

Riches to Rags (Part 2)
Philippians 2:5-8
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Well, we continue this morning in our study in the book of Philippians. For those of you who are visiting with us, we began -- I think it was the first Sunday in November, in the morning to look at this wonderful epistle. And the good news is we've made it to Philippians 2. We are looking at verses 6-8 this morning. You'll have to forgive my voice, it's a little on the weak side because of the allergies that I'm experiencing, but hopefully you'll still be able to make out what I say.

There's a growing disconnect today between Christian living and doctrine. In fact, more and more there's a view that doctrine is just frankly irrelevant, and in some cases even divisive. You can read about this in a number of places in a number of different ways. You've probably heard one of the mantras of the current culture, which is this: Doctrine divides, but experience -- you fill in the blank -- unites. Experience unites. Or, perhaps another example we'll do, in a contemporary sermon preparation textbook. Now remember, this is a book written to Seminary students about how to prepare a message. In commenting on doctrine in preaching, or doctrinal preaching, the writer calls it this: "the unilluminating discussion of unreal problems in unintelligible language."

What is he talking about? There's a man out of touch with the reality of the pages of Scripture. Why you would bother writing a textbook on preaching and take that kind of position I'm not sure? The apostle Paul wouldn't have agreed with that statement. In fact, frequently the apostle Paul first lays down as a foundation a doctrinal understanding of an issue before he addresses the practical application, because doctrine is the ground of foundation on which our lives is built.

Let me give you just one example. Turn to the book of Ephesians. You've undoubtedly noticed this before. Paul's writing a letter. He's teaching, if you will, a congregation in Ephesus. He begins after a brief greeting with a number of verses laying out the reality of all of the spiritual blessings they enjoy. It is full of deep, rich doctrine. He even uses the "P" word, predestination. And he lays a foundation for their understanding. He talks about all that they have in Christ because of what He's accomplished and who Christ is, verse 20 in following. Then in Chapter 2:1, he comes to the issue of Soteriology. Well, first he starts with the doctrine of sin, and he

explains the reality of what they used to be. And then, he comes to the doctrine of salvation, what God has done and the doctrine of regeneration, how God made them alive in Christ. And then he gets to the issue of the church. And he says, “Here’s this great mystery. Let me explain to you the doctrine of the church.” And he lays out the doctrine of the church. He hasn’t yet made one practical application.

Finally, he gets there, Chapter 4:1. After three chapters of doctrine, Paul says, “Therefore,” all right now. Let’s get down to the practical application of what I’ve just taught you. “Therefore, I implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you’ve been called.” But here’s the point. If you didn’t understand the calling in which you’ve been called, then you’re not going to live up to the standard in a worthy way of that calling.

Doctrine is crucial. In Ephesians verses 1-3 are the foundational doctrinal instruction, Chapters 4-6 of the practical application. Now, there’s a profound lesson for us in this. Paul, and more importantly, the Holy Spirit wants us to know that there is always a link between the doctrine we grasp and how we live.

What do I mean by doctrine? Let me define it for you so that we’re clear. Doctrine is nothing more than the articulate statement of eternal and crucial biblical facts so that you can understand what the Scripture’s teaching and so that, therefore, you can understand its implications for you in your life.

Let me make a bold statement. There is no sin with which you struggle, which I struggle, that can’t be traced back to an error in our doctrine. Let me give you an example. We often struggle as humans with the issue of craving. It’s part of what we are as human beings. We crave what we don’t have. In the Garden of Eden, Christ, or I believe Christ, but God certainly said to Adam and Eve, “Don’t eat of the one tree.” And like your children, what was Adam and Eve’s first question? Which one? Because we, of course they weren’t fallen at that point, I used that just as a point of illustration. But that’s how we are. That’s how we respond. We crave. When we crave it’s because we have either not understood the doctrine of God’s goodness or we’ve not understood its application to our lives. Because if we really believed God was good, then we’d believe that God, the good God, has given us every good gift richly to enjoy, and that nothing really good for us is outside of God.

Take the issue of worry and doubt and fear. When you and I worry and fear, what we’re really betraying is that we either have a deficient doctrine or a deficient understanding of the

application of the doctrine of the providence of God, God's sovereignty in the affairs of our lives. Because if we really believe in the depths of our soul that there's nothing that happens to us outside of God's control, if we really believe that there's not a stray molecule in the universe, then what are we going to worry about? What are we going to fear?

