

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

Knowing and Experiencing Christ as the Pattern (Message 2)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:3-9; 1:19-21a

- I. If we would know Christ as the pattern, we should let the mind which was in Christ Jesus be in us—Phil. 2:5:
 - A. We need to take Christ’s mind as our mind, opening ourselves to “let this mind” be in us—vv. 3-5:
 1. *This* in *verse 5* refers to the considering in *verse 3* and the regarding in *verse 4*.
 2. Lowliness of mind is in contrast to both selfish ambition and vainglory (v. 3); this must not be our natural lowliness but the lowliness of Christ (v. 8).
 3. This kind of mind, this kind of thinking, was in Christ when He emptied Himself and humbled Himself—vv. 7-8.
 - B. To have “this mind” requires us to be one with Christ in His inward parts, in His tender, inward feeling and in His thinking—1:8.
 - C. For the mind of Christ to be in us means that this mind is something living; actually, the mind of Christ is Christ Himself, for the person of Christ is manifested in His mind—2:5; cf. 1 Cor. 2:16, footnote 1.
- II. In order to experience Christ, we need to know Him as the pattern—Phil. 2:5-9:
 - A. In *Philippians 2:5-9* Paul presents Christ as the pattern; we need to have this pattern infused into us.
 - B. The pattern of the Christian life is the God-man Savior, who emptied Himself and humbled Himself and who has been exalted and glorified by God—vv. 6-9:
 1. Although the Lord was equal with God, He did not consider being equal with God a treasure to be grasped and retained; rather, He emptied Himself, laying aside what He possessed—the form of God—vv. 6-7a: [32]
 - a. In His incarnation the Lord did not alter His divine nature.

- b. He changed only the outward expression, from the form of God to the form of a slave.
 - 2. The Lord became “in the likeness of men”—vv. 7b-8a:
 - a. *The form of God* implies the inward reality of Christ’s deity; *the likeness of men* denotes the outward appearance of His humanity—vv. 6-7.
 - b. He appeared to men as a man outwardly, but as God, He had the reality of deity inwardly—John 1:1, 14, 18; 3:16; Rom. 8:3.
 - c. Christ entered into the condition of humanity, and He was found in fashion as a man—Phil. 2:8a.
 - 3. Christ humbled Himself by becoming obedient even unto death—the death of a cross—v. 8b:
 - a. Humbling Himself was a further step in emptying Himself.
 - b. Christ’s self-humbling manifested His self-emptying—vv. 7-8.
 - c. The death of a cross was the climax of Christ’s humiliation.
 - 4. The Son willingly emptied Himself to become a created man as the representation of submission to authority—vv. 6-8:
 - a. The Lord Jesus set His heart to subject Himself to the way of submission, even unto death—Isa. 50:7; Luke 9:51; Mark 10:31-34.
 - b. “Even though He was a Son,” the Lord “learned obedience from the things which He suffered”—Heb. 5:8:
 - 1) God ordained that Christ should die, and Christ obeyed—Phil. 2:8.
 - 2) He learned this obedience through the suffering of death.
 - c. The Lord, who was submissive throughout His life, has given us His life of submission; a believer’s obedience is a consequence of taking Christ as a pattern of obedience—v. 8; Col. 3:4.
 - 5. The Lord humbled Himself to the uttermost, but God exalted Him to the highest peak and bestowed on Him “the name which is above every name”—Phil. 2:9. [33]
- III. There is an urgent need among us in the Lord’s recovery today to experience Christ as our pattern—vv. 3-8:
- A. Christ as our pattern is not only objective but also subjective and experiential; the One who set up the pattern and who Himself is

the pattern is now operating within us as the indwelling God—[vv. 5, 12-13](#).

- B. The principle of Christ as the inward pattern for our living is that even if we have the highest standard or the highest position, we should not grasp it—[vv. 3-6](#).
- C. We need to live Christ in His human living, especially in His emptying Himself and humbling Himself and in His not grasping equality with God as a treasure—[1:20-21a; 2:6](#):
 - 1. We have a life in us that is self-emptying and self-humbling.
 - 2. This life never grasps at something as a treasure but is always willing to lay aside position and title—[vv. 3-6](#).
- D. We have Christ crucified as our pattern, and this pattern is the crucified life within us—[1 Cor. 1:23a; 2:2; Gal. 2:20; 3:1; 6:14](#):
 - 1. The steps of Christ’s humiliation in [Philippians 2:5-8](#) are aspects of the crucified life lived out in a full way.
 - 2. Christ’s being obedient unto the death of the cross was the crucified life lived out in a full and absolute way—[v. 8](#).
 - 3. When we live Christ, we live the One who is the pattern of a crucified life—[1:21a; 1 Cor. 2:2](#).
 - 4. By living a crucified life, we can experience the power of resurrection—[Phil. 3:10a; Eph. 1:19-22](#).
 - 5. The highest life on earth is a crucified life; whenever we live a crucified life, God will bring us into resurrection—[Phil. 3:10-11](#).
 - 6. Christ is exalted in our daily life as we, by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, take Him as the crucified life to be the pattern of our daily life—[2:5; 1:19-21a](#).

