

Philippians 2026 Series -Lesson 14
“Developing The Mindset of Christ or Thinking Like Christ”
Spheres of Grace Ministries International, Inc.

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Text: Philippians 2:5-8 says:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

“But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

“And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.

Introduction:

We have titled today’s study “Developing the Mindset of Christ or Thinking Like Christ.” The text in our study here instructs us to have the mind of Christ operating in us.

This is a very important lesson and is key to our experiencing the Joy available to the Believer. So, we are going to study it in depth. However, before we begin our study, let me remind you that the New Testament was written in Koine Greek. It was not by chance that Koine Greek was the language of the New Testament. It was by God’s design. It is the most exact language man has known. God wanted us to have His new covenant in an exact language, one through which we could understand exactly what He was saying.

Frequently, as you have seen in the past, the translation from the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament frequently leaves something to be desired and that’s the case here in verse five.

Verse 5 says:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”

A more literal translation for the original Greek says: *This thinking keep on allowing in you which also was in Christ Jesus.*

There are fifteen different Greek words that are translated **“think”** in various places in the scriptures. The word here is **“phroneiteh”** (φρονεῖτε) which is a verbal passive imperative and means to be minded in a certain way. To be minded in a certain way means to have the right frontal lobe of your mind programed by what you have learned and accepted as a norm or standard for yourself.

We might say it refers to our attitude but that falls short of the meaning if we don’t understand this word **“phroneiteh.”** Our English word **“mindset”** is a descriptive word which speaks of the automatic reflexive applicational response of knowledge to experience. We have previously pointed out the distinction between the two Greek words and the two Hebrew words that are translated wisdom in our Bible, but it bears repeating here...

There are two Greek words that are translated **“wisdom”** in the New Testament. **“Sophia”** is defined as *“insight into the true nature of things.”* It refers to understanding the nature of the facts in order to apply them to one’s circumstance or situation. Simply stated it is the ability to understand how to apply knowledge to experience. **“Phro-neis-is”** has been defined as common sense, but that definition requires a definition of “common sense.” The word **“phroneisis”** is the reflexive application of what we have accepted to be true. While **“sophia”** provides insight into the nature of things, **“phroneisis”** is the reflexive application of what we believe or accept as a norm or standard or a principle. You have heard me say *“If you want to know what you truly believe, inventory your behavior.”* Your behavior reveals what you have accepted as truth and made it a norm or standard for your life. We each have established a “frame of reference” which is comprised of information to which you have been exposed and accepted as truth and is cycled from the left frontal lobe where communication is received to the right frontal lobe where your frame of reference is located which dictates your behavior. That transferred information forms your norms and standards which dictate your behavior- that stored information results in **“phroneisis”** – your reflexive application of what you believe to your circumstances and experiences.

This distinction between **sophia** and **phroneisis** may be seen in the life of Solomon. He asked for, and was given, **sophia** (the Hebrew word is **khok-maw**). He was given insight into the application of facts to experience. In I Chronicles 22:12 David told Solomon, **“Only the Lord give thee wisdom...”** The word David used, **say-kil** in the Hebrew, corresponds to the Greek word **phro-neis-is** (the reflexive application of knowledge to experience). Although Solomon asked for and received **sophia** and knew how to apply knowledge to his circumstances or situations, he lacked **phroneisis** - the reflexive application of that knowledge to his personal experience. He had theoretical understanding but did not always apply the facts God had revealed to his experience. David’s request of the Lord was that Solomon might reflexively make the application. He did not! That is why his life was such a mess. The transfer of information from comprehension to behavior I have identified as “Faith Transfer.” Faith Transfer occurs when you accept knowledge that you have acquired as truth and have accepted it to be a norm or standard for yourself- when you place your faith upon it in application.

The reason for this review is help us understand the command in our text, *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*

So the short, abridged version, of this lesson is that we are to program our mind with the teachings of Christ. We are to have the reflexive application of knowledge to experience-our minds are to be programed with the mind of Christ; that is, we are to reflexive think like Christ thought.

Then, verses 6, 7, and 8 tell us what Christ's mindset was:

Verses 6 and 7 say:

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:"

Now, bear with me, because this, too, is a poor translation. A more literal translation from the Greek text says:

Who has always been and continues to subsist as God, after carefully weighing the facts, considered the expression of His nature or essence as God not a treasure to be hung on to. He emptied Himself of the natural function of His essence, taking upon Himself the essence of a bonds slave, entering into a new state of existence, that of mankind.

It is important that you understand this. So, let me try to clarify it for you. Christ, the second person of the Godhead, has always had the same essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit. But He, after carefully weighing the facts, decided to deprive Himself of His natural function as God and took upon Himself the function of a slave entering into the state of mankind.

Christ did not lose His equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit nor did He lose His essence. He simply deprived Himself of the natural function of that essence that He might become our Savior.

Verse 8 says:

"And being found in fashion as a man,,,"

The word "*fashion*" is from the Greek word "*schemati*" (σχῆματι). It's the word from which we get our English word schematic. It means that He took upon Himself the entire outwardly perceptible mode and shape of a man. He made Himself known and recognized as a man. He took up residence in a body of flesh and blood.