You see, ultimately the battle between God and Satan is lost or won in your mind, in your thinking. And that's why doctrine is so important. Paul understands that. And so, with the goal of encouraging the very practical Christian living of humility, which is the single most important virtue that will produce unity in a church, with that in mind, he provides us here in, in Philippians 2 with the ultimate doctrinal lesson, the supreme humility of Jesus Christ becoming a man.

Now, let's turn to Philippians 2. And let me just read the passage for you. You follow along beginning in Philippians 2:5. Paul writes.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

As we saw last week, those verses may very well be part of a first century hymn that Paul and the other New Testament believers sang. We begin last week to look at verses 6-8, and I hope to finish them today. We're examining -- as we look at these verses, we're examining the four giant steps down that Christ took to reach us. And remember, while it's filled with doctrine, Paul is teaching us that doctrine so that we'll get the very practical point, which is this: His chief concern is that we will follow Christ's example of humility in how we relate to one another. With that in mind, let me remind you of the two steps that we looked at last week. We're looking at these four giant steps down Christ took.

The first step is where His decent began, and I call it "what He always was." "What He always was." Notice verse 6. "Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality

with God a thing to be grasped.” Christ was in the very form of God. That means that Jesus always had those characteristic attributes that distinguished God from everything that isn’t God. He also says that He was equal with God. I reminded you or mentioned to you last time that from the Greek word for equal we get the English word, or we get a number of English words. One of them I mentioned to you was isosceles, as an isosceles triangle. It’s a triangle in which two sides are exactly equal, isometric of equal measure. In the Greek language, you take these two expressions together that Christ was in the form of God and that He was equal with God. There really is no more concise, compelling way to say that Jesus was God. That’s what He always was.

Secondly, last time we noted, in addition to what He always was, what He chose. What He chose. Notice the middle of verse 6. “Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard or think or consider His equality with God a thing to be grasped, but He emptied Himself.” That’s the choice Christ made. He didn’t consider His equality with God as a prize to be held onto at all costs. He didn’t really clutch His privileges as God. But instead, He emptied Himself. Literally, He poured Himself out.

The Greek word translated “empty” is the word “kenao.” I noted for you last time that that’s the word from which our theological word “kenosis” comes, the self-emptying of Christ. It refers to what Christ gave up when He became a man. And while this is taught explicitly in this passage, we noted that biblically, what Christ gave up when He became a man was two things. Number one, He failed His glory. Men saw Him as a man. They didn’t see the magnificent, effulgent glory of God. Although, there were a couple occasions, I noted them for you last time. There was the transfiguration when the Synoptics write that His face was bright as the sun at noon, and His garments were like lightening. We had a powerful demonstration of that this week, a reminder of the magnificence of our Lord even in His glory. It’s like lightening. He gave up His preincarnate glory.

But secondly, He chose to empty Himself by voluntarily restricting the use of some of His attributes. When we talk about Christ’s self-emptying, we’re saying He failed His glory, and we’re saying He voluntarily restricted the use of some of His attributes. He refused to use His divine attributes for His own convenience to make His human life here easier. As I noted for you last time, He didn’t cheat. He lived just like you and I have to live. He only used His divine attributes in the fulfillment of His ministry. So, what Paul is saying here is that Christ made a conscious choice not to hold on to His privileges at all costs, but instead to pour Himself out.

I love how one writer describes the incarnation. He says, “Imagine for a moment, a diver, preparing to go to the deepest levels of the sea, as far as his natural lungs will allow Him to go. And he jumps and bursts himself into the warm, slightly tinted water. And then he begins his descent. And he passes through that welcoming environment down into the cold, dark waters eventually coming to an area of ooze and slime and decay, until he grabs what it was he went down there for. And then he pushes himself off of the bottom, and he comes back up through each of those levels until, finally, his lungs as though they would burst, he bursts through the surface of the water holding up in his hand the precious item that he went down to get.” That’s the incarnation. That’s what Christ did. That’s what He chose to do. Now, that’s where we finished last time.

