

FROM HEAVEN TO THE CROSS
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PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11; S2-1719

- SLIDE:** *READ Philippians 4:2-3: "I plead with Euodia (means "fragrance") and I plead with Syntyche (Syntyche means "fortunate.") to agree with each other in the Lord. Help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel ... whose names are in the Book of Life."*

I don't know what Fragrance and Fortunate were fighting about, but Paul was concerned. With them in mind he penned one of the most precious descriptions of Jesus Christ.

READ Philippians 2:1-5: 2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:" giving, sacrificing, humble, a servant.

- SLIDE:** Reminds me of the story of the three young friends who attended seminary together and scattered to different parishes after being ordained into the priesthood: Father Callahan, Father O'Brien, and Father Sicola.

In a few years, the hierarchy of the church announced that Father Callahan and Father O'Brien were both to be made a monsignor—but Father Sicola still remained a simple priest.

Years later, it was announced that Father Callahan and Father O'Brien were to be named bishops, but Father Sicola still remained a simple priest.

It was the ultimate crushing blow when years later still, Bishop Callahan became a cardinal and Bishop O'Brien became a cardinal and poor Father Sicola stayed as a small-town priest.

Finally, he bolstered his courage and went to the powers-that-be and protested, "I went to school with Callahan and O'Brien. We got the same grades, and they went on to great advances in the church. They went from monsignor to bishop to cardinal, while I stayed a simple country priest."

The chair of the committee somberly intoned: "We know, my son, that you have all the qualifications of the other two, and you too, were a candidate for high advancement with the church -- perhaps even higher than the other two. But we would never be able to call anyone Pope Sicola."

- SLIDE:** **NOTICE THE SEVEN STEP DESCENT OF JESUS FROM HEAVEN TO THE CROSS.**

- SLIDE:** **Philippians 2:6a: Who, being in very nature God,**

In order to understand this meaning we need to have a simple lesson in grammar.

"Being" is a verbal adjective. It is a verb used to describe a noun.

In Greek the context or circumstances in determine the meaning.

- SLIDE:** "Jesus, _____ being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped."

The participle may be causal and we put the words "because of";

Or it might be concessive (although);
Or it might be conditional (if);
Or it might be durative (while).

“Why are you doing this?”

“Precisely because I am God. This is how I do things.”

•**SLIDE**: **Philippians 2:6b: did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,**

It was no effort for the Lord Jesus Christ to be God. He did not go to school and get special training and earn a special degree to become God.

Nor was it something that He had to hold on to keep from losing.

When He left Heaven’s glory to this earth He didn’t say to the Father, “Keep Your eye on Gabriel. I think he’s after My job.”

He did not consider the divine manifestation of His life as something to be clung to at any price. He gives it up. He comes down a rung of the ladder.

•**SLIDE**: **Philippians 2:7a: but made himself nothing,**

He emptied it all out to come to earth and die.

Why did you do this? “because I am being God. This is what God does.”

•**SLIDE**: **Philippians 2:7b: taking the very nature of a servant,**

- SLIDE**: Children’s Picture
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Not one picture of Christ as a servant!

•**SLIDE**: Have you noticed in the Gospels that it is Jesus who serves others, not others who serve Jesus? He is at the beck and call of fishermen, harlots, tax collectors, the sick, the sorrowing.

Jesus grew and developed over time. Servanthood is something we grow into.

I grew up in a household of boys.

I remember the day my mom went on strike.

When boys go to the bathroom where they aim can be rather hit and miss. One day mom called from our bathroom. Holding in her hand the small, blue, plastic trash can that sat beside the toilet. Well, boys will be boys, it was an inch or so deep with some of the hit and miss—more miss than hit. She was livid.

I think it was Ronnie who said, (it might have been I), “Why you are so upset, all you have to do is pour it back in the toilet—no big deal.”

Can you imagine? Well, if you have teen-age boys, sure, you can imagine. We were clueless.

At that point she went on strike: fix own meals, wash clothes, etc.

Not much servant hood in our teenaged hearts.

But it was at that same time that my grandmother, Nana, had a stroke and I watched my mom care for her. She gave up everything for a while to nurse her in her time of need.

Made a deep impression on both of us: "Oh, this is how you are supposed to do it. We never got over that.

An illustration of this self-emptying of the Son of God is at the table in the Upper Room the night before His crucifixion. The disciples are arguing about who is the greatest.

He set aside the outward expression of His divinity as God and expressed Himself as a servant. Our Lord, picked up a towel, and washed the feet of the disciples.