MESSAGE TWO

KNOWING AND EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS THE PATTERN

The general subject of this series of messages is “The Experience of Christ.” In [2 Corinthians 11:2-3](#) Paul says,

I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the

purity toward Christ.

It seems that after raising up the church in Corinth, Paul had to fight to bring the saints back to Christ. It seems that he had a similar experience with many of the churches that he had raised up. He had betrothed the new believers to Christ, but different things came in to distract them from Christ. He battled with this with the Corinthians as well as with the Philippians. The believers in Corinth and Philippi faced different distractions but had the same result. In a sense, it does not matter what the problem is, for as long as our focus is turned away from Christ, the enemy will be satisfied. However, it is so good that we could have a series of messages dedicated fully to and focused on the experience of Christ.

When I first came to know of this general subject, there was an immediate pause in my being because I realize that all the general subjects of the seven annual feasts are not arbitrary. All the general subjects are brought forth through the brothers' prayer, fellowship, and careful consideration over many months and are according to the Lord's leading, through which He unveils the need in His recovery. I believe that as the brothers are exercised to read the breastplate, the Lord gives them the sense of what His people currently need. Therefore, when I saw this general subject—"The Experience of Christ," I said, "Lord, thank You. This is my need. This is Your recovery's need."

It seems that the matter of experience is always preceded by vision. In principle, this is what was presented in Message 1 and will be developed in the subsequent messages. Before experience we need vision, and our vision results in pursuing. We need more vision of the excellency of Christ [35] so that we can have a greater pursuit of Him. It is possible that although the Lord is giving us a vision, we are not focused on the central part of the vision. In [Matthew 17](#) there was such a case. The Lord took three of His closest disciples up to a high mountain, and there He unveiled Himself in an unprecedented way ([v. 2](#)). Following the appearance of Moses and Elijah, Peter made an absurd suggestion concerning making three tents ([vv. 3-4](#)). He inadvertently devalued the vision that he had seen in [chapter 16](#) and placed Christ on the same level as Moses and Elijah. While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and the Father said, "This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. Hear Him!" ([17:5](#)). The three disciples fell on their face, frightened, but when they heard the Lord speak to them and opened their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus only. Even after Peter saw the vision of the Christ as the Son of the living God, he could be drawn off by secondary things. Likewise, in our receiving a message, it is very possible for us to be impressed with

secondary or tertiary things, rather than have our sight on the person of Christ, the main thing. I am praying inwardly that my speaking would not cause you to be impressed with anything else, that you would be focused only on Christ and on the experience and enjoyment of this wonderful person. This is our need.

There are four key statements that summarize the burden of this series of messages. The first key statement, which summarizes and unveils the burden from Message 1, says, “The most important thing for us to do is to experience Christ as our enjoyment today so that the church may be built up for His glory; this is the way for us to be preserved in the Lord’s recovery until He comes back.” In this key statement there are two words common among us—*experience* and *enjoyment*. The third major point of Message 1 says, “Strictly speaking, Philippians is a book not only on the experience of Christ but also on the enjoyment of Christ.” There is a distinction between experience and enjoyment. This is a great revelation presented by Brother Lee. This is a great help in our personal experience and enjoyment of the Lord.

The first subpoint under the third major point of Message 1 says, “Since Philippians is concerned with the experience and enjoyment of Christ, which issue in joy, it is a book filled with joy and rejoicing.” Many times we experience Christ without enjoying Him. We all can testify of experiencing something without enjoying it. For example, while I was growing up, I did not enjoy eating vegetables. Personally, broccoli is an acquired taste. I did not enjoy broccoli, but I had to experience it by eating it. [36]

The second subpoint says, “The experience of Christ is primarily in our spirit, but the enjoyment of Christ is in our soul; like children who are made to eat without enjoying their food, many times we experience Christ without enjoying Him.” When my son was a young boy, he hid the vegetables that we gave him to eat. He was trying to bypass the experience. Before we have the enjoyment, we must have the experience. We cannot enjoy something that we have not experienced firsthand. Although we first have the experience and then the enjoyment, it is possible to experience something without enjoying it. Likewise, we may experience the Lord in our spirit yet not enjoy Him in our soul.

The third subpoint says, “Thus, we can have the experience of Christ without the enjoyment of Christ; the problem here is with our soul—our mind, emotion, and will.” If we have a problem in our soul, in our thinking, we may still have an experience of Christ. The Lord is gracious, and He

allows us to experience Him, but if we do not have the mind of Christ, if we do not agree with and open fully to this experience, it does not become an enjoyment in our soul. If what we experience of the Lord does not become an enjoyment in our soul, the Lord will not be magnified. In [Luke 1:46-47](#) Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has exulted in God my Savior.” We may have some experience in our spirit, but if there is a problem in our soul, that experience will not lead to enjoyment. As a result, the Lord will not be magnified. We have probably seen many saints who have had some experience of the Lord, especially while they are passing through some suffering, some difficult situation, but they do not magnify the Lord that much. This is because there is a lack of the real enjoyment of the Lord. The Lord is faithful and gracious to them, but they do not open to enjoy the abounding grace. Consequently, they may have an experience in the spirit but no enjoyment in the soul.