That brings us to Christ’s huge third step down. It’s what He became. We noted what He always was. We’ve seen what He chose. And now, let’s look at what He became. Notice the middle of verse 7. He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men, being found in appearance as a man. You’ll notice that there are three phrases there, three participial phrases. Notice they begin with the “i-n-g” form of the verb, taking, being made, and being found. In those three participial phrases, Paul captures the incredible condescension of Jesus Christ. I love the economy of language. You know, if you and I had written this reality, we would have written page after page after page to try to explain it. But the genius of the Holy Spirit, He reduces the incarnation to those three simple phrases. They profoundly describe the earthly and the eternal existence of the Incarnate Son of God.

I don’t know if you’ve ever thought about this or not, but the angels are not omniscient. They don’t know everything. And, in fact, there’s a very interesting reference in 1 Peter 1 where Peter says in verse 12, that regarding things concerning salvation, the angels long to look into them. The angels want to know more than they know. They want to understand more than they understand. I can imagine that for a few weeks before Christ came to the earth, there were rumors circulating among the angels. “So, how do you think he’ll go? How do you think he’ll enter the world?” One might say, “Well, I think he’ll come in a blaze of flashing glory, the shekinah glory that literally blinds all men and brings them to their knees.” That’s how I think He will go. And another might say, “No, I don’t think so. I think he’ll come as a mighty general, marching into Rome, the center of human power, establishing His authority and taking back what rightfully belongs to Him.” Maybe another angel said, “No, I, I think he’ll come as the wisest of the Greek philosophers. And I think He will absolutely put men’s intellect to shame by the brilliance of His reason and His argument.”

Imagine the angel's surprise when there's no glory, there's no pomp. Christ, instead lays aside His glory, He lays aside His heavenly robe, steps down from the throne, and puts Himself in the womb of a 13-year-old virgin in a remote part, a remote colony of the Roman Empire. It's no wonder that the angels that night burst into a crescendo of praise. Who would have ever thought the king of all creation born as a baby?

Let's look briefly at these three phrases that describe what the eternal Son of God became. The first one is taking the form of a bondservant. This is what He became, taking the form of a bondservant. Notice that the word "taking," as I told you, is a participle. That means it's modifying the main verb of the sentence. The main verb is the word empty. So here's what Paul is saying: Christ emptied Himself by taking. Specifically, He took the form of a bond-servant. Now, in the NAS, the word "bond-servant," that actually still has a little bit of a sound of nobility to it, it's noble, something close to slave can sound, but the word is really "doulas," it's slave. He became, He took the form of a slave.

Now, the Greek word for form is exactly the same word that we saw back in verse 6, "He was in the form of God," same word, form. It means that He took on the essential characteristics of a slave. In the same way that Jesus had always had the characteristic attributes of deity, of God. In the same way that that was true, He took to Himself, or He added the essential characteristics of a slave, that is those qualities that distinguish a slave from everything that isn't a slave. He took those qualities on. He didn't disguise Himself as a slave. He didn't just look like a slave. He took to Himself the nature or the characteristic attributes of a slave.

Now, the question that comes to my mind, as I'm sure it does to yours, is: a slave in what sense? A slave of whom? Well, there've been several answers to that question. One of them says this: Well, it means that He became a slave in the sense that He came to serve men. And that's true. For example, Matthew 20:28, Christ says, "... The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve...." Luke 22:27, Christ says, "... I am among you as ... one who serves." That's true.

Another view says this, it says, "Well, no, that isn't quite what it means. It means that Christ entered his glory like a literal slave. He had no advantages. He had no pedigree. He had no credentials. He only owned the clothes on His own back. He had no rights, no privileges. He came like a slave." As D.A. Carson says, "Think of it, imagine this, Almighty God comes into the world as a nobody." And while those things are true, I think Paul tells us exactly what he means in the next phrase.

Being made in the likeness of men. You see, Christ took the form of a slave by being made in the likeness of men. Paul is saying that the only way to really illustrate it, what it's like for the creator to come and become one of His creatures, is to compare it to being a slave. It's like a king stepping down from His throne and becoming one of the slaves who serves Him. He took the form of a slave in the sense that He became like us. Now, let's be honest, it's a pretty crushing blow to our pride to think that becoming like one of us is a huge step down, it's like becoming a slave. And yet, that's exactly how Paul describes it. Know how Paul describes the process, he says, "Being made."

