profound act of humility and self-renunciation, **not** a loss of divinity. In His kenosis our Lord veiled His divine attributes (like omnipotence, omniscience, and shining brilliance) behind His humanity to fully encounter genuine, human life. He did not, however, yield the substance of deity or his attributes of justice, love, and mercy. In His kenosis, He became a model for believers to empty themselves of pride and selfish ambition in order to serve the needs of others. He gave without expecting anything in return.

He was the King stepping down from His throne to walk with the common man — an ocean poured into a cup. His was an open hand without a grasping fist; a mighty warrior laying down his sword to bring peace to mankind; like soil absorbed by the roots so flowers can bloom; like a mother bird that feeds her chicks before she feeds herself.

3. Step Three: Servanthood

Philippians 2:7

“Who, being in the form (morphe) of God . . . Taking the form (morphe) of a servant, and was made in the likeness (homoióma) of men. And being found in fashion (schema) as a man . . .”

◆ The text refers to Jesus taking on the “form” (morphe) of a servant even though he was in the form (morphe) of God Both are the same word (“morphe”).

First, we must try to understand the Greek terms used in this section of Scripture.

There are three Greek words that impact the theology of verses 7 & *8: The words “form” (morphe); “likeness” (homoloma) in verse 7; and “fashion” (schema) in verse 8.

There are two Greek words for **form**, “morphe” and “schema.” Both must be translated “form” because there is no other English equivalent. However, they do not mean the same thing.

Morphe describes a condition that never alters — the internal, unchanging *essential nature* of a thing or person. For instance: Jesus is in the form of deity; i.e. His *eternal nature* does **not** change; likewise he took on the *morphe* of a human being; that is, He was truly a human. That He took on the form (morphe) of a servant refers not to his nature but *to his mind set*.

Schema describes a temporal, outward, external state which can change from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance (See verse 8): “and being found in the fashion (schema) of a man” with hair, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and body of a man. *Schema* can refer to that part of our

humanity which is continually changing – job, finances, status, health, age and condition.

Verse 8 tells us that he was “**fashioned**” (schema) like a man; i.e. he had the appearance of man and not an angel or spirit. He lived, walked, ate, slept, and moved like regular people.

A baby, a child, a boy, a youth, a man of middle age, or an old man always has **the *morphe* of humanity**, but the outward *schema* changes all the time (Barclay).

Homoloma refers to the fashion or external, temporary appearance of a thing.

The apostle states in verse 7 that Jesus was “made in the likeness (homoloma) of a man.” He took on the bodily **sameness** of a man; that is, He was not a phantom, ghost, or apparition. He did not wear a mask or pretend to be human. He was an authentic, flesh and blood, living man.

In Matthew 17: 2, Jesus was transfigured before them. “**Transfigured**” is a translation of the word *metamorphoo* (meaning *to change from*) – a revelation that the outward appearance of Jesus changed from one of common, plain humanity to one of exceptional divine magnificence. His nature as God did not change, but His external appearance changed back to the splendor He had in heaven before He became man.

Second, we must enter into the phenomenon of Jesus becoming a servant.

The text says our Lord took **the form (morphe) of a servant**; that is, He took on the attitudes and mindset of a slave (doulos).

Mark 10:4 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.

Moreover, He was the servant with a pierced ear (Exodus 21).

One of the questions my grandparents use to ask me as a boy was, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” My answer included being a big football star. This question is asked every boy and I do not know of any that would include the answer: “I want to be a servant or a butler or a bellhop when I grow up.” But, Jesus’ ambition was to be God’s servant.

Christians want to do big things for God because we live in a success driven world where men are dominated by the status of winning.

But, Jesus? He took **the form** (morphe) of a servant — enduring attitudes and mind set of an obedient slave with no rights: selfless, master minded, attentive, temperate, modest, frugal, disciplined, alert, obedient, positively polite, careful — the opposite of self-serving.

Dr. Samuel Brengle of the Salvation Army loosely translated this verse, “He girdeth Himself with a towel.”