The fourth subpoint expresses Brother Lee’s clear concern: “I am somewhat concerned that you may not have very much enjoyment of Christ’ (*The Experience of Christ*, p. 29); the reason that many lose the enjoyment of Christ is the problem they have in the soul; if you do not have much enjoyment of Christ, it indicates that you are not one in soul, joined in soul.” In our church life, if we are not one in soul with the saints, we may have daily experiences of the Lord, but we will not have that much enjoyment in the meetings of the church. The problem is with our soul. There needs to be an adjustment in our soul. I believe our seeing the distinction between experience and enjoyment should cause us to pray, “Lord, lead me to have deeper experience and enjoyment. I want to really [37] enjoy You.” We often speak of enjoyment in a superficial way; actually, the matter of enjoyment is much deeper.

The second key statement is “There is an urgent need among us in the Lord’s recovery today to know and experience the pattern of the Christian life—Christ as the God-man Savior, who emptied Himself and humbled Himself and who was exalted and glorified by God.” This statement is a good introduction and summary of the burden in Message 2. This message is based on [Philippians 2:3-9](#), which says,

Doing nothing by way of selfish ambition nor by way of vainglory, but in lowliness of mind considering one another more excellent than yourselves; not regarding each his own virtues, but each the virtues of others also. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider being equal with God a treasure to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave,

becoming in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.

We may be very familiar with these verses, and our familiarity may hinder our entering into the central thought of the writer. What was in the heart of Paul when he was writing this portion? Early in my Christian life, I was in a Brethren assembly. I recall sitting in the Lord's table meeting, and in the prayers of the brothers, there was a reiteration of the seven steps of the Lord's humiliation. They did not pray in a set way but with genuine appreciation, through which there was a recalling of the Lord's emptying Himself, humbling Himself, and being obedient unto death, and they worshipped the Lord that God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name. This kind of praise and worship is proper. Every now and then there is an allusion to this portion even in our Lord's table meetings. However, if that is all we see from this portion, our view is limited to the objective side. This does not imply that we should not have an appreciation and worship the Lord for what He has passed through and attained. As wonderful as that is, it may be objective to us. The pattern that Paul is presenting in these verses is not merely objective but subjective. We have to realize that everything in the book of Philippians is a subjective experience of Christ. Paul was fighting for the saints to have the experience of Christ in all the aspects unveiled in this [38] Epistle. I pray that none of us would be stopped from seeing the heart or the central thought of Paul in this portion.

**IF WE WOULD KNOW CHRIST AS THE PATTERN,
OUR NEEDING TO LET THE MIND
WHICH WAS IN CHRIST JESUS BE IN US**

If we would know Christ as the pattern, we should let the mind which was in Christ Jesus be in us ([Phil. 2:5](#)). [Verse 5](#) says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." We must let this phrase—*let this mind be in you*—be infused into our being. *Let* implies that this mind is already trying to get into our mind. This mind is a living mind. Our mind is our person. What is on our mind expresses who we are. It tells us where we are. If we are with someone who is not saying much, we may ask, "What is on your mind?" In other words, we are saying, "I want to know you." Christ's mind is the most living and most active, and we need to let His mind be in us.

**Needing to Take Christ's Mind as Our Mind,
Opening Ourselves to "Let This Mind" Be in Us**

***This in Verse 5 Referring to the Considering in Verse 3
and the Regarding in Verse 4***

We need to take Christ's mind as our mind, opening ourselves to "let this mind" be in us (vv. 3-5). *This* in [verse 5](#) refers to the considering in [verse 3](#) and the regarding in [verse 4](#). The Lord's emptying and humbling of Himself in [verses 5 through 9](#) is in the context of [verses 3 and 4](#). Paul was burdened to address a situation in the church in Philippi, which began in [Acts 16](#) with the salvation of two households. The church was in a good order; nevertheless, their thinking was not the same. There was a problem in their souls, and Paul was prescribing an antidote—the mind of Christ. Paul pleaded with the saints to let this mind be in them.

***Lowliness of Mind Being in Contrast
to Both Selfish Ambition and Vainglory;
This Having to Not Be Our Natural Lowliness
but the Lowliness of Christ***

Lowliness of mind is in contrast to both selfish ambition and vainglory ([Phil. 2:3](#)); this must not be our natural lowliness but the lowliness of Christ ([v. 8](#)). We have human virtues, but all our virtues are limited. We may feel that we have lowliness or endurance. Whatever virtues we [\[39\]](#) have will eventually be tested and found wanting. However, the lowliness of Christ endures, is endless, and is unlimited. Thus, the lowliness of mind in [verse 3](#) surely refers to the lowliness of the mind of Christ. This is in contrast to selfish ambition and vainglory, which existed in the church in Philippi, especially among two serving sisters ([4:2](#)).