The same Greek word is used over in Galatians 4. Turn there for a moment, Galatians 4:4, familiar words about the incarnation. It says, "But when the fullness of God came, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the law." Now, you see the English word "born," that is a translation of the same Greek word "being made" back in Philippians 2. It means to come into a particular state. Not like Texas.

You know, I know there's some of you who think that, you know, you really didn't live. Your life really didn't begin until you came into Texas. But that's not what Paul is saying. In this case, he's saying that Christ came into the state of the likeness of men, "likeness." The word "likeness" speaks of equivalence, to copy, or if you will, an identical duplicate of the original. Christ looked and acted like a man because He was a man. You remember what Christ said to Himself in John 8:40? He said, "... you are seeking to kill me, a man who told you the truth."

But here's a question that comes to my mind. Why is it that Paul didn't just say that? Why didn't Paul say Christ was a man? Why did he say that He was being made in the likeness of men? I think it's because of this, because although Christ was truly man, He was not merely man. Paul uses the word "likeness" to make an important theological point. And that is that Christ was like us. He is like us, but He's not exactly like us. Listen carefully. This is very important. What is the point of similarity between Christ and us? That is, His full and complete humanity? Think about that for a moment. The Son of God united Himself to an unglorified humanity. He didn't become like Adam before the fall. And He didn't become like we will after the resurrection when we'll have glorified bodies. He now has a glorified body, but He came into the world in a state of unglorified humanity.

It was only *after* His resurrection that He received a glorified human body. So, as a man, Christ was everything that we are. He was subject to temptation, that is, the external solicitation to evil. He was subject to trouble, to weakness, to pain, to sorrow, and to every human limitation that

you and I face. But although Christ was exactly like us in this full and complete humanity, He was not exactly like us. There were two important differences.

One is in Romans 8:3 where it says, “God sent His son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” Implied yet without the sin. That’s the first difference. He was exactly like us except there was no sin. There was no sin nature in Christ that called out or responded to sin. And there were no acts of sin. And the second way He wasn’t like us is that, although, He was thoroughly and truly and completely a man, He never ceased to be God as well. Jesus became a real man, but not merely a man. He was made in the likeness of men.

Paul has another phrase to define what Christ became, he says being found in appearance as a man. Beginning in verse 8, “being found in appearance as a man.” Being found has the idea of inspection, of discovery something by a search. Basically, the people around Christ, all who saw Him, found Him to be what He appeared to be. They found Him to be in appearance as a man. The word appearance is an interesting Greek word. It’s the word from which we get the English word schematic. It speaks of outward form, that which makes anything recognizable for what it is.

Now, let me give you a little experiment. Those of you who were at the Shepherd’s Conference, you’ll have a point of similarity here. This is a watch. Now, am I going too fast for anyone so far? It’s a watch. This watch has distinguishing characteristics. For example, you can, even from where you’re seated, see that that’s a watch because it has a shape, similar. It’s in the shape of watches. You can see that it has a face. And on that face there are some indications of twelve divided periods. You can also see that it has hands, except for some of you in the back who need glasses, this might be a good test to see if you need to go. But you, the point is, this watch has distinguishing characteristics that make it obviously a watch. That’s what Paul is saying in Philippians 2 about Christ. There were distinguishing characteristics that made it obvious to everyone around Him that He was, in fact, a man. He was in the appearance of a man. He was human. Not only was Christ fully human, but everyone who saw Him recognized that reality. He was in the appearance of a man.

This is the constant witness of the New Testament. Let me just remind you of the flow of Christ’s life. Galatians 4:4 tells us that Christ was born in the usual way human beings are born. He had a physical body according to Colossians 1:22. He grew up in a family. In fact, He was the oldest of at least seven children. We don’t know exactly how many were in Christ’s family, but we know He had four brothers, and the word sisters is used plural. So, that means there were

at least seven, and there may have been more. He had human parents who cared for Him, Luke 2:40-51.

He grew and developed as other children developed, Luke 2:52. He probably worked from at least the age of 13 to the age of 30 in His human father Joseph's business. He got hungry. He got thirsty, tired. He needed sleep. He felt pain. He experienced emotional loss. He even experienced external solicitations to sin according to Hebrews 4:15. And eventually, He died like all humans die. He was truly and thoroughly human. He was exactly like all other human beings. He was a genuine man.

