

Christ's Glory in the Incarnation (part 2)

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[0:00] We're going to turn now to God's word in Philippians chapter 2. As we're considering the glory of Christ.

If any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. 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, being made in human likeness. And being found in an appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

[1:30] 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. Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. This is a note. Philippians chapter 2. Many scholars think it is a song. This, you notice in the NIV at least how it's not in paragraph form anymore when it says who being in God or being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.

I'm not sure, but many commentators believe that Paul is quoting an early Christian hymn. And if that is true, then it has always been the tradition of God's people to remember the great works of God in song.

[2:55] And this being one of them. This being the greatest of them. Well, it is to these very well-worn, worn-down words that we come to tonight.

They're paths that we've trod, I'm sure, many times. This is one of those passages that we come to very frequently or we quote very often. And we do that because it is so wonderful, so powerful.

And in a way, it brings us to God. It brings us to see the glory of Jesus Christ.

And in a way that's very unique among the passages of the Bible. I'm not saying anything against all the rest of Scripture, but some passages we do hold more dear because they hold so much of Jesus Christ.

Well, why do smokers keep smoking when they know that it's going to hurt them? I don't think anything shows the brokenness of our humanity, like our addiction to things that we obviously know are not good for us, that hurt us.

[4:14] Or on the other hand, we shirk from things that are good for us. Even when we've experienced how good they are for us, we save those for last.

Have you found that in your heart like I have in my heart? And what I mean is sitting down and praying and pouring out my heart to God, my troubles to God, my frustrations, looking to God, seeing His glory, that feels so healthy, so wholesome.

There's this wholesomeness to it. And my spirit revives when I do that. It's like climbing to the top of a tree when you've been stuck down into the dense forest and the air is so stuffy down there.

And then to come up and to feel the winds on your face. But what is wrong with me? What is wrong with you?

That when we are feeling spiritually weak, we try everything else first. So let's read this book. Let's play this game. Let's watch this video clip.

[5:20] Let's get ourselves busy. Maybe I can get out of it that way. All those things end up leaving my soul unfulfilled. And I'm sure they end up leaving your soul unfulfilled, unsatisfied, unhappy.

But we and I keep going back. Have you found that in your own heart, in your own experience? The thing that fills you with health and joy, you put off until the end.

Until it seems like there's nowhere else to go but to Jesus. And what we need is God. And what we need is Jesus and His glory shining in our life to experience His love.

Just as Paul talks about in chapter 2, verse 1 here. Just the encouragement from being united with Christ. This comfort from His love. This fellowship with the Spirit. He expected the Christians there to experience these things.

And we do. We want those things. We want to feel and know them. Because that's the place of revival. That's the place of health. That's the place of strength.

[6:23] Well, last week we looked at the incarnation. Do you remember? Who did He come for? Ruin sinners to reclaim.

Ruin sinners to reclaim. And there's oceans of wonder. And oceans of praise. And just thinking of that. He came for me. He came for you.

How far did He stoop? Well, who could say? He was God. He held the oceans in His hands. Numbered every grain of sand.

He unties Orion and sets Him wandering in the sky. How far did He stoop? No one can say.

Because no one can measure the infiniteness of the distance between God and man.

And so it was infinite humility. And that deserves infinite, eternal praise. And the glory of heaven is that that incarnation, He is still God and He is still man.

[7:24] And He will be forever and ever. And so we will have forever and ever to wonder and praise that He would do that for us. Well, how personally unnecessary was it for Him?

Do you remember that? He was in the bosom of the Father. He was in the place of love and honor. The place of glory. Angels would have gone on praising Him if He had never come.

He would not have been any less happy if He had never come for us. He would never have been any less glorious. But He did come and He came for us.

There's glory there. Well, tonight we're going to turn our attention back again to this mystery. And Paul says that, behold, the mystery of godliness is great.

He appeared in a body. Something very mysterious about this. And so we've looked at it from a few different perspectives. But tonight we're going to look at the mystery itself.

[8:28] We're going to look at this doctrine of incarnation. Of the incarnation. And I'm sure you're saying, that doesn't sound very interesting.

Or what can we say about that? Or I need something that will help me live the Christian life. How will that help me live the Christian life? I have problems. I have family problems.

I have work problems. I have personal problems. I have sin. I have trials. How will that help me?

Well, here's my answer. Let's go into a Christian bookstore.