***This Kind of Mind, This Kind of Thinking, Being in Christ
When He Emptied Himself and Humbled Himself***

This kind of mind, this kind of thinking, was in Christ when He emptied Himself and humbled Himself ([2:7-8](#)). "Let this mind be in you" may also be translated "think this in you." This kind of thinking was in Christ. When He emptied Himself and humbled Himself, He had a particular mind. We

can have this mind in us in the church life. Actually, this kind of mind, this kind of thinking, is our great need.

**To Have “This Mind” Requiring Us
to Be One with Christ in His Inward Parts,
in His Tender, Inward Feeling and in His Thinking**

To have “this mind” requires us to be one with Christ in His inward parts, in His tender, inward feeling and in His thinking (1:8). We are focusing on Christ as our pattern, but this pattern got into Paul, and then Paul became our pattern. In [verse 8](#) Paul says, “God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.” Paul entered into the inward parts of Christ, and he let the mind of Christ enter into him; therefore, he could contact the saints with the mind, with the feeling, of Christ. Not only Paul received Christ as his pattern; in [2:25-26](#) Paul speaks of Epaphroditus, who also longed for the saints in Philippi. In [verses 19 and 20](#) Timothy is mentioned as being like-souled with the apostle. The feeling of these brothers, who had been around Paul, concerning the Philippian believers was actually Christ’s feeling expressed through them, because they let His mind enter into them. To let the Lord’s mind enter into us means that we have the same thinking as He does. We all have our natural way of thinking, and sometimes we question others’ way of thinking from the conclusions that they make.

To have the mind of Christ means that we have the same motivation, concept, point of view, and even priority as He does. In the Gospels we often see the disciples, who were the ones closest to the Lord, not thinking the same way as the Lord Jesus did. They did not let His mind be in them. [Mark 9:38-40](#) says, [\[40\]](#)

John said to Him, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us. But Jesus said, Do not forbid him, for there is no one who will do a work of power in My name and be able soon to speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is for us.

That was the Lord’s way of thinking, but John had another way of thinking. Then [10:13-14](#) says,

They brought little children to Him so that He might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus, seeing it, was indignant and said to them, Allow the little children to come to Me. Do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God.

The parents wanted to bring their little children to the Lord, and the disciples stopped them and refused them. When the Lord saw that, Mark's account says that He was indignant with the disciples. They had not let His mind come into them. They had a different view and priority. They may have thought, "We cannot let the Lord be interrupted when He is ministering." They were focused on the gathering, but the Lord cared for the children as well as their parents, because whenever we shepherd a child, we are simultaneously shepherding his or her parents.

In [Luke 22](#) the disciples were contending among themselves as to who was the greatest. This occurred right after the Lord established the Lord's supper and hours before the Lord went to the cross. In [verse 27](#) the Lord said, "I am in your midst as the one who serves." In our church life we need to let this mind be in us.

**For the Mind of Christ to Be in Us
Meaning That This Mind Is Something Living;
Actually, the Mind of Christ Being Christ Himself,
for the Person of Christ Is Manifested in His Mind**

For the mind of Christ to be in us means that this mind is something living; actually, the mind of Christ is Christ Himself, for the person of Christ is manifested in His mind ([Phil. 2:5](#); cf. [1 Cor. 2:16](#), footnote 1). In the course of our church life, daily life, and family life, this mind is living, active, and moving. For example, when we begin to say something or react to something that was said to us, this living mind operates. It may say, "Do not think that way. Do not say that so quickly. Do not react that way." Sometimes we may be silent, but our facial expression says it all; the ^[41] mind of Christ in us may then say, "Do not roll your eyes that way. Do not purse your lips that way. This is not the face of My mind." We need to let this mind be in us.

**IN ORDER TO EXPERIENCE CHRIST,
OUR NEEDING TO KNOW HIM AS THE PATTERN**

In order to experience Christ, we need to know Him as the pattern ([Phil. 2:5-9](#)). Now we come to the heart of this message—the presentation of the pattern. This is not just an objective but also a subjective pattern. As the Lord was passing through all the steps that are detailed in [Philippians 2:5-9](#), He had a certain mind, and this mind can be in us. This pattern is

already in us, and He is longing for His pattern to be reproduced in us.

**In Philippians 2:5-9 Paul Presenting Christ as the Pattern;
Our Needing to Have This Pattern Infused into Us**

In [Philippians 2:5-9](#) Paul presents Christ as the pattern; we need to have this pattern infused into us. We need to pray, “Lord, I want to see You as this pattern. More than that, I want You to be infused into me as this pattern.”