Very fitting Jesus’ only tool in life was a towel used to wash the disciples feet.

Our Lord was not just any servant, He was the Servant of His Father committed to fulfilling His decrees on earth. Most of us serve our own desires, but Jesus could truly say, “Not my will, but Thy will be done.”

Many of us serve, but we lack a servant attitude . . . and a towel. We are easily annoyed and inconvenienced when we have to care for the needs of others. Not so with Christ. The Savior not only served, He possessed servant attitudes. Washing the disciples feet with a towel was not uncomfortable to Him. There was no tension between His royalty and His debasing service to His disciples.

Peter, however, felt the tension between Jesus’ majesty and His subservience to the twelve saying, “You (Lord and Master), are not going to wash my feet.”

Absent in His service among sinners was any sense of frustration, shame, annoyance, indignity, or resentment.

Our Lord was exceptionally comfortable serving the spiritual needs of self-righteous Nicodemus, an elite ruler of the Jews as He was in ministering to the spiritual needs of the Samaritan woman, a common, sinner among the Samaritans — a woman aware of her adulteries. He was at rest caring for the physical needs of the woman with an issue of blood with no power, and addressing the spiritual needs of Governor Pilate with absolute power. He was at ease confronting the arrogance of the Rich Young Ruler as He was at ease confronting the deficiencies of Mary and Martha.

Man of Sorrows, what a name
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim

Hallelujah, what a Savior

Bearing shame and scoffing rude
In my place condemned He stood
Sealed my pardon with His blood

Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

When the Servant-Son was tempted on the Mount of Temptation by Satan and urged to take leave of the painful fast commanded by the Father, He responded, “It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).

Most of us would have used his power to turn “stones” into a Thanksgiving Feast . . . but not the Son.

In Philip Keller’s marvelous book, “Sheep Dog,” Keller tells the story of a stray Australian sheep dog on his sheep ranch. Though Keller needed a dog for his ranch, the dog was a stray and avoided any contact with Keller.

Keller decided to feed the dog and not compel him to submit. After several weeks, the dog put his nose in Keller’s hand and gave himself to

the rancher. Keller trained the dog. The perfectly trained collie would heel, sit, bark, and herd sheep. Often the dog would go into a thicket to chase out wayward sheep and come out with all kinds of thorns in his side and paws. He was the perfect dog. When it came time to sell the ranch, Keller put his dog to sleep. In explaining why he did this Keller stated, "the dog had given himself to me completely." The ranch was sold and the dog's work was finished. He was mine and the dog trusted me. It was my decision to end his life. End of the answer.

Likewise, Jesus was God's Sheep Dog sent to earth to round up strays" "to seek and to save the lost." Ordered to the cross, Jesus obeyed. He was the *doulos* of God who from first to last. From beginning to end the Son was fully, wholly, totally dedicated to the will of God. One man on earth wholly, totally, completely committed to the will of God? What a special delight to Heaven's heart!

4. Step Four: Humanity

Philippians 2:7

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself”

◆ On that first Christmas morning the Son of God lay in that manger with two eyes, two ears, ten little fingers, and ten toes. He was truly man full of life subject to all the incumbrances that human beings face — a flower pedal in the rain delicate enough to bruise, yet brave enough to bloom.

This was a gigantic step down for the Son! For you and I to become an ant would not be half the step it took for the Son to become a flesh and blood man with all his physical and emotional limitations.

He gave up His freedom as a king in exchange for the fetters and chains of a slave. He consented to leave the brightness and clarity of His Father’s presence to work in the darkness where batty-sinners grow.

He was born a sentient man Who experienced all the subjective encumbrances that men feel in life: fatigue, hunger, pain, and temptation.¹ He learned how to crawl, to walk, to speak. He went through the growth stages of humanity: birth, circumcision, maturation, puberty, and adulthood, yet without sin.

As a man He knew the tension between being and having. He felt the human need for shelter, rest, and comfort . . . but had none of it.