In your imagination. Have you been in a Christian bookstore lately? So you go into this Christian bookstore. And we walk along the shelves. And we look at the books. What kind of books do we see?

Well, we see books on, lots of books on practical Christian living. I invite you. Go to a bookstore and see what you'll see. We see lots of books on parenting and marriage and relationships and church life.

[9:34] I looked on the front page of a Reformed book website on Friday. And this is what I saw. So this is not just, oh, that's evangelicalism. This is Christianity in America.

This is what I saw. A book on fear. A book on killing sinful habits. A book on bitterness. A book on being too busy. A book on sexual orientation. Lots of practical books.

Now, in no way, don't mishear me, in no way do I have a problem with any of those books. Or any practical books. But three months ago, I wonder what kind of books would have been on the bookshelves.

Or on that website. And I imagine it would be the same kind of books. And three months from now, what will be on those bookshelves? The same kinds of books.

New titles. New subjects. New authors. But the same kind of books. And this is what I wonder. Would we need that endless line of practical Christian books?

[10:40] Which, again, don't mishear me. I don't have any problem with. Would we need those books if we were living in awe of the greatness of God? Or if we were living in awe of who Jesus is as the God-man?

If we could get lost in that mystery, would we need so much of those practical books? This is what I'm saying. Perhaps what we really need most, perhaps the most practical thing, is for us to stop and think long and think hard about the most basic, about the most glorious truths of the gospel that's revealed in Scripture.

And I think what you will find, and this is what I have found in my own study, this is what I have found in the past, that if when we take the time to sit and meditate on the wonder of the Incarnation, or sit and think about the greatness of the Trinity, and how God is so different than we are, if we put that into our canteen, and sip on that throughout the day, men, it's not going to be so easy to sin when we're in awe of God.

And it's going to go a long way in killing those habitual sins, of putting to death that selfish heart that's consumed with me and my parenting and marriage problems that all center around the issues that I have.

It will do those things because it will put the fear of God in our heart. And what I mean is it will put the awe of God in our heart. When our minds are consumed with Him, when our eyes are fastened on Christ, then we fear God, and we're led to worship Him.

[12:32] And the fear of God is the soul of godliness. And so tonight we're going to see what Christ did in stooping. And I hope you don't look at it as just this doctrinal thing that doesn't affect me, because it has everything to do with you and how you're living.

And so we've asked who He came for, how far He stooped, why He didn't need to, and tonight we're going to look at what He did and what He didn't do in becoming man.

What He didn't do, what He did do in stooping. So first, what He didn't do in stooping. What He didn't do. He didn't cease to be God.

He didn't cease to be God when He became man. When the Son of God became man, He did not cease to be God. John 1 says the Word became flesh. It didn't say He stopped being God.

He didn't stop being the Word. He became something He wasn't before. And you see it in the passage that we have in front of us.

[13:39] 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. The all-important question for us as we look at this passage now is what does it mean He didn't consider equality with God something to be grasped, but He made Himself nothing.

What does that mean? He made Himself nothing. Does that mean He stopped being equal with God? Did He become less than God?

In some way. In any way. Some theologians have wrongly looked at this passage and they took it to mean that He somehow took a part of His deity off.

That He took something of His deity away from Himself. He stopped being God in some way. He reduced His deity that He became less than God. But that is to read into the text.

What does He made Himself nothing mean? Well, the next phrase tells us He took the very nature of a servant. So He was all in all.

[14:48] He was the King. He had everything. He was God. He was all-glorious. But now, by taking on the form of a servant, He became nothing in the eyes of the world.

He covered His glory. He didn't take it away. He hid it in order to become a servant. He was God. He couldn't stop being God. He couldn't stop being God and save this world because this world depends upon Him for its existence.

So if He stopped being God, the very world that He would want to save would disappear. What does it mean?

Well, He couldn't stop being God because the world depends upon Him for its existence.

He couldn't stop being God because if He stopped being God, then He would stop existing Himself. When the water became wine in Cana, it stopped being water.

[15:56] And if Christ became man and stopped being God, then He would stop existing in any way. And the more important thing is without Him being God, then His suffering for us would be a

finite value.

If He wasn't God, He couldn't save a mighty host. If He wasn't God, then He would have to suffer forever and ever.

And then you are still in your sins. His death would be the death of a man. But the great fact of the crucifixion is that it was the Son of God who substituted Himself for us.