In fact, so much was He a genuine man that His enemies scoffed at His claims to be God. And His own brothers, those who grew up in the household with Him, the four brothers, they didn't believe His claims until after the resurrection. And His own disciples, He had to repeatedly explain His deity to them, even up to the night before His crucifixion. Thomas is still saying, "show us the Father." And He's saying, "Thomas don't you get it? He who has seen me as seen the Father."

When you look at Philippians 2:7 and 8, it is unquestionably clear that Christ was fully human. Yet, in verse 6, Paul is equally clear that He continued to exist in the very form of God, equal to God. So, fully God and fully man. Theologians call the union of those two natures the hypostatic union. Now, don't get frightened by that term. All it is, is a description of the reality that you have a person who is truly and fully man, and who is truly and fully God in one person. How can that be? What's the relation of those two natures?

Well, if the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, the relation of these two natures in Christ, the human and the divine, was described in four very simple expressions that you and I can understand. The Council of Chalcedon begins, quote

"we then following the holy fathers teach men to confess one in the same son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man. And, then they explained how that can be, basically, and how those divine human natures are united in Christ with four simple expressions: Without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation."

Let me take each one of those and briefly explain it to you.

First of all, without confusion. That is, the two natures, the human and the divine in Christ are not confused. Christ's human nature continues to be His human nature, and His divine nature continues to be His divine nature. They are not confused. In other words, let me give you an example. When Christ was on the earth, His human nature was confined to one small geographic area on the globe, one place at a time. But at the same time that Christ was on the earth and His human nature was confined to that location, His divine nature, which cannot be confined, occupied all of the universe. He was omnipresent in His divine nature, at the same time in His human nature, He was confined to one small spot on the globe.

The writers of Chalcedon also said that His two natures are without change. In other words, you know how sometimes you put two ingredients into a pot and you stir them, and you get a third new ingredient. That didn't happen with Christ's natures. You didn't pour in His divine nature and His human nature and stir them together and get some new admixture, some new ingredient. No, the human nature was and always will be human, and the divine has always been and will always continue to be divine.

Thirdly, they said, "without division." In other words, the two natures in Christ do not constitute two persons, but one person.

And finally, they said "without separation." And here's the encouraging part for us. Listen to this. The second person of the trinity, God Himself, will always have a human nature as well. He'll always be exactly like us, except without sin. What He became was truly human so He will forever be what theologians call the God-man, fully God, and fully human at the same time.

As we examine the descent of Christ, we've seen first what He always was, secondly, what He chose, thirdly, what He became.

That brings us to His final step down, what He endured, what He endured. Notice the end of verse 8, "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. You see Paul's point is this, as God, He emptied Himself, and then as man, He humbled Himself. In Greek, as in English, the emphasis in this expression, He humbled Himself, is on the fact that Christ's actions were free and voluntary. He humbled Himself. Christ was a volunteer. This is where Paul has been driving. This is what I don't want you to miss. This is where Paul has been coming. He wants the Philippians to realize that as they struggle to assert themselves, as they struggle to put forth their own selfish ambition and to pursue their own empty conceit, they are in direct contrast to what Christ was, because Christ

who was in the very form of God, decided to empty Himself. And then He became a man. And what did He do as a man? Did He promote Himself as a man? No. Then even as a man, He humbled Himself and became a slave. This is the opposite of the Philippians. They were motivated by pride. They were striving for selfishness and for empty conceit.

I love what Paul Reeves writes in his commentary on this passage. He says, “Look at Him, this amazing Jesus. He is helping Joseph make a yoke in that little carpenter shop at Nazareth. This is the one who could far more easily make a solar system or a galaxy of systems. Look at Him again, dressed like a slave with towel and basin for His equipment. He’s bathing the feet of some friends of his, who but for their quarrelsome, should have been washing His feet.” He humbled Himself. “Don’t forget this,” cries Paul to these dear friends of His in Philippi. “Don’t forget this when the slightest impulse arises to become self-assertive and self-seeking, and so to break the bond of your fellowship with one another.”