¹ Encumbrances refers to the burdens, difficulties, obligations, and limitations that come with life, encompassing physical needs, emotional attachments, societal roles, financial debts, mental struggles, and existential challenges, making life a constant navigation on the sea of obstacles rather than a state of pure freedom, as famously explored in political philosophy and spiritual traditions (GAI).

Luke 9:58 And Jesus said unto him, **Foxes** have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

As a man he felt the need for relationship, fellowship, and companionship. Yet, no one understood Who He was or how the sins of men grated His soul.

Mark 1:35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

He felt heat, cold, sweat, and pain that humans feel. Scripture calls Him *a man of sorrows*. Being a sentient man means He was touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin. He had no depraved feelings or voracious appetites. Yet, He was like a glass harp, easily breakable.

The Greek-Orthodox Church, rightly understands Jesus as the God-man: fully divine, fully human (the Hypostatic Union). He was **not** a machine nor a super human with x-ray vision, brute force, faster than a speeding bullet. He was **not** He a human computer with artificial intelligence, a fictional corporation, Homo sapien, a walking primate, nor a legal entity.

Greek monks believe His humanity wasn't diminished but "divinized" through union with His divinity, making Him the model for authentic human life with all its joys and sorrows, culminating in the resurrection, which offers believers deliverance from the power of sin and the potential to grow in God-like character (Theosis).²

² Theosis: a core concept in Eastern Christianity, especially Orthodoxy, describing the spiritual journey of becoming united with God, sharing in His divine life, and growing into His likeness, not literally becoming God but participating in His uncreated energies through grace, purification (catharsis), and divine vision (theoria)

So important is the humanity of Christ in the Orthodox Church they set aside one Sunday a year to commemorate His humanity in order to prevent apostasy – the Feast of Circumcision (early January).

Jesus was a real, living, breathing man – a living soul full of justice, love, and mercy driven by devotion to please His Heavenly Father. His love is a lighthouse on a stormy sea. Its beams of light cuts through the dark-chaos of Jewish tradition, teaching hearts, and helping men find their way back to the Father (John 14:6).

Born of a woman meant He fulfilled the Mother Promise (the First Euangelion) – the Seed-Messiah that would redeem man, crush Satan, and restore Paradise lost (Genesis 3:15).

Though free from Adam’s sin, he understood that death was a locked door with no key and only silence behind it – an echo that shouted at Him from birth; the heart thump of the tomb behind every step.

Born of a virgin, he was truly a man, yet without sin; a man without Adam’s corrupt nature, without all the weaknesses, fleshly desires, and drives of carnal men – a man without humanity’s inherent tendency to rebel against God and trounce on His law.

As the Seed of Mary, He had no lust, greed, self-seeking interests, jealousy, or hatred. He was a holy man, qualified to be the Servant of the Lord, His High Priest and a pure unblemished-Sacrifice for the sins of men (Hebrews 4-5, 9).

As man He had a divine nature full of justice, love, and mercy – a beautiful man who attracted followers – a moral, ethical Being who was a true, honest, noble King who could be trusted with power – a Redeemer who discharged the debts of sinners on the cruel cross. A Savior who carried burdens like a man with an elephant on His chest.

Being a holy, devout man without sin qualified Him to be God’s Representative to mankind – to mediate the concerns of God to men.

Being a sentient, righteous man qualified Him to be our Mediator-High Priest and to represent our concerns before the Lord — a mountain spring that refreshes thirsty souls.

1 Timothy 2:5 For *there is* one God, and one **mediator** between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

He carried responsibility on His shoulders like a manly-man with true grit – unwavering, unbending, and uncompromised. For this reason He is called, “the mighty God, Rock of our Salvation, King of Kings, Alpha and Omega, Chief Cornerstone, The Lord Strong and Mighty, Horn of Salvation, and The Lion of the Tribe of Judah.”

A man of steel and velvet, the shadow of death followed every step of His ministry.

