

Joy When Life is Tough - Philippians
Part 3
“Living As Jesus Lived”
Philippians 2:6-11
Pastor Charles Price

We're going to look at what is one of the great statements in scripture about the person of Jesus Christ. [Philippians 2:6-11](#) says, "who being in very nature, God did not consider equality with God, something to be grasped, but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant and being found in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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 the kind of passage that theologians love because it's rich.

In its summary of the person and the work of Jesus, it talks about him and his deity, his equality with his father, how that he became a real man and took upon himself human form. It talks about his humility and his obedience, even to the cross it says.

Then it tells of his exaltation to the highest place. That at the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and on Earth. And this summary, runs from eternity to eternity before time ever began, to beyond times closure at the end of this age.

But when Paul wrote this, he wasn't writing that kind of theology. He wasn't saying to the Philippians, now I've talked a lot about myself in Philippians 1, which he had. Now let me give you some good, heavy theology to get your teeth into.

That isn't why he wrote it. He had a very, very practical reason for writing this. His reason writing, is this. He says, I think you Philippians need to know how to live, and I'm going to tell you how to live.

And so, he says in [Philippians 1:5](#), your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ, or as the King James puts it, "let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." And then he explains the mind, the attitude, the thinking of Jesus and the reason he's doing this is not that we sit back in worship and wonder, though we do. And this passage gives us ample reason to worship Jesus Christ. But he's saying this is how you need to live your life. If you're going to please God and not only please God but find the kind of satisfaction that you are intended as a human being to enjoy and to experience.

So, what is the mind of Christ or the attitude of Christ that he talks about here? Because if we understand this, if we understand how Jesus lived, says Paul, then we understand how we are designed to live with the same attitude and the same mind.

And I want to draw out just two things this morning. They were true of Jesus, but how does it become true of you? First of all, having described in [Philippians 1:6](#) that he was in very nature

God, and that, of course, is very, very important that we understand Christ in terms of his deity first of all.

He was in very nature God, equal with the father. And Jesus Christ was pre-existent to his birth in Bethlehem. When John opens his gospel, he affirms this by saying in his opening words, in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning, through him all things were made, and without him nothing was made that has been made. And what John is saying there is that when the beginning began, Jesus Christ was already in existence, co-equal with his father.

In fact, he wasn't just there when the beginning began. He actually began the beginning. Through him, all things were made, whether in the skies or on the Earth, the book of [Colossians 1:16 - 17](#), Paul writing there says, by him all things were created, things in heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers, rulers or authorities. All things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him, all things hold together. Not only is he the originator of the universe, he is the glue, says Paul, which holds it all together.

And if we deny the deity of Christ, if we undermine the creative work of Christ, we have undermined everything else about him. This is the starting point in Paul's statement here. But having said that, having affirmed his deity, he then talks about his humanity in [Philippians 1:7](#). And this is where he begins to talk about how you and I are designed to live. We are not divine. We're not God, of course, but we are created and intended to live as Jesus lived as a man.

When God clothed himself in humanity, he became a real man. And the two things I want to talk about. first of all, he says in [Philippians 1:7](#), "he made himself nothing." Whatever that means, we'll talk about that in a moment.

And secondly, he humbled himself and became obedient to death. In other words, the two things that were true of Jesus were that he was dependent on his father. He made himself nothing as we'll see in a moment, and as nothing lived in dependency on his father and he became obedient to his father. He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. First of all then, let's talk about the fact of his dependency on his father. Now, when it says that Jesus made himself nothing, we have to ask the question. In what sense did he become nothing?

In what sense is it true to describe a human being as nothing? It's not a very nice way to talk about people, is it? If I were to say to you this morning, good morning, you bunch of nothings, would you go away feeling affirmed and satisfied?

Probably not. You probably say, and same to you nothing. But this is the word that's used, he made himself nothing. I mean, did he go around with a board around his neck saying, I am nothing? But of course, he didn't.

He is not speaking of his value or dignity as a human being, because the Bible is clear that every human being has value, incredible value. In fact, this whole section is about the value that God placed on humanity that caused him to send his son in the first place.

When Jesus said as part of his mission, I've come to seek and to save that which was lost. I don't know if you ever thought about this. But to be described as being lost is a wonderful thing because to be lost is to be wanted. You don't call the local police and report that you've lost your empty coke can out on Sheppard Avenue somewhere. They'll say, sorry chum, we've got better things to do, that is of no value and put the phone down.