**The Pattern of the Christian Life Being the God-man Savior,
Who Emptied Himself and Humbled Himself
and Who Has Been Exalted and Glorified by God**

The pattern of the Christian life is the God-man Savior, who emptied Himself and humbled Himself and who has been exalted and glorified by God ([vv. 6-9](#)). The pattern of the God-man Savior is in us, and He wants this pattern to be reproduced in us. For this, He took two steps—He emptied Himself and He humbled Himself, and God did the rest by exalting and glorifying Him. We must let this mind be in us. This is the pattern. If we would just take care of emptying and humbling ourselves, God will do the second part.

***Although the Lord Was Equal with God,
His Not Considering Being Equal with God
a Treasure to Be Grasped and Retained;
Rather, His Emptying Himself,
Laying Aside What He Possessed—the Form of God***

Although the Lord was equal with God, He did not consider being equal with God a treasure to be grasped and retained; rather, He emptied ^[42] Himself, laying aside what He possessed—the form of God ([vv. 6-7a](#)). This is a very crucial point. We need to be very accurate concerning these points. The Lord did not empty Himself of His divinity to become a man; that is a heresy. Rather, He emptied Himself of the expression of being in the form of God. Moreover, He took the form of a slave. He went from the highest form to the lowest form.

In His Incarnation the Lord Not Altering His Divine Nature

In His incarnation the Lord did not alter His divine nature. We must be very clear concerning this.

*His Changing Only the Outward Expression,
from the Form of God to the Form of a Slave*

He changed only the outward expression, from the form of God to the form of a slave. It is interesting that the Word does not say that the Lord emptied Himself from the form of God and took the form of a man, but, rather, the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men. We can say that He went from the highest form to the lowest form because the lowest form among men is the form of a slave. In his introduction in [Philippians 1](#), it is interesting that Paul introduces himself not as an apostle but as a slave. He says, “Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and deacons” (v. 1). This was Paul’s attitude. Paul and Timothy let the mind of Christ come into them.

The Lord Becoming “in the Likeness of Men”

The Lord became “in the likeness of men” ([2:7b-8a](#)). He changed only the outward expression from the form of God to the form of a slave, and He became in the likeness of men. He did not change His divine essence in any way; He changed only His state.

*The Form of God Implying
the Inward Reality of Christ’s Deity;
the Likeness of Men Denoting
the Outward Appearance of His Humanity*

The form of God implies the inward reality of Christ’s deity; *the likeness of men* denotes the outward appearance of His humanity ([vv. 6-7](#)). He was there as a genuine man, so much so that people were veiled from seeing the divine reality that He had within Him. He was God in His essence within, but this was hidden. Stanza 2 of *Hymns*, #490 says, [\[43\]](#)

But, Lord, when Thou wast here on earth,
How scarce were those Thyself who knew;
A veil there was twixt Thee and them;
They crowded 'round but saw not through.

They could not see through the veil. Some seekers saw, but most people just saw the likeness of men.

*His Appearing to Men as a Man Outwardly,
but as God, His Having the Reality of Deity Inwardly*

He appeared to men as a man outwardly, but as God, He had the reality of deity inwardly ([John 1:1, 14, 18](#); [3:16](#); [Rom. 8:3](#)).

*Christ Entering into the Condition of Humanity,
and His Being Found in Fashion as a Man*

Christ entered into the condition of humanity, and He was found in fashion as a man ([Phil. 2:8a](#)). He was not found in fashion as a man merely for a weekend or for two years but for thirty-three and a half years. There is no record of much of His living as a man. He emptied Himself. He was with His family as a man. Even when He began to minister, He was still found in fashion as a man.

At the beginning of His ministry at the age of thirty, He went to John the Baptist to be baptized, but John tried to prevent this, saying, "It is I who have need of being baptized by You, and You come to me?" ([Matt. 3:14](#)). The Lord, however, said, "Permit it for now, for it is fitting for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness" ([v. 15](#)). He lived fully as a man. At the end of His earthly ministry, even hours before going to the cross, we see a beautiful picture in [John 13](#). At first, the Lord was around the table with His disciples, and then He left the table, laid aside His outer garment, girded Himself with a towel, and stooped to wash the disciples' feet. When we wash someone's feet, it implies that we are lower than they are. How much the Lord emptied and humbled Himself! We need to let this mind be in us.

Do we have the mind of the Lord who washed the disciples' feet in [John 13](#)? Is this our characteristic in the church life? Do we have the mind to wash the saints' feet, that is, to minister something refreshing to the saints?

We need to let this mind be in us. In His human life, from the beginning to the end, the Lord never insisted nor resisted. This was the characteristic of His human life. In [Matthew 8:20](#) the Lord Jesus said, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have roosts, but the Son of Man [44] has nowhere to lay His head.” This is the pattern that Paul presented to the Philippians as an antidote to the problems in their church life. We need to let this mind be in us.

***Christ Humbling Himself by Becoming Obedient
Even unto Death—the Death of a Cross***

Christ humbled Himself by becoming obedient even unto death—the death of a cross ([Phil. 2:8b](#)). Humbling Himself was a further step in emptying Himself. Christ’s self-humbling manifested His self-emptying ([vv. 7-8](#)). The death of a cross was the climax of Christ’s humiliation. We need to see the pattern, the beautiful picture, of this God-man Savior who emptied Himself and humbled Himself. These are all aspects of the pattern that is now in us. He wants to be reproduced in all the churches.