Though strong our Lord was like an open window in a July storm – inviting the breeze that cools the home, but risking the damage of blowing rain.

5. Step Five: Humility

Philippians 2:8

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself”

◆ Jesus being in the form of God not only became a man, He chose the life of a humble man — lowly, poor, and modest.

From the word “fashion” (schema), we get the word schematic. It is the same word we use to describe the electrical circuit on the back of a washer or dryer. Like all men, Jesus walked, ate, and talked like regular men. He was fully man. And, as a man, he endured all the frustrations and difficulties of manhood. He knew what it was like to be hungry, tired, and weary.

The word “**humble**” (tapeinoo) is an aorist verb meaning “to make low.” The English word comes from the thirteenth century Latin term, “humilis” which means “lowly,” or “on the ground.” *Humilis* is derived from the word *humus* (“earth”) which is linked to being close to the ground, modest, or of low status shares roots with “human” and “humiliate”— made from the dust signifying a connection to this “earth” (humus) ; that is, being grounded or brought low.

The object of the transitive verb is “himself;” i.e. he made Himself low, humble, and modest. He was a man made from the dust (humus) — common like soil from which all food is grown; like an ocean that reflects the sky; a candle in the dark that gives light without demanding attention; like the foundation of a house — unseen but everything depending on it; like a full cup of water ready to refresh the thirsty.

The first use of the term “humble” is found in Matthew 18:4 where Jesus admonishes men “to humble himself as this little child.” In saying this,

the audience seems unaware the Jesus was more humble than children – the most humble man to every walk on this earth.

Paul refers to the humility of Christ because the Philippians were embroiled in conflicts and divisions caused by pride (1:27-30; 4:2-3).

Through pride the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every vice, it's the complete anti-God state of mind." — C. S. Lewis

“There never have been, and never can be, and there never shall be any sin without pride” — St. Augustine.

Because of pride, Christians look more like devils than angels.

Proverbs reminds us “that **only** by pride comes contention” (13:10).

The Hebrew word for “pride” (zadown) is translated “presumptuously” in Deuteronomy 17:12 – a reference to the kind of spirit that resists the instructions of a priest to which the death penalty was attached. The term implies excessive self-confidence, boldness, and defiance of authority – arrogant, rude, and rebellious – a teenager demanding to express his opinion on important matters; a young female defendant telling a judge what to do; a young man wanting to drive the family car without being trained; a seed demanding fruit before sprouting; a baby chick flying before its wings are mature.

Our Lord was so humble He became living humus to save our souls.

Unlike the rest of us, Jesus had a choice of what kind of man to be.

He could have been born in Jerusalem, the City of Kings, but he was born in Bethlehem, the smallest of Jewish villages.

His first bed was not a white, fluffy mattress, but a crib – a slobber-soaked feeding trough in the farmer’s barn for sheep and goats.

He could have been born into a family of wealth and privilege, but he was born a carpenter’s son.

He could have been born in a sterile hospital surrounded by nurses, but he was born in a stable surrounded by farm animals.

He could have grown up in the city with all its fun and excitement, but he was raised in Nazareth, the “other side of the tracks” so to speak.

He could have been a doctor or lawyer or statesman, but he chose the occupation of a carpenter.

He could have owned a king’s wardrobe, but at the cross soldiers gambled for his only garment.

He could have been born rich, but when giving an illustration he had to borrow a penny.

One of His early miracles was catching fish for His disciples not providing food for Himself.

He was happy to heal a blind man born blind from birth immediately after the blind Pharisees threatened to assassinate him.

He was sustained by widows, not the resources of the rich, young ruler.

He permitted Mary to anoint His feet with oil, but rebuked the treasurer of the disciples.

He was so humble, the King took off His ministry robe, girded himself with a towel and proceeded to wash the feet of the disciples as their servant.

He could have entered Jerusalem on a white stallion, but he entered on the back of a donkey.