Why did you do this? because of my being God.

•**SLIDE: Philippians 2:7c: being made in human likeness.**

"He was in the process of becoming."

This verse troubles me—and to speak of Him becoming bothers me a bit.

He did not, as St. Alfonsus suggests: "Shortly after birth, He sat up in straw, umbilical cord still wet and said, 'Hi, Mary, I am Jesus, the Son of God.'"

That is not what happened. His mind had to develop. So must ours

I love the idea of Jesus Christ discovering who He is—learning—studying—understanding—and the discoveries go on and on through His ministry.

•**SLIDE: When did He finally know that he was Messiah?**

Not at 2 or 4.

Probably around age 7 or 8 when Mary taught him Psalm 22? Isaiah 53? Passover Lamb?

Just like us, Jesus was Often Forced To Live With Mystery.

I love those passages in Christ's life when he had to say, "I don't know everything!"

•**SLIDE: One day the disciples asked, "When will your coming be?" And Jesus, not having the read Tim LaHaye's new Left Behind Prophecy Series, was forced to say, "I don't know."**

One day James and John asked, "Can we sit, one on your right and one on the left?" And He said, "I don't know. That's not mine to give." It was a mystery to Him.

All the time He was serving on earth, He did not know who would respond and who would not.

Rich Young Ruler? Nicodemus?

Judas? Or Peter? Or John?

•**SLIDE: At the end He was forced to live with mystery: "Is this the right way? Nevertheless, thy will be done."**

When we are serving, we live in mystery as to how much of it will turn out. We often don't know whether or not any particular action will be worth it, or do any good. But, we serve anyway.

How does an adult know, when he or she is sacrificing their own time and energy to work with some hyperactive, disrespectful, attention-deficit, trouble making eleven year old that one day that child will turn out to be Glenn Barteau?!

That is the mystery a servant lives with.

I love old fable about the traveler going through the night. He sees a monastery up ahead of him in the dim rainy mist. Cold and indecent was the weather. And when he stopped and knocked on the door the keeper of the monastery came and he said, "May I come in?" And the abbot said, "Not only may you come in, you may eat with us."

The food was wonderful. The monks were warm. It was a wonderful evening, safe and dry and warm. The monks, because the weather was so bad, asked the traveler to spend the night. He agreed on the basis that they would supply him with three or four things. "What is it that you want?" they asked.

"If I spend the night with you, I must have in my own room a pound of butter, a pair of rubber pants, a poker, a cricket bat, and a bass saxophone." It was unusual. But they scurried around the monastery and found it all.

Weather continued to be bad. As they went to sleep that night, the monks heard an awesome progression of half tones and squeaks and squawks coming from his room.

Because the weather continued badly they asked him to stay another night. He did do that, and he asked again for that mysterious list: a pound of butter, a pair of rubber pants, a poker, a cricket bat, and a bass saxophone. Each night he requested these things and each night they heard those awful noises. And finally it was time for him to leave.

The old abbot walked him to the door and said, "We were glad to supply all of those things, but if you don't mind, would you mind telling us why you asked for those things?"

Traveler said, "Well, it is a family secret. It's been in my family for years and years. But if you promise not to tell another living soul, I'll tell you."

And so he told the old abbot, and the abbot, being a man of his word, never told another living soul. And so we shall never know.

When we live our lives and serve, we often have no idea of how it will all turn out. And that is OK.

If Jesus cannot answer it all, neither can we. And we wait in darkness and talk of God giving light, and live without knowing, inhabited by the mind of Christ.

•**SLIDE: Philippians 2:8a: And being found in appearance as a man,**

Here is what people saw: He could get weary and sit down at a well. He needed to eat and sleep. He allowed people to spit in His face; they could crucify Him. He appeared to them as man.

In Heaven His inward nature was outwardly expressed as God. On earth His inward nature was expressed in quiet humility as a man.

While in a human body He bears the imprint of His Father in Heaven.

SLIDE: USA TODAY: "Genetically, It Seems, Your Face Belongs To Daddy."

"Sorry moms, according to a new theory, babies are more likely to look like their dads. It is self preservation. The theory is that the father confers face genes on the baby that will make the baby's face resemble his own. While a mother can be sure that the baby is hers no matter what it looks like, the father cannot. It is to the baby's advantage to look like the father to encourage paternal investment.