***The Son Willingly Emptying Himself
to Become a Created Man
as the Representation of Submission to Authority***

The Son willingly emptied Himself to become a created man as the representation of submission to authority ([vv. 6-8](#)). There was a rebellion in the universe, first by angels and later by man. The Lord became a created man to be the representation of submission to authority. In chapter 5 of *Authority and Submission*, entitled “The Son’s Submission,” there is a particularly striking section entitled “The Lord Creating Submission.” In this section Brother Nee says,

The Lord lowered Himself twice, first in emptying Himself in His deity, and then in humbling Himself in His humanity. When the Lord came down to earth, He emptied Himself of the glory, power, position, and image in His deity. As a result of His emptying, those without revelation did not recognize Him and would not acknowledge Him as God, considering Him merely as an ordinary man. In the Godhead the Lord voluntarily chose to be the Son, submitting Himself to the authority of the Father. Hence, He said that the Father was greater than He ([John 14:28](#)). The Son’s position was a voluntary choice of our Lord. In the

Godhead there is full harmony. In the Godhead there is equality, yet it is happily arranged that the Father should be the Head and that the Son should submit. The Father became the representation of authority, and the Son became the representation of submission. [45]

We are human. Submission for us is simple. We can submit as long as we humble ourselves. But the Lord's submission is not a simple matter. The Lord's submission is more difficult than His creation of the heavens and the earth. In order to submit He had to empty Himself of all the glory, power, position, and image in His deity. He also had to take on the form of a slave. Only then could He receive the qualification of submission. Hence, submission is something created by the Son of God. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 47, pp. 141-142)

The point of all this fellowship is not that we see this pattern and then imitate it. It would be impossible to have His living by imitating His pattern. Only the God-man could live such a life. In ourselves, we do not have the proper humanity or the divinity for this. However, we have the God-man, the One who became the representation of submission to authority, within us.

*The Lord Jesus Setting His Heart to Subject Himself
to the Way of Submission, Even unto Death*

The Lord Jesus set His heart to subject Himself to the way of submission, even unto death ([Isa. 50:7](#); [Luke 9:51](#); [Mark 10:31-34](#)). [Isaiah 50:7](#) says, "The Lord Jehovah helps me; / Therefore I have not been dishonored; / Therefore I have set my face like a flint, / And I know that I will not be put to shame." [Luke 9:51](#) says, "As the days were being fulfilled for Him to be taken up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." In [Mark 10](#) He told the disciples what would happen. [Verses 32 through 34](#) say,

Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus led the way before them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that were about to happen to Him: Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and to the scribes. And they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles, and they

will mock Him and spit at Him and scourge Him, and they will kill Him. And after three days He will rise.

The Lord knew what would happen in Jerusalem, yet He set His face toward Jerusalem and led the way there. We need to let this mind be in us.

[46]

*“Even Though He Was a Son,”
the Lord “Learned Obedience
from the Things Which He Suffered”*

“Even though He was a Son,” the Lord “learned obedience from the things which He suffered” ([Heb. 5:8](#)). God ordained that Christ should die, and Christ obeyed ([Phil. 2:8](#)). He learned this obedience through the suffering of death.

*The Lord, Who Was Submissive throughout His Life,
Having Given Us His Life of Submission;
a Believer’s Obedience Being a Consequence
of Taking Christ as a Pattern of Obedience*

The Lord, who was submissive throughout His life, has given us His life of submission; a believer’s obedience is a consequence of taking Christ as a pattern of obedience ([v. 8](#); [Col. 3:4](#)). Salvation brings joy. In Message 1 we saw many verses on joy in the book of Philippians. However, salvation also brings a life of submission.

*The Lord Humbling Himself to the Uttermost,
but God Exalting Him to the Highest Peak
and Bestowing on Him
“the Name Which Is Above Every Name”*

The Lord humbled Himself to the uttermost, but God exalted Him to the highest peak and bestowed on Him “the name which is above every name” ([Phil. 2:9](#)). We can have subjective experiences of Christ’s humbling.

**THERE BEING AN URGENT NEED
AMONG US IN THE LORD’S RECOVERY TODAY
TO EXPERIENCE CHRIST AS OUR PATTERN**

**Christ as Our Pattern Being Not Only Objective
but Also Subjective and Experiential;
the One Who Set Up the Pattern and
Who Himself Is the Pattern Now Operating within Us
as the Indwelling God**

There is an urgent need among us in the Lord's recovery today to experience Christ as our pattern (vv. 3-8). Christ as our pattern is not only objective but also subjective and experiential; the One who set up the pattern and who Himself is the pattern is now operating within us as [47] the indwelling God (vv. 5, 12-13). The key matter in this message is to let the mind of Christ be in us. In this section we will see how Christ as our pattern can be our subjective experience.