He was so humble that following His victorious resurrection from the dead that he showed himself first to Mary Magdalene, a sinful woman, not the Sanhedrin; not even to His mother; nor His leading disciples.

Someone has said the hardest instrument to play in the orchestra is second fiddle. Jesus was happy to subordinate Himself to His Father.

There was no pride, presumption, ego, or self-will in our Lord. He was the humblest man to walk on earth.

Pride is essentially competitive. Pride is not content with having honor. It must have more honors. Pride is not content with a piece of the pie, it must have a larger piece of the pie. There was no pride in Jesus.

Consider the wonders of our Lord's attitude in contrast to this question: If you could change ten things about your life, what would it be? Jesus had that choice, and He chose to be an ordinary, Hebrew boy raised in a poor Jewish home in the "hillbilly" country of Northern Galilee.

The only tool of his trade was a servant's towel (John 13). His was the whisper in a crowded room; the splashing of water on dirty feet — more profound than the voices of learned scholars in His day.

And, he calls us to be humble; that is, to walk with the most humble man that ever lived, we must get low ourselves . . . to listen more than we speak; to wait in line for our turn; to ask questions before rattling off statements; to correct ourselves before correcting others; to think less our needs and more on how to supply the needs of others; to admit wrong and not justify our responses; to volunteer without fishing for accomplishments; to serve without fanfare; to love more than to take; to listen to the problems of others without sharing our own.

C.S. Lewis got it correct: "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less" and less and less.

Pride makes fake men; humility makes authentic men.

Oh, the many faces of pride! Be humble or stumble!

6. Step Six: Obedience unto death

Philippians 2:8

“ . . . he became obedient unto death . . . ”

◆ **Obedience:** the word “obedient” means “to give ear;” to be all ears; to listen more than to speak; to be a doer and not a talker.

The test of obedience is to surrender to God’s will when things do not go our way.

“Obedience leads to true freedom. The more we obey revealed truth, the more we become liberated.” — James E. Faust.

The Obedience of Christ

Obedience to His parents — As a child, He was subject to Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:51); i.e., He demonstrated respect for earthly authority.

Obedience in baptism — Though sinless, He submitted to baptism by John (Matthew 3:13–15) fulfilling the call to righteousness.

Obedience in ministry — In His prayer to the Father in John 17 He said, “I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”

Obedience to God’s will — In the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his trial, He prayed, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

Obedience in suffering — Jesus was omniscient. He knew all things . . . but there is one thing Jesus learned in His life on earth: “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8).

Obedience unto death — Our text in Philippians 2:8 describes Him as “obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

It is not easy to obey the will of another, but it is even more difficult when obedience produces poverty, shame, difficulty, and even death.

“What is the extraordinary? It is the love of Jesus Christ himself, love that goes to the cross in suffering obedience.”
— Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

Obedience is an Easter-funeral because it involves the death of self and a resurrection of love for Jesus Christ.

Death has many indignities including sounds and smells and fears and pain.

In surrendering himself to the Father’s will, he faced the most common plight of all men.

There is no pride in death. All powers to save life are taken away. All herbal remedies fail. All control is stripped from a dying man. He has no choices. All rights are taken away. The final prayer for salvation from death is answered with a “No.”

So aware of the Father’s resolute will, Jesus prayed with great drops of blood streaming from his forehead, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” The Father said, “No!” and Jesus accepted the falling of autumn leaves; the closing curtain in the drama of life; the setting of the sun – no relief; no light; no last minute pardon; no magical remedy; His river flowed into the sea! Obedient! What a man! What a Son! What a Savior!

7. Step Seven: A Shameful Death

Philippians 2:8

“. . . even the death of the cross.”

◆ **Shame:** The final humiliation of Christ was the kind of death he died — the cruel death of a criminal — a violent death to which he consented before the foundation of the world.

Oh, the terror of a wooden cross, spikes, ripping pain, blood, and prolonged death.

Death is a cold-slab, stunning fact for all men; rich and poor; male and female, Christian or non-Christian!