But if you call the police and say, I've lost my wallet, I've lost my wedding ring. That's got value, because to be described as lost is to be given value. Now, it's not wonderful to be lost of course, it's wonderful to be found, that is a wonderful description because of the value placed on every single one of us here and every single person on the street. So, it's not in terms of his dignity or his value that he described himself as being nothing, but rather it's in terms of his ability, that is to live as a real man he recognized his absolute and total dependency on his father, because in himself, by himself, from himself, as a man, he was capable of nothing.

Now, that's what Jesus said about himself on other occasions. You say to me, surely Jesus wasn't capable of nothing? I mean, look at the marvellous works he did. Look at the miracles he performed. You can't say when he fed 5000 that he was capable of nothing. You can't say when he raised Lazarus from the dead, he was capable of nothing. You can't say when he preached his sermon on the Mount he's capable of nothing. You can't say that when lepers went home clean he was capable of nothing. But it may surprise you to know that's exactly what Jesus did say about himself.

Let me read you some verses in [John 5:19](#). Let me read you what Jesus said here, and we haven't time to explore this fully this morning, maybe another time; we're just passing over this to some extent.

But in [John 5:19](#), Jesus gave them this answer. I tell you the truth. Listen to this; the Son can do nothing by himself. Don't congratulate me for turning the water into wine. I can do nothing by myself. Don't congratulate me for walking on the water, I can do nothing by myself. Look at [John 5:30](#), in case you think that's just one instance in [John 5:30](#), Jesus says, by myself, I can do nothing.

Let me turn to [John 8:28](#). And Jesus says there, when you have lifted up the son of man, then you know that I am the one I claim to be. Now, the NIV translation there adds some of those words "the one I claim to be" Literally the original Greek says, when you lift up the son of man, then you'll know that I am, and many of you know that "I am" is the name God gave himself when he spoke with Moses at the burning bush in the Old Testament. And our English word, Jehovah comes from that statement.

It means I am, or he is. Now, said Jesus, when you lift up the son of man, then you know that I am. That's his claim to deity but look at what he says next. And that I do nothing on my own.

That's his humanity, and what he's saying here is, that of all the miracles that I may have performed, of all the words that have come from my lips. I myself do nothing. Now this is not my opinion or anybody's opinion.

This is what Jesus himself said about himself. By the way, don't ever use the miracles of Jesus to prove his deity. I've heard people use the examples of his miracles to prove that he was God. But

if you try to prove that he was God by his miracle, you're going to have problems because Moses performed miracles, and Moses wasn't God. Joshua, performed miracles and Joshua wasn't God. Elijah performed miracles, Elijah wasn't God, Elisha performed miracles. Peter performed miracles. Paul performed miracles. Miracles were not the evidence of his deity. Then what is the explanation for Jesus miracles if he says, I myself do nothing?

What is the explanation of his miracles? Well, in [John 14:10](#) he tells us. Let me read you this first, [John 14:10](#), where he says, "Don't you believe that I am in the father and the father is in me."

That is, I'm in union with my father and the words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the father living in me who is doing his work. He says there, it's not my words, it's not my works. It's the father in me who does his work? That I as a man on Earth as a real human being have learned, that as I live in dependency on my father, it's my father in me that does the work through me.

And if Jesus said this in [John 14](#), in [John 15](#), he said exactly the same thing about his disciples and their relationship to him. Because in John 14 he says, "I'm in my father and my father is in me." That's my relationship with my father.

And in [John 15:5](#), says, "you abide in me and I abide in you, you'll bear much fruit." That is, things will happen in your life as a result, for apart from me you can do nothing. Exactly as much as Jesus said he could do apart from his father.

Now, this is tremendously encouraging, because the level playing ground in which we all stand is that all God expects of us, left to our own natural resources and natural strength is nothing. But the marvellous thing is, as we live in dependency on God as the Lord Jesus Christ lived in dependency on his father, the father in him did the work, the father in us does the work.

That's why you can relax when you serve God and you seek to live the life he wants you to live, because we're learning to rest in his strength, in his ability, in his enabling. Now, says Paul, I want to have this mind in you, which is in Christ Jesus. And the first part of this mind is although he was by nature God, he made himself what you have to learn to become. He made himself nothing in terms of your self-sufficiency and self-dependency.

Now, of course, we have abilities, we have gifts, we have talents that differ, but you can exercise those in human strength and as far as God's concerned, accomplish nothing. But we exercise them in dependency on God, saying, Lord, it's not what I do in this situation, it's what you do through me. Thank you. I want to trust you.

And if we have time this morning, we haven't. It's not appropriate, and we were to look at how Jesus performed his miracles, we'd see this is how he did it. When he stood before 5000 people. They had no food. Only five loaves and two fish. Jesus prayed, and what he prayed was it says he gave thanks. In other words, he said, Father, thank you. This situation, which is bigger than any one of us here in this mountainside today, we don't have enough food, thank you. It's not too much a problem for you, you're totally sufficient and he began to break the bread. And you know why I said that was a significant thing, because later you read this in John 6, they went back to

the place where Jesus performed the miracle of feeding the 5000, and it doesn't say they went back to the place where he performed the miracle of the 5000. What it says, is they went back to the place where Jesus had given thanks, because that was the key.