It was the Son of God as the God-man who died in our place. And so He suffered in His humanity as His body was beaten and broken and torn to pieces and as His human mind and His human soul suffered separation from God and feeling the condemnation from God.

But He suffered as well in His divinity in the sense that He was judged and condemned by the Father for the sins of His people. Because it wasn't a human nature that suffered.

[17:11] It was the person who suffered. It was the person of Jesus Christ. And so God in Christ was substituting Himself for us.

It was God in Christ and the God-man substituting Himself for us. John Stott put it like this, the concept of substitution lies at the heart of both sin and salvation.

For the essence of sin is man substituting Himself for God. While the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be.

And God sacrifices Himself in the person of Christ for man and puts Himself where only we deserve to be. But we have to be clear, it wasn't the Father suffering.

It wasn't God generically. It was God in Jesus Christ. God in the person of His Son now joined humanity who is suffering. Now think about how secure your salvation is then.

[18:24] Think of that. Your life, your righteousness, your eternal destiny, your forgiveness rests on the death of the Son of God.

And if the God-man dies in your place, then you are safe. Because what He does is completely done. He won the victory.

So sin is great, but Christ is greater. Sin is great, Satan is terrible, but Christ is greater. And what are those things compared to Him? So He is God for us, and so we can rejoice in that and triumph in that.

Satan would hold us in chains of fear and regret and despair. But here is freedom. Here's the way out of morbid introspection. Here's the way out of death. Doubt.

You can be assured of your salvation because who died for you. The ultimate assurance doesn't come from what I've done or how I'm doing.

[19:24] The Spirit speaks assurance to our heart as He tells us who died for us. It was no mere man. It was the God-man. Well, let's keep going.

What He didn't do. So He didn't stop being God, but He didn't mix God and man together either. He didn't mix humanity and divinity together.

And what I mean is He didn't become a third kind of thing that's neither God nor man. So sometimes I make low-carb cream cheese pancakes.

And the recipe is pretty easy. Two eggs, two ounces of cream cheese, cinnamon, stevia, put it in the blender and blend it up. And when I'm done blending, what I have is nothing like eggs and it looks really nothing like cream cheese either.

It's this other thing. It's a third kind. It's a mix. That isn't what the Son of God did when He became man. He didn't become something not God and something not man.

[20:29] In the ancient church, this view had adherence. It came in different forms. Eutychus of Constantinople taught more or less what I'm saying. That when the Son of God became man, He mixed it all up and He became this other thing.

Another view that's probably more common in our day, and I wouldn't be surprised if it's not something that gets into your head sometimes, is called Apollinarianism.

And it was taught by this man named Apollinarius. He taught that the Son of God took on a human body, but His soul and His mind was still the Son of God, was still divine.

So do you get this picture? This isn't like the eggs and the cream cheese. This is more like the hand and the puppet. So the hand goes into the puppet and talks to the puppet and moves the puppet.

But it's neither one or the other. It's this mix. And so Jesus is this mix, a man of God. He doesn't have a human mind. He has God's mind. He doesn't have a human spirit.

[21 : 32] He has God's spirit, not a human one. And maybe that's how you think of Jesus sometimes. And you can tell that you think of Jesus that way if when you hear that verse, He was tempted like us in every way.

If you say, okay, but not really. If you say, well, that can't be true. He couldn't understand what it's like to be me.

He doesn't know what it's like to be in my mind because He's God. Well, the other problem with that, one is, I mean, that Jesus you can't relate to and He can't relate to you.

The other problem with that is that we need a human to be our substitute. So we talked about how we need God to be our substitute. Here, we need a human to be our substitute, not a God-man mix that doesn't, isn't like us, that couldn't stand for us, we need someone fully human, we need a second Adam to represent us.

The first Adam lost us everything as our representative and the second Adam is our Savior and He saves us as the second Adam, as a man, not just as God.

[22 : 46] And He doesn't save us as sort of like us. He saves us as one of us representing us. Something sort of like us, but not really us, couldn't stand before God and say, they've disobeyed, but I have obeyed in their place.

They owe you payment, but I have paid for them. But Jesus can. Jesus does say that for us. He can say that. He is our mediator.

There's only one mediator between God and man. The man, Christ Jesus. So Jesus didn't stop being God and He didn't mix deity and humanity together to be something that we can't relate to.