If I could choose my own death, it would be a hero's death — an instantaneous death — death in the act of trying to save some child — a Joan of Arc type death or being a “Captain America” — something like the death of actor Bruce Willis in the movie “Armageddon” where the only hope for earth was for Commander Willis to blow up the asteroid with self-detonation. Instant death. No pain. Dying a hero!

But, Jesus had none of these ambitions nor any of these fantasies. His was the most long, difficult, grueling, agonizing death a man could die — a death by tetanus poisoning, dehydration, and exhaustion.

The cross is the Christian's most sacred symbol. We often wear smooth, silver crosses around our necks. However, we need to remember that there was no status connected to crucifixion — zero, zilch, nada. The wooden cross had splinters and knots that ripped the skin. Accusations, charges, incriminations, damning verdicts, beatings, stripping of clothes, impalement, nakedness, agonizing pain, and public humiliation choked all optimism out the victim. Crucifixion is a death by tetanus poisoning

where in the latter stages gripping thirst screams for attention while muscles contort and cramp causing a person to die of toxic asphyxiation.

The Highly Exalted Savior

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (2:10-12).

Humble in life and humbled by death, the Lord Jesus waited on the Father to raise Him from the dead.

In rising from the dead, Jesus solved man’s fundamental problem. Since He is the only man in history that has defeated death, He is the only hope of salvation from death.

40 days after His resurrection, He disappeared into the clouds while ascending into heaven. His ascension ended His earth sojourn on this earth.

He is not a disembodied spirit. He sits at the right hand of the Father; on the throne of His Majesty, as the Highly Exalted Savior.

Today, that babe in Bethlehem is called “the Christ,” “the King,” “the Son,” “the Savior,” that at the name of Jesus every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The name “Jesus” means Savior. It was given to Him by the Father:

Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

The Savior is called “Jesus” in English and “Iesous” in Greek, pronounced “yea’seus.”

His official title in the New Testament is “The Lord Jesus Christ” – and not “Jesus” or profanely “the man upstairs.” His name “Jesus” is not a swear word and men should use His name reverently, carefully, with honor and respect. It is sheer wickedness to say “Jesus” in anger – evidence one is headed to the fires of hell.

The name “Jesus” is used 937 times in the NT; the title “Christ” 555 times; and His title “Lord” is used 711 times. The title, “Lord Jesus Christ” is used over 80 times in the NT after His resurrection. “Jesus” is His official, personal name; “the Lord Jesus Christ” is His official, royal, highly exalted title.

Not once did men call our Lord “Yeshua” in the New Testament. His name is “Jesus” – “the sweetest name I know”. . . “Jesus” is His official, personal name; “the Lord Jesus Christ” is His official, royal, highly exalted title.

The point of this text is that the One who stooped so low to become a man the greatest name and is exalted to the highest position in the universe. Every being in heaven bows to the Lord Jesus Christ . . . and, one day every knee on earth will bow and confess Him as the Lord.

Have you bowed your knee to Him? You can do it now voluntarily or you can do it later by force because at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.

All men die, but Paul added this perspective: “For me to live is Christ, to die is gain” (1:21). Believest thou this?

Conclusion

◆ A long time ago, a good king ruled in Persia. Because he wanted to know how they lived, he dressed in the clothes of a working man and went to the homes of the poor. No one knew he was their ruler. On one occasion, he met a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the man's simple food. He spoke cheerfully and kindly to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity by saying, "I am your king!" The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn't. Instead he said, "You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate my simple food. You brought joy to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!

Likewise, Heaven's King has visited us on earth. Let's remember the seven downward steps of Jesus Who is from everlasting to everlasting.

Because He took steps downward to walk on earth's dusty roads, we can be assured of walking on the streets of gold in Heaven's celestial city.

If we truly understand the glories of our eternal destiny, we can afford to give up our pride, prejudice, and presumption . . . and to take steps toward humility. Because He was humble, we have salvation. God was among us and has risen above us to save us, to guide us, and to deliver us.