At the tomb of Lazarus was a body dead for four days, already in the process of decay and smelling. Jesus looked up to heaven and said, Father, I thank you. Thank you father, you're totally sufficient. And you trace it to even at the last supper when he broke the bread, this is my body, this is my blood. Do you know what he did, he says, he gave thanks. Isn't that incredible. My body, my blood. Thank you father. Because although this leaves me in 24 hours dead as it would, this is your business to accept the sacrifice as a substitute for men and women and boys and girls who could not bring any sacrifice of their own, that was sufficient and then father to raise me from the dead. Thank you.

See the language of faith is not please. That's the language of a beggar. The language of faith is thank you! That's why I give thanks in all circumstances, because giving thanks is acknowledging dependency on God. That's what thanks means. If I open the door for you, you say thank you. As you go through what you're saying is, you did something for me, thank you. You hand me something and I say thank you. I'm acknowledging my dependency on you in that situation. Now the point of Paul here, is he's saying, I want you to have the mind of Christ, because this is how we are to live, and that involves, first of all, dependency on his father. But it wasn't a passive dependency where you just sit back and say, well, I just depend on God, fold my arms and do nothing. Because he goes on to say in [Philippians 2:7](#), he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.

That's not a passive word being a servant, that's an active word; and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Obedience is not a passive word. It's an active word. Now he's saying that Jesus' dependency on his father led to his obedience to his father. And that's the second of these two attitudes that he talks about in these verses.

They are to be in us that were in Christ. His dependency on his father, his obedience to his father. You see, if Jesus as a man, professed no ability of his own, I do nothing myself. He also, as a man, professed no agenda of his own. The only agenda he had was the agenda his father wrote for him, because in [John 6:38](#), I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me. I didn't come from heaven on some personal crusade.

I came from heaven to fulfill the will of my father. And right through the life of Jesus there was a constant criteria in everything he did and everything he said. What is the will of my father? As says Paul, remember the context, have this mind in you, which is in Christ Jesus.

Not only dependency on his father, but obedience to his father, that is unquestioning. He tells us in [Romans 14:9](#), "for this reason, Christ died and returned to life that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living."

Why did Christ die and rise again? That he might be Lord, that is, he might occupy the place in your life and mine that is supreme, as Master and King. Now, of course, we will be interested in a certain measure of obedience because we recognize God knows better than we do about some

things, but it's whether our obedience extends as the obedience of the Lord Jesus did. He became obedient to death, even death on a cross. And Paul is saying there, this is not a fair-weather obedience when God's will is nice and good for us. But there are times when God's will might involve us in sacrifice in some way, and to the Lord Jesus, even to the point of death. What does it mean for the Lord Jesus to have been obedient even to death?

Just imagine with me, if you would, a conversation that may have taken place in heaven before time began. And forgive me for humanizing God in this conversation. But it might help us to get a hold of what this is teaching us.

But as the father looked down the corridors of time and knew the rebellion of the human race and the alienation of people from God that would take place, he said to his son, son. I need you to become a man in order to bring about the reconciliation of human beings with myself. Are you willing to go to Earth as a human being? Imagine the son says, yes, I'm willing to go, but how do I do this? So, I just appear one day, do I just step out from behind a wall?

No, son. I want you to be born as a baby. As a baby? but a baby is so helpless.! That's right. I want you to become as helpless as a baby. Well, as long as you give me decent parents. Yes, I'll give you decent parents, but they'll be very poor.

Poor, but isn't it more fitting for me to be born into a royal palace or at least into some rich mansion where I'm fully cared for? Now, son, not only will your parents be poor, but you are actually going to be born in a stable.

A stable, but that's where sheep and cattle and horses live. I know. I hope it's in a period of time when there's plenty of medicine and antibiotics available. No son, it's going to be long before that. But you say my parents will be good people? Well, yes, they will, and you'll have brothers and sisters, but I need to tell you that when you are a teenager, your human father will die, and you will become a single parent family. And you'll be the oldest, so a lot of the responsibility will fall to you. But aren't I going to preach, isn't that the idea? Yes, you're going to preach son, but not for a while. Not until you're 30. What do I do until I'm 30? Well, I want you to stay in the home in Nazareth and I want you to work as a carpenter. A carpenter, you mean with hammers and nails and chisels and wood? Yes, that's right.