So, how exactly did Christ humble Himself? What does that mean? Well, Paul says He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. Christ made a major point while He was here, that He was obedient to His Father. In fact, in Hebrews 10:7 it says that when Christ came into the world, He came into the world saying, “I have come to do Your will, oh God.” John 8:27, He says, “I always do the things that are pleasing to the one who sent me.”

You get the same picture in Hebrews 5. Turn there for a moment, Hebrews 5:7. “On the day of His flesh, Christ offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the one able to save Him from death, And He was heard because of His piety.” And then a remarkable statement. Imagine this for a moment. Although He was a son, the unique, the only Son of God, God Himself, He learned obedience from the things He suffered. Christ, in His human nature, submitted Himself to learning obedience to His Father. And He did. He obeyed Him perfectly. But it was not always completely easy. There were times when for Christ this obedience was a struggle of a kind.

You’ll notice in Matthew 23:39, you see the struggle on the night before His crucifixion. He’s in the Garden of Gethsemane. And what does He say to His Father? He says, “Father, if possible, let this cut pass from me, yet not as I will, but as You will.” You see, as Christ in His human nature, struggled with the reality that He would experience separation from God, that He would have Himself forsaken in the communion that He had enjoyed with the Father from time, before time, eternity passed. He asked if that could pass, and yet He says, “Not as I will, but as You will.” You see, an obedience to His Father’s plan, Christ chose death as His destiny, the destiny

that we're told was decreed before there was ever time, the lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

But Christ's death was the final great expression of His devotion to, and His obedience to His Father. And by that obedience, He secured our salvation. This is the point Paul makes in Romans 5. Turn there for a moment. By Christ's perfect obedience, in life and in death, 5:18.

So then ... through one transgression [that is Adams,] there resulted condemnation to all men ... even so, through ... [one act of righteousness, there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners,] even so, through the obedience of the One, the many will be made righteous, [because Christ obeyed His Father perfectly, even to the point of death.]

You and I can have that perfect righteousness, that perfect keeping of the law, that perfect obedience put in our account, and God will treat us as if we had perfectly obeyed.

But back in Philippians 2 we learned the descent of Christ didn't stop at death. Paul adds, even death on a cross. Now, we sit here in our nice church in the 21st century, and that doesn't do what it would have done to the Philippians. The language Paul uses was meant to shock them, because no one in Philippi used the cross as a symbol of their faith. There were no necklaces with gold crosses hanging on them. There were no crosses emblazoned on the front or behind in the places where they met to worship.

No, to them, the cross was God's scandal, and it was, thus, their scandal as well. It was God's absolute contradiction of human wisdom. Gordon Fee writes, and I love this. He said, "The one they worshiped as Lord of all, including Lord of Caesar, had been crucified as a state criminal at the hands of one of Caesar's proconsuls. It's unimaginable that the Almighty should appear in human dress and that He should do it in this way as a messiah who died by crucifixion,"

You see, Christ didn't just descend to our level. He's descended below us. He descended lower than we will ever go. He died on a cross. The cross, we'll talk about in a couple of weeks, was reserved for the dregs of the Roman Judicial System. It was only for slaves and for rebels and for terrorists. But more importantly, God had said that if anyone dies on a cross, He would curse him. Listen to Deuteronomy 21:23. "His corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day, for he who is hanged is accursed of God." In other

words, Moses is saying that the victim of such a death is outside of Israel under the ban of excommunication, not just from the nation, but also from all of God's covenant promises.

That's why in 2 Corinthians 5:21 Paul says, "He was made sin for us." It's not as some heretics teach that He became a sinner. No. God treated Him as if He were the worst of sinners. He literally became a curse for us. How far down He came. To paraphrase Neil Armstrong, these were four huge steps for the Son of God and one giant leap for mankind.

I began by saying that doctrine has profound implications. What are the implications of this doctrine for us? How does this make a difference in how we live? Our understanding this, how does it affect the reality of our Christian experience? Let me just give you a brief list. And I'll give you the verses. We won't turn there. I encourage you to look at them in your leisure.

First of all, if Christ became a man, as He has, then the first implication is that He defeated the power of death. Hebrews 2:14 and 15 says that He had to be made like us. He had to take on flesh and blood so that He could defeat Satan who held the power of death. And we were held slaves to that fear of death all of our lives. Christ, by becoming a man, and by dying, defeated death. We don't have to fear it anymore. That's one of the greatest, that *is* the greatest fear that man has is death. And yet, Christ removed its stain, because He went ahead of us as a human being and defeated death.