**The Principle of Christ as the Inward Pattern for Our Living
Being That Even If We Have the Highest Standard
or the Highest Position, We Should Not Grasp It**

The principle of Christ as the inward pattern for our living is that even if we have the highest standard or the highest position, we should not grasp it (vv. 3-6). In *Life-study of Philipians* Brother Lee says,

There is an urgent need among us in the Lord's recovery today to experience Christ as our pattern. We desperately need to experience Him as our crucified life. Such a life stands altogether in contrast to a life of rivalry and vainglory. In the church life we either take the crucified life as our pattern or automatically live a life of rivalry and vainglory. There is no third way. If we do not take the crucified life as our pattern, we shall automatically live in the way of rivalry for vainglory. The issue here is extremely serious. We need to be honest with ourselves and consider the kind of life we have been living in the church. If you review the time you have been in the church life, you will see that whenever you did not take the crucified life as your pattern, you were living a life of rivalry for vainglory. (p. 92)

Brother Lee goes on to say,

During the years I have been in the church life, I have known many cases of those who were in rivalry for vainglory. Without

exception, all those who engaged in such rivalry went downhill. It is utterly foolish to have rivalry in the church life. We should fear this more than we fear a serpent. Whenever you are in rivalry with others, you are without question living in the self. We must condemn this rivalry and repudiate it. (pp. 92-93)

Paul presents this pattern in Philippians and not in the other Epistles because rivalry for vainglory was a definite problem in Philippi.

As long as saints are seeking glory for themselves, there is rivalry. Those who have been in the church life for some time have occasionally seen such cases and have realized that the source of the problem is rivalry for vainglory. We all suffer from having rivalry for vainglory whenever we [48] do not take Christ as the pattern of the crucified life. For example, when three brothers are asked to take more responsibility in the church life, other brothers wonder, "What about me?" They are bothered. Then when one of the three brothers is asked to do something particular, the other two may be bothered. This occurs among sisters as well. Suppose a sister in a service group is tasked with a certain responsibility. This may cause another sister to be bothered. Actually the sister who is bothered does not really want the responsibility; however, she is bothered that the other sister, rather than herself, was given the responsibility. This shows rivalry for vainglory, for empty glory.

In Greek the word *vainglory* means glory without a basis, and therefore, no glory at all. We strive for vainglory unconsciously. Can you imagine that there was rivalry for vainglory in the church in Philippi? We may say that it is God's mercy that there was such rivalry, because Paul could then write this Epistle as an antidote for us today. We can benefit from this by realizing that these germs could be present even in a proper church.

In [Philippians 1:15](#) Paul says, "Some preach Christ even because of envy and strife, and some also because of good will." Can you imagine that some were preaching the gospel out of jealousy? They were trying to somehow cause a reaction in Paul. In [verse 17](#) he says, "The others announce Christ out of selfish ambition, not purely, thinking to raise up affliction in my bonds." Some were announcing Christ with a different motive or thinking than Paul's or Christ's. Christ had a different kind of thinking when He ministered to all the ones around Him. We need to let His mind be in us. In [verse 18](#) Paul says, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truthfulness, Christ is announced; and in this I rejoice; yes, and I will rejoice." How broad Paul was! The reason why he could rejoice in that situation is that he had the mind of Christ.

Consequently, in 2:1-2 he says, “If there is therefore any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of spirit, if any tenderheartedness and compassions, make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing.” It seems that the case that affected Paul the most was that of the two sisters in 4:2. Their not being joined in soul was a great concern to Paul. It is very possible that we in the church life, the serving saints, and the co-working brothers do not have the same thinking.

In these days the Lord is advancing in many places and blessing the work in an unprecedented way. Both internationally and domestically, the Lord is doing very much. In nearly every place that we are in, we have [49] been exercising to bring in younger brothers to learn to serve with us. We need to let this mind be in us so that nothing would be done out of the motivation of rivalry or selfish ambition. If we are asked to take care of a certain district or a certain church, and we hear a report that another district has baptized ten this week, we should not compare or compete. Rather, we should rejoice with them. We should let the reports of the churches encourage us instead of stirring up rivalry. We need to let the mind of Christ be in us.

**Needing to Live Christ in His Human Living,
Especially in His Emptying Himself and Humbling Himself
and in His Not Grasping Equality with God as a Treasure**

*Having a Life in Us
That Is Self-emptying and Self-humbling*

We need to live Christ in His human living, especially in His emptying Himself and humbling Himself and in His not grasping equality with God as a treasure (1:20-21a; 2:6). We have a life in us that is self-emptying and self-humbling.

