

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Philippians 2.5-11 | October 4, 2020

Prepared by Curtis A. Bronzan
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series Citizens of Heaven, engaging the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians. In these verses we will explore a rich and robust theology of the identity and work of Jesus Christ. But it's even better than that: This passage implores us to accept Jesus' attitude as our own.

II. Connecting with One Another

Our world is enamored with superheroes. Who is your favorite?

III. Study the Text

- a. Before digging into this week's passage, let's briefly remind ourselves of the context. **Reread Philippians 1.27-2.4**, where Paul shifts from the indicative to the imperative.

What has come to your mind this week as you have reflected upon "whatever happens"? Has that phrase shifted any of your thoughts?

- b. **Read Philippians 2.5.**

First, let's remind ourselves of the obvious: Paul writes, "in your relationships with one another." He is writing not to individuals, but to a congregation, a community in Christ. In fact, this letter would have been read aloud in their worship gathering.

How is that different than if he'd written to a single person?

- c. What does the second half of **verse 5** say in your translation? Be sure to share with others, if you're engaging this in a group.

The Greek word *phroneō* is translated as "attitude," "mind," "mindset," and "think of yourselves." How does each give a different sense of the verse's meaning?

- d. What was this attitude, this mindset, the Philippians must have been wondering – as they, no doubt, hung on every word? **Read Philippians 2.6-8** to find out.

Verse 6 speaks of Jesus' "preincarnate state" – in other words, before he became human. Did you know Jesus existed before he was born in the stable? That is the clear and consistent communication in Scripture. See, for instance, **John 1.1-4** and **17.5**.



As James Montgomery Boice explains, "Jesus Christ possesses all of God's attributes... [Jesus] is God. Is God omniscient? So is Jesus. Is God all-powerful? So is Jesus. Is God the creator, redeemer, the truth, the way, the life, the past, the present, the future? So is Jesus."

Why is this truth central to Christian faith? Think of as many reasons as you can.

- e. But, Paul goes on to declare that Jesus did not use his divinity to his own advantage. **Verses 7-8** explain how.

Where are we Americans tempted to take advantage of a situation?

How can you be tempted to use something for your own advantage?

- f. There are deepening levels of condescension in these verses.

What are they? Which is the lowest level? Why do you think Paul communicates it like he does?

- g. When he writes that Jesus took on "the very nature of a servant/slave," Paul uses the same word he used to describe himself and Timothy in **Philippians 1.1**.

Why do you think he uses this word? Is it intentional? Or is it accidental? Why?

- h. **Read Philippians 2.9-11.**

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus repeatedly declared, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (see **Matthew 18.4, 23.12, Luke 14.11, 18.14**).

Think back to your favorite superhero. Do they follow the same pattern as Jesus? Do they exalt themselves? Or humble themselves?

How could it affect our lives if we idolize those who exalt themselves?

- i. Think back to the Garden, with Adam and Eve. Juxtapose the scene in **Genesis 3** with **Philippians 2.5-11**.

What did Adam want? What did Jesus want? What were the results?

IV. Pray

- a. Lift up areas of your own life where you idolize the wrong superhero.
- b. Pray for the witness of the church during this difficult and divisive election season.
- c. Ask God for the wisdom and courage for how you can best mirror the humility of Jesus Christ.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. To juxtapose the thoughts of Lucifer with the mind of Christ, see **Isaiah 14.13-14**.
- b. For more on the first and last Adam, turn to **1st Corinthians 15**.