Secondly, because He was made a man, He understands you, and He represents you as a high priest before God. In Hebrews 2:17 we're told that it was necessary for Him to be made like His brethren and all things so that He might become for them a merciful and a faithful high priest. God says Christ was made just like you so that He could understand you and so that He could represent you before God.

Thirdly, in becoming a man, He satisfied the wrath of God for you. That same verse in Hebrews 2:17 says it was necessary for Him to be made like us in all things so that He might make a propitiation to God, literally so that He might satisfy the wrath of God. You see, you and I as humans deserve God's wrath, but instead, Christ became the receptacle of that wrath, as a human being in our place.

Fourthly, He's able to help you in temptation. He's able to help you in temptation. Hebrews, 2:18 says that He's able to come, since He Himself suffered being tempted, He's able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. Because He was a man, because He endured what you and I

endure, He's able to help. You can go to Him for help in the time of your temptation and trouble.

Fifthly, He became a man so that He could redeem you from the laws of penalty, so that He could keep it on your behalf. You see, God says as a human being you and I have to keep His law. Galatians 4:4 and 5 says that He was born under the law, so that He might redeem those under the law. In other words, Christ kept the law for you. He became a man so that He could live like a man and so He could do everything that we're supposed to do, but don't.

Sixthly, He reconciled you to God. Colossians 1:22 says, "... in His fleshly body, He reconciled you to God." You see, what we needed was someone who would lay hold on us and someone who would lay hold on God. What we have in Christ is the perfect mediator because He is the God-man. He was able to reconcile us to God, we, who were God's enemies.

Seven, because He was made a man, He sympathizes with your weaknesses, Hebrew 4:15. He understands. It's like that great image from Psalm 103, where it says, "Our Father remembers our frame. He knows that we're the dust." He can sympathize with your weaknesses because He faced human weakness.

Number eight, He has shown us God. By becoming a man, we got to see God living in our world and know how God would live if God were here. John 1:18 says, "No man has seen God at any time; [but] the only begotten God who ... [was] in the bosom of the Father, [He has exegeted God,] he's explained ... [God.]" We got to see what God would live like if He were in the world.

And, finally, and this is Paul's point in Philippians 2, Christ provided us, in His incarnation by becoming a man, He provided us the supreme example of humility by putting our interests ahead of His own interests. Think about this. If the one who was equal to God didn't pursue His own interests, but ours, then how can we pursue our own selfish agenda over the interest of others? If the one who laid aside the Son of God and who laid aside the display of His true glory to become a slave to serve us, then how can we pursue empty conceit? How can we be carried away with our own desire to be well thought of and to assert our pride in the face of such humility?

It's no wonder Paul says have this mind among yourselves in the church, which was also in Christ Jesus. Because you see, if you and I will practice that kind of humility, if we will consider the others around us as more important as ourselves, if we will put their interests ahead of ours

starting in our own homes, determine to be a slave to the people who live in your home with you. Determine to be a slave to the people around you even as Christ did. And if we all live that way, then we will have unity. Such amazing condescension. Think about what Christ did for us.

You know when I think about that, I can only conclude with one thing. Romans 11:33. "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomed His ways!"

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank you for how it speaks to the issues of our lives. Lord, thank You for the reminder of Christ.

Lord, forgive us for our pride. Forgive us for asserting ourselves as if we were important when Your own Son didn't clutch His privileges, but He emptied Himself. And then, as a man He humbled Himself. From the position of a slave, became obedient even to the point of death for our sakes. He lived, and He died, not for Himself, but for us.

Lord, help us to live and even to die not for ourselves, but for You, and for others. Lord, don't let us be conformed to the mindset of our times, who says assert yourself, get what you want. And Lord, help us instead consider others more important as ourselves and to put their interests ahead of our own. Help us to be like Christ.

And Lord, I pray for the person this morning who came to be with us, or who is one of us but doesn't truly know You, I pray that as they've seen all that Christ did, that they would be brought to the place where they would be willing to seek Your forgiveness, cry out to You and give them a new heart, because of the tremendous sacrifice You made in Christ.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.