He didn't become two people either. Jesus is not two people, two persons put together.

He's not the Son of God and a man named Jesus put together. No, He's one person, the Son of God in the flesh, the Son of God now become man.

[23 : 54] Listen to how our confession puts it, summarizes it. Two whole, perfect, distinct natures, the divine and the human, were inseparably joined together in one person.

Not in two persons, in one person. Without the conversion of one nature into the other. So God didn't change God into man. Without the mixing of one nature with the other.

So it wasn't that God-man mix that we were talking about. The Son of God is now true God and true man. Yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

So we've seen what He didn't do. But what did He do? We have to clear that debris away and that confusion away to see what He did do.

He assumed, He took on a human nature. And that's what our passage says. Look at verse 7 again. He made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

[25 : 08] this stooped down was a taking upon Himself. Humanity. So what did He do? He took on something that He wasn't before.

He took on a human nature. See, He was originally by very nature God, but now He is adding, taking the very nature of a servant. all that it means to be a human.

He took that on for us. Not just a body, but a mind and a soul. He began to experience things that God had never experienced before.

So He was a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. And His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, everything that He was.

And He stayed those things. He was those things and He stayed those things, but in a way that we cannot comprehend, He began to experience things new.

[26 : 18] He began to experience time. Where time was, He was outside of time. Experienced time. He began to experience being confined to a location.

He began to experience physicality. He began to experience growth and change. Unchangeable God now changing as a man.

So you ponder those words in Luke 2.52 and Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

So, was He God, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable? Yes. But now He became something else too. finite, time-bound, growing in wisdom and in stature.

The Son of God began to experience what God had never experienced before. He began to experience temptation. He began to experience tiredness.

[27 : 22] He held the universe in His hands. He held the oceans in His hands and He falls asleep on a boat because He's worn out.

So you see what else He did then. He humbled Himself. He humbled Himself to experience those things. He became something that He never was before.

He became a servant. So angels did His bidding before. Demons asked for His permission before. Now He says to a man, what will you have me do for you?

Now He takes off His outer garments and washes His disciples' feet. And it was strange to them, but that's why He came. Not to be served, but to serve.

He came lowly. He came suffering. Isaiah prophesied, the servant is coming. He's coming, but He's going to suffer. So by His wounds, whose wounds?

[28:30] The servant's wounds, we are healed. The servant must obey. Isaiah 50 says, the sovereign Lord has opened my ears and I have not been rebellious.

He speaks to me and I obey. The servant had to obey and now here He is humble and obedient, doing whatever His Father says. the servant must be the light of the Gentiles and bring the light, bring salvation to the ends of the earth, freedom for the captives.

And so now who sits on the throne doing those things? Well, the servant of the Lord. Jesus, the God-man. And so is He still a servant?

Is He still humble? Does He still say, what will you have me to do? I would say all those promises where He says, you ask and I will give you is Jesus saying, what will you have me to do?

So is He a servant? Yes. And He's still a servant. He was a servant and He's still a servant. And that accounts for those very strange and peculiar words in Luke chapter 12 where it says, it will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when He comes.

[29:45] I tell you the truth, He will dress Himself. the master will dress Himself to serve. We'll have them recline at the table and we'll come and wait on them.

So who's the lowest of the low? And who is the Lord of Lords? It's the same person. So behold Him there, the risen Lamb, a servant, a man and our God forever and ever.

So Paul says, set your minds on things above where Christ is. Set your mind on things above and put to death everything that's still earthly within you. Because He's there and that kind of love and that kind of devotion and that kind of passion for you demands that you put things to death. death. So think of Him there. The God-man. All God. All man. All powerful. Full of compassion. It's the best of both worlds. It's the best of all worlds. So here's comfort for your troubles. And this is how we're going to apply this.

[31:03] Here's comfort for your troubles. What trials do you face? What fears haunt you? What sins plague you? Jesus Christ is comfort for those troubles.

He's God for you. He's full of grace. Full of power. Full. He's overflowing with grace. From Him we receive grace upon grace.

He's overflowing with those things. There's no shortage of strength. There's no shortage of wisdom. There's no shortage of help. There's no shortage of mercy. He's God for you now. And yet will He help you?

Will He's man for you? Look at Him. He's done the impossible from a human perspective for you. He has become man for you. And so His heart knows trouble because He's experienced it.