*This Life Never Grasping at Something as a Treasure
but Being Always Willing to Lay Aside Position and Title*

This life never grasps at something as a treasure but is always willing to lay aside position and title (vv. 3-6). There are some saints whom the Lord has blessed with certain positions or titles in the world, yet we would not know this from their conduct in the meetings in the church life. They put

their position and title aside for the benefit of others and for the glory of God. We have patterns like this among us. It is beautiful. I know a sister in a certain country whose husband was transferred there to run a big business, and they live in a mansion with servants and drivers. On Saturday mornings she would ask her driver to take her to the meeting hall. She would go there to clean the kitchen and the bathroom. One of the drivers commented, “She does not do that at home. She has people to do that for her at home. But she does that at the meeting hall.” During the conferences for the young people at a camp, this sister would serve for three or four days, sharing a room with three other sisters. After the conference the driver would pick her up and take her home. We need to not grasp even at the God-given things. We need to lower our position for the sake of others and for the glory of God, not caring for reputation, position, or title. [50]

**Having Christ Crucified as Our Pattern,
and This Pattern Being the Crucified Life within Us**

***The Steps of Christ’s Humiliation in Philippians 2:5-8
Being Aspects of the Crucified Life Lived Out in a Full Way***

We have Christ crucified as our pattern, and this pattern is the crucified life within us (1 Cor. 1:23a; 2:2; Gal. 2:20; 3:1; 6:14). The steps of Christ’s humiliation in [Philippians 2:5-8](#) are aspects of the crucified life lived out in a full way.

***Christ’s Being Obedient unto the Death of the Cross
Being the Crucified Life Lived Out in a Full and Absolute Way***

Christ’s being obedient unto the death of the cross was the crucified life lived out in a full and absolute way (v. 8).

***When We Live Christ, Our Living the One
Who Is the Pattern of a Crucified Life***

When we live Christ, we live the One who is the pattern of a crucified life (1:21a; 1 Cor. 2:2). Paul wrote Philippians to dear saints in order to encourage them. The pattern in [chapter 2](#) follows what he wrote in [chapter 1](#) about living Christ: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (v. 21). In [chapter 2](#) Paul speaks of the Christ whom we are living as being the

self-emptying One and the self-humbling One. This should mean that a life of living Christ looks like a self-emptying life, a self-humbling life. We cannot claim to live Christ yet not pay attention to His pattern. If we do not take Him as our pattern, something is wrong in our living of Christ. For example, if in a family the husband wants to grasp his position as the head, he will eventually not be exalted. To hold on to our position is not the way to exaltation; rather, the way is to be willing to be emptied. The gospel, the good news, is that the pattern is within us. While we are talking with our spouse, the living mind of Christ is operating in us during the conversation. At that time we should let the mind of Christ, who did not consider equality with God as a treasure to be grasped, be in us by saying Amen to the Lord within. How wonderful that we could have as our testimony the crucified life lived out in a full and absolute way.

***By Living a Crucified Life,
Our Being Able to Experience the Power of Resurrection***

By living a crucified life, we can experience the power of resurrection [51] (3:10a; Eph. 1:19-22). [Philippians 3:10](#) says, “To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”

***The Highest Life on Earth Being a Crucified Life;
Whenever We Live a Crucified Life,
God Bringing Us into Resurrection***

The highest life on earth is a crucified life; whenever we live a crucified life, God will bring us into resurrection ([Phil. 3:10-11](#)).

***Christ Being Exalted in Our Daily Life
as We, by the Bountiful Supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
Take Him as the Crucified Life
to Be the Pattern of Our Daily Life***

Christ is exalted in our daily life as we, by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, take Him as the crucified life to be the pattern of our daily life (2:5; 1:19-21a). We need to see that even Christ being exalted and glorified can be our subjective experience. It is only by living the crucified life, saying Amen to this mind, that this mind comes into us more,

saturates us, and transforms us. Since resurrection always follows crucifixion, we will be energized and empowered by this resurrection life.

Saints often complain about being weak in their family life, daily life, and church life. The reason for our weakness is the lack of living a crucified life. There are couples who are in discord. Although both the husband and wife may know this teaching, the problem is that neither is willing to live a crucified life. As soon as one is willing, resurrection comes in, and they experience the sweetness of resurrection. The crucified life is the gateway to resurrection. If we remain in our situation, we remain in our weakness and also in disobedience. It is a matter of rebellion to not be willing to take the life of submission. The Lord created submission for us to experience even in our family life.

Christ is exalted in our daily life as we, by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, take Him as the crucified life to be the pattern of our daily life. It is possible that Christ can be exalted everywhere except in our personal universe. We need to exalt Christ, not just by words but by letting this mind come into us and by going through the process of death and resurrection in a practical and subjective way.

Paul let this mind of Christ be in him, and he became a reprint of that pattern. The Lord desires that we all would be a reprint of His pattern. [52] In recent annual gatherings, we have been considering the reality of the Body of Christ. Our considering the experience of Christ in these messages is not a turn from this line, because the only way the Lord could gain the reality of the Body is by our experiencing His pattern. We cannot have the reality of the Body of Christ if our church life is one of rivalry for vainglory, selfish ambition, or other thinking and motivations. The key to the reality of the Body is our becoming a reprint of Christ's pattern. May the Lord gain this in us.—R. A.