But can't I just go into a room and when nobody else is watching, go pew and just miracle furniture into being? No son you do it the hard way, no shortcuts. When do I start to preach? Well at the age of 30, a day will come when the spirit in the form of a dove will descend on you, that will set you apart and then you begin to preach. Not only that, but you're going to perform miracles. I'm going to enable you to perform amazing miracles. Will the people like it? Many of them will, yes. You'll be the best friend they've ever had.

But others won't. What do you mean they won't? Others will get angry about this. And what will they do? Well, after three years, that's all, just three years in ministry, they're going to arrest you and put you through the mockery of a trial. They're going to drum up false charges against you and they're going to sentence you to death. To death? Yes., you see, they're going to strip you naked at the end of your trial and they're going to flog you with whips.

They are going to take some thorns four inches long, they're going to twist them into what will look like a crown and in mockery, they will push this crown into your head. But not just that they're going to rip the beard from your face. Leave your face ripped to pieces and they're going to spit on you. They're going to take your own staff and they're going to hit you over the head with it again and again. Then they're going to put a heavy cross on your shoulder and make you walk with it, and you'll come to the point of absolute exhaustion and you will collapse under the weight and the exhaustion of that process, and somebody else will carry it for the remaining yards.

And then they'll lie down the cross and lie you on the cross and they'll put nails into your hands and your feet. Then they'll lift the cross up and they'll drop it into a hole in the ground several feet deep. And as this cross of wood hits the base of that hole, the jolt will knock many of the bones of your body out of joint. And you will hang there for six hours, and crucifixion is the most cruel form of punishment ever devised by human beings. And for those six hours, every nerve in your body will scream. At that point too son, heaven will close its doors. And you'll cry out, my God, why have you forsaken me? The sky will turn black and you will die. Are you still willing to go?

Paul writes he became obedient to death, even to death on a cross. Never doubt for one moment, the willingness to which Jesus went to the cross, but he didn't go waltzing to the cross. In the garden of Gethsemane the night before he was crucified. He said, my father, if it is possible, let this cup be taken from me. If there's any other way that men and women can be reconciled to a

holy God other than by this, please let that be the way if there's any other way this cup can be taken from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. Your will overrides at every point my convenience. Your will overrides at every point my comfort. Your will overrides at every point my satisfaction.

And says Paul, let this mind be in you. It was in Christ Jesus, I'm telling you about Jesus says Paul in order that you might understand the mind, the attitude, the disposition that needs to characterize you as a Christian. If you're going to be effective and fruitful. Can I ask you,

is this your Christian life? You can settle for a more superficial level, but it'll never satisfy you. You see in closing; the rest of this statement having talked about what Jesus did. He made himself nothing. He humbled himself. He became obedient to death, even death on a cross. And then it says, therefore, and from now on, it's all about what God did. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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. You see, once you and I have settled the business of my dependency on God and my obedience to God, God takes care of everything else.

Then he works. He exalted it. And you see the obedience, even though it may be costly as it was for Jesus. Always yields satisfaction. It says that of Jesus. In Isaiah 53, speaking prophetically about his death on the cross, it said of Jesus, he saw the travail of his soul. The agony of his soul, all the endurance he went to, he saw the travail of his soul and was satisfied. Isn't that incredible. What satisfied him beyond the cross and all the agony of the cross was he looked down through

time and saw sitting here this morning in this building hundreds of men and women and young people. All across the world, those who have been reconciled to God on the basis of the death of Jesus Christ as their substitute and he is satisfied.

Whatever it costs you to get right with God, whatever it means to live in obedience to God, and he will direct your paths, he will show you that. Once you settle the issue of dependency on him, where you place your dependency, that's the most important for any one of us where we place that dependency. Our dependency on him and our obedience to him. Once we've settled those two issues, in a very real sense, there are no further issues for us to face, because the rest of the story is therefore God did, God did, God did, God did.

Once you and I have settled that issue in our lives, that I don't depend on my own resources anymore, I depend on the indwelling spirit of Jesus Christ to work in me and through me. And I live in obedience to him, I take my agenda from him. Once you settle that issue, every other issue becomes, God did, God did, God works in your life and you look back, and we see in retrospect the will of God in anticipation and we look back over the past and we say, look what God did. Look how God led, look how God directed. And you see his fingerprints all over your life when you look back. But if you never settle that issue, you'll never know that. If you never settle this, you'll never live with a sense of confidence, no matter what happens today.

And we live in a world where there's lots of fear at the moment. Lots of fear, and people are scared. We say Lord Jesus, no matter what's happening all around me. I found a refuge in God.

Whatever it is you want in my life, you are my strength. I depend on you. And you're my master and I'll obey you.

If you never settled that, you need to settle it this morning.