And His heart knows temptation because He's experienced it. He knows what it is to wrestle to the very end. To resist to the point of death. And that's what the cross was.

[32:06] It was Jesus saying, I will obey no matter what it costs me. He's known what that felt like. And He's no stranger to your trouble. And so what a comfort for us because He's there.

And shame on us because what peace we often forfeit because we do not take it to the Lord in prayer. We willed away. We don't flourish.

And it's our own fault because there's no weakness in Christ. There's no lack of strength in Christ. There's no lack of willingness in Christ. He's that for us.

So here's comfort for your troubles and here's courage for your fight. Fight for what? For progress. For holiness. For spirituality. For your children. For your marriage. For evangelism. For progress. For the good of the church. For your ministries. To live is to fight.

[33:10] We live this Christian life in a fallen world with Satan opposing us. So do you need courage? Do you need strength of heart? To face those difficulties and go through them and keep working to stare down those things?

Well here it is. Here it is. It's in Jesus Christ. How committed is he for you? I found such great joy in just thinking about this.

What is Jesus for you? What is Jesus for me right now? Well he's a man for me. He did that for me. He humbled himself for me. He took on a full human nature for you. He humbled himself even to death for you. So here's your hero.

Here's your captain. Here's the one saying follow me. I've won the victory. So are things hard? Yes. Are they too much for you?

[34:16] They're too much for you. Yes. Do you feel like you're going to break down and cry sometimes? Yes I'm sure you do. But look at Jesus. His flesh bears the scars. He's still dressed.

He's still in human nature. He's still a man for you and he will be forever and ever. He's committed to you. And so when you look to him and when you lean on him he's not going to let you down. He's already done the greatest thing for you. So lean into Jesus. Lean into him when you're afraid. Lean into him when you wake up and you see your day. Do it tomorrow morning.

Monday morning. I saw an article just this week that said Monday morning is the place where women feel the ugliest and men feel the most depressed. That's what it said.

So there you are tomorrow morning and you're looking at yourself and you're saying I don't have what it takes. I don't feel good. I'm not having a bad hair day. I'm just it's bad all around.

[35:19] And you look at Jesus and you say because he's there I'm strong enough for that because in him I can do everything. I'm in over my head but victor over sin and death you triumphed.

You've shown me life beyond the grave so help me. Help me to be what I cannot be. Help me when I'm feeling so broken. Reach out and touch his garment and find healing.

So often we're like that woman who was sick for 12 years. Aren't we? We go from doctor to doctor and find nothing and still wasting away.

Try everything first but then when at long last we reach out and touch Jesus when in faith we go and reach for him power goes out from him and we find healing.

So let's not wallow and our weakness. When he's there for us. How do you talk to yourself?

[36:29] You say I just cannot do this because I'm this. I can't do that because I've got blank.

How do you talk to yourself? You're the most influential person in your life because you talk to yourself the most. How do you talk to yourself? Are you saying look to Jesus?

Look to Jesus. He's God for me. He's man for me. He's everything I need. He's all powerful. He's full of compassion. He understands me. He listens to me.

So I don't need to sit here and limp along saying oh I don't have what it takes. I can't do this. I can't do it and give up. He's full of grace. He's full of power.

All God. All man. And all for you. Committed to you. So we should be encouraged brothers and sisters. Because right now he's there for us.

[37:28] Well let's pray. Heavenly Father I pray that you would please fasten our minds on the things that are true.

Lord we're so good at wandering all over the place and thinking about anything and everything except for Jesus. Thinking about his commitment to us and his love to us and his power for us and because we don't believe we disobey and because we don't believe we find excuses for ourselves. And we want to be done with those things. We want to be done with the excuses. We want to be done with the compromising and we want to give ourselves wholeheartedly to you.

Will you please center our hearts then and our minds and our thoughts on Jesus Christ and make us to know these things in our heart by the power of the spirit and the spirit of God I do pray that you would remind us throughout the day when we're caught up in our work break in upon us and when we're caught in those sinful patterns of our lives break in upon us and show us Jesus and give us faith to go out and rest upon him.

And so to trust and to obey. Lord I pray for those who are lost. Thank you that Jesus is God and man for them.

[39:00] If they would believe he would be their salvation. Show them the willingness of Christ. Show them their need of Jesus Christ and save.

In Christ's name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.