122 people matched photos of children ages 1, 10, and 20 to photos of adults. Nobody could consistently match photos of 10 and 20 year olds with their parents. Nor could anyone match 1-year olds with their mothers. But they did match 1-year olds, both sons and daughters, with their fathers."

This is why Jesus said so often, "I and my Father are one." He was consistently doing the things God would do if He were on earth.

•**SLIDE: Philippians 2:8b: he humbled himself**

Does anybody remember a modern-day athlete who claimed, "I am the greatest"? Muhammad Ali. One time, he was on a plane, and he refused to buckle up his seat belt. The flight attendant said, "You have to put on your seatbelt." He answered, "I'm not going to put a seatbelt on, because I'm Superman." He went on about how he didn't have to do this, and she kept explaining to him that it was a safety law. They couldn't take off until he put it on. Finally he said, "I'm Superman, and Superman don't need no seatbelt!" She said to him, "Superman don't need no airplane!"

The heart of Christ was never like that! He humbled himself.

Charles Jefferson wrote The Minister as Shepherd.

•**SLIDE**: "A Pastor's greatest work is done on the backside of the desert where nobody is looking."

Jesus' best work was done on the cross in the darkness between noon and three p.m.

Some of the best work He will do in your life is in the darkness when no one else is around.

•**SLIDE: Philippians 2:8c: even death on a cross!**

The word "even" is a translation of a Greek word which means, "up to the point of". It was not death nor the cross that killed him. He willingly dismissed His spirit.

A woman who was out Christmas shopping with her two children. She spent hours looking at toys and potential gifts. For hours she listened to her children asking for everything they saw on those shelves. She finally made it to the elevator with her kids.

She was felt so many of us feel during the Christmas season: overwhelming pressure to go to every party, taste all the holiday treats, get that perfect gift for every single person on the list.

Finally the doors opened and there was an elevator already crowded with shoppers and gifts. She pushed her way in and dragged in her kids.

When the doors closed she couldn't take it anymore and stated, "Whoever started this whole Christmas thing should be found, strung up, and shot."

From the back of the car a quiet calm voice respond, "Don't worry we already crucified him."

Many people wear today beautiful crosses of glittering gold. These are not at all like the one on which Jesus died." He died on one of rough-hewn wood, with splinters in it, stuck into a hole on Jerusalem's common crucifixion ground.

•**SLIDE**: Jesus humbled Himself. He went from commanding angels to sleeping in the straw. From holding stars to clutching Mary's finger.

The Palm that held the universe took the nail of a soldier.

Why? Because that is what God does.

It is His nature to die for us—to forgive our sins so we may know Him in deep intimacy forever!

•SLIDE #22: But God did not leave Him there. Now we see the exaltation of Jesus Christ.
Notice the three steps back up!

He grasps once more the ladder. Christ as men see him after the crucifixion!

•SLIDE: Philippians 2:9a: Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
•SLIDE: Philippians 2:9b: and gave him the name that is above every name,

The angel said, “Call Him Jesus because He’ll save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

After His resurrection and exaltation, He was given the name, “Lord.”

•SLIDE: Philippians 2:10: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Charles Lamb said that if Shakespeare were to enter a room, all those present would rise to their feet, but if Christ should enter that room, all would bow.

•SLIDE: Philippians 2:11: and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

“Jesus Christ is Lord” became the earliest creed of the Christian church.

There is a DAY in God’s future time scheme when every creature will acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

It is possible for people to bow before Him and confess today, and receive the gift of salvation.

Let me show you the difference the life of Christ can make.

•SLIDE: Servanthood Is Not Without Reward.

•SLIDE: Many of you remember J.L. Goodman. J.L.’s funeral was the largest funeral I ever preached. The sanctuary was filled. Here is my last picture of J.L. and me under the Big Tent on our new property. Two hours later he had a heart attack. Two weeks later he died.

I invited people to give testimonies at the funeral. Set up microphone.

•Young man told of rough growing up. “Always a meal and bed at J.L.’s house.”

•“I served in the air force with J.L. He wanted to know where I was going to go when I died. I didn’t know. He led me to Christ.”

•Single Mothers’ ministry at NW Baptist

•Repair service: Widow’s repairs for free when they couldn’t pay.

•Pastor: “Up at three to cure concrete for our church floor.”

J.L. developed the of Christ. He had a servant’s heart.

I knew why the church was full at his funeral.

Just like Jesus, he had the humble heart of a servant.

Just like Jesus, he surrendered His life to the needs of the people around him.

He was one of the most fulfilled and happy men I have ever known.