Be encouraged to develop more Christ-esteem and less self-esteem not to think less of yourself, but to think of yourself less and less and less. We don't need to be thinking more about ourselves; we need to be thinking less about me, my, and I; and, more about our Lord on High.

Our problems are not related to poor self-esteem, but to TOO MUCH SELF-ESTEEM!

The remedy is more CHRIST ESTEEM! Let us think more of Christ . . . and less, and less, and less of self!

The Christian community is wonderful but it has one defect: We think too little of Christ! Our views of Him are snail small! Our faith in Him is a spark without a fire! He is more than a good teacher; more than a ticket to Heaven; more than eternal life insurance. The text informs us that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. He is the Highly Exalted Savior, King, Priest, and Son!

“Jesus” is the sweetest name I know. Let us not use His beautiful name and drag it down into the gutter. Stand up to those who abuse His name. Shame them with being so banal and blasphemous.

Do you love Jesus? Then stand up for Him! Stand up to those proud, filthy men who dare take Heaven’s sweetest name and dip it in a gutter.

Show some teeth. Bark at the blasphemers . . . in nice Christian way, of course . . . or, maybe not.

All men will bow the knee to the Lord Christ -- some willingly in this life and others by force in the age to come.

If you have not bowed the knee to Him and surrender to His authority, forsake your neglect of God and start a new life under His authority and His management.

If you confess Him as your Lord and believe in your heart that He died for your sins and rose from the grave now, He will be your Savior for all eternity (Romans 10:9-10). Let Him be your Savior . . . your Sunshine in the day and your Candle at night; your Compass in the darkness, and your Lighthouse in the storm.

Publications

Books we have written:

1. [Biblical Standards for Civil Rulers, Form #13.013](#)
2. [Should Christians Always Obey the State?, Form #13.014](#)
3. [The Crisis of Church Incorporation, Form #13.017](#)
4. [A Family Under God, Form #17.001](#)
5. [Origin of the Bible, Form #17.002](#)
6. [The Gospel of the Kingdom of God, Form #17.003](#)
7. [Five Pillars of the Gladiator Gospel, Form #17.004](#)
8. [Prayer Puts Power In Your Life, Form #17.005](#)
9. [Old Testament Theology, Form #17.006](#)
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16. [The Pursuit of Piety, Form #17.061](#)
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18. [Marriage Counseling Manual, Form #17.063](#)
19. [Words for the Weary, Form #17.064](#)
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22. [If I Could Do Church Again, Form #17.067](#)
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33. [Psalms of Asaph, Form #17.079](#)

- 34.[Double Through Discipleship, Form #17.080](#)
- 35.[The Art of Conflict Management, Form #17.081](#)
- 36.[Know Who You Are In Christ, Form #17.082](#)
- 37.[From Corinth to American Churches, Form #17.083](#)
- 38.[When Satan Goes to Church, Form #17.084](#)
- 39.[Nike Greek Grammar Manual, Form #17.085](#)
- 40.[The Magna Carta, Form #10.017](#)
- 41.[The Case for Common Law Marriage, Form #13.022](#)
- 42.[The Matthew 24 Preterist Interpretation, Form #17.086](#)
- 43.[The Passover Seder, Form #17.087](#)
- 44.[You Can Be Your Own Lawyer, Form #17.088](#)
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- 47.[Opting Out of the Tax System, Form #10.018](#)
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- 71.[Sunday-The First Day Sabbath, Form #17.108](#)
- 72.[Mark of the Beast, Form #17.109](#)

73.[The Seven Titles of the Gospel, Form #17.010](#)

Works we have contributed to:

74.[Laws of the Bible, Litigation Tool #09.001](#)

75.[Ten Commandments of Freedom Form #13.016](#)

76.[SEDM About Us Page, Section 9](#)

77.[Proof of Claim: Your Main Defense Against Government Greed and Corruption, Form #09.073. Click Here for the article this publication is based on from this site](#)