Verse 8 goes on to say:

"...He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Christ had to become man to die for the sins of men. Follow very carefully as we study the tremendous implications of this. Christ Jesus, in His pre-incarnate state was ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY. That is, He was King of kings. There was no authority or power over Him. In His incarnation He deprived Himself of His natural function as

King of kings and became a bond slave. He became a bond slave to serve us. To minister to us. Think of that! The King of kings set aside His sovereignty to become obedient to the death of the cross for us. And He did it of His own will.

Now, look with me further. In His pre-incarnate state He was eternal. Yet, in the incarnation He deprived Himself of His natural function of eternalness and became subject to death, even the death of the cross. He did that for us, and He did it of His own will.

In His pre-incarnate state He was absolute righteousness. But, in His incarnation He became subject to temptation and was tempted in every area where we are tempted, yet without sin. But, because of that, we have a merciful High Priest that can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

But it goes on. In His pre-incarnate state He was love. But He deprived Himself of His natural characteristic of love and became subject to the feelings and attitudes we have. Yet, as our servant He continued to manifest self-sacrificial love.

In His pre-incarnate state He was omnipotent – all powerful. But now look at this! In His incarnation He deprived Himself of the natural function of His omnipotence and became dependent upon the operating power of the Holy Spirit and the Father. Because of us, He was willing to deprive Himself of the use of His own power until after the resurrection when it was given back to Him.

In His pre-incarnate state He was omnipresent – in attendance everywhere, all the time. But, in His incarnation He deprived Himself of the natural function of His omnipresence and became limited to time and space and dwelt in a body.

In His pre-incarnate state He was omniscient – all knowing. But, through the incarnation, He became subject to learning even as we are.

What a sacrifice He made on our behalf! He, the King of kings, set aside His crown to become the bond slave of all. He, who was eternal, set His eternal life aside that He might die for us. He, who was absolute righteousness and could not be tempted to do evil, set that righteousness aside to become subject to the temptations we face. He, who was love, deprived Himself of that quality that He might learn to love. And learn He did as He loved us enough to give Himself as a ransom for us. He, who was omnipotent deprived Himself of that power that He might become dependent upon the Holy Spirit and the Father. (His example we should follow.) He, who was omnipresent, deprived Himself of that quality and became tied to time and space in a human body for us! He, who was omniscient, deprived Himself of that natural function and became subject to learning and learned obedience well.

Remember! We are to have the same mindset Christ had. So, let's see how it applies to us. In a previous study we saw that we are going to rule and reign with Christ. I Peter 2:9 tells us we are a royal priesthood. We share Christ's kingship. But, before you go off demanding the respect due royalty, remember, we are to have the same attitude Christ had. He deprived Himself of His function as a King and functioned as a slave. The apostle

Paul identifies Himself as the bond slave of Jesus Christ over and over again. We are to function as a bond slave during this present time. Our attitude is to be one of service.

Christ deprived Himself of His function as eternal and became subject to death so He could die for us. If we have that same mindset we will die daily to self and live for Christ in service to others. Jesus said that those who seek to save their lives shall lose them but that those who lose their lives for His sake would find them. The opposite of this attitude is found in those who take their eternal life and abuse God's grace by failing to put that life back in service to Him through serving others. Sure you have eternal life. But, the Christ like attitude manifests itself in living as though it was being earned rather than the free-gift of God.

Christ deprived Himself of His natural function of love to learn how to love. We are given the Holy Spirit to produce this self-sacrificial love in us. We are given the capacity to love through the Holy Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22-23). To love our enemies, to love those who abuse us, to love in the true sense of caring and giving, is self-sacrificial love.

Christ deprived Himself of His omnipotence and relied on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We, too often, rush along in the energy of the flesh trying to accomplish our goals ourselves instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to empower and equip us.

Christ deprived Himself of His natural function of omnipresence to be tied to time and space and to dwell in a body. Some of us are so Heavenly minded we are no earthly good. We don't want to be tied to time and space. We want God to zap us along with one miracle after another.

We must learn to be content regardless of our circumstances. He has appointed us as His ambassadors, according to II Corinthians 5:20. And, that means being tied to time and space until He calls us home.

Christ deprived Himself of His natural function of omniscience and became subject to learning. God must be appalled at our constant attempts to acquire knowledge without reading or studying His word. It appears that most of the counseling done through the church is the result of someone trying to take a short cut to knowledge and wisdom. The answers they seek are in the Bible, they just don't want to take the time to search them out.

I was followed, in a former pastorate, by a minister who did not study the word of God but sought to interpret it through prayer alone. He would pray and say God gave me this interpretation. Often that interpretation would conflict with many other passages of scripture. But, he had prayed about it and said God had told him it meant this. The mind of Christ is clearly absent in our refusal to subject ourselves to the discipline of learning.

We are to have the same attitude Christ had. How does your attitude measure up? Are you willing to set aside your royalty and natural power to operate in the power of the Holy Spirit and function as a bond slave in service to others? That's the attitude of Christ! He came to die that we might live and we who have that life can enjoy its

abundance if we have the mind (attitude) of Christ!

Now let's examine the means of applying these principles to our life and "Developing The Mindset of Christ" through an exposition of the text. We have examined this verse in our introduction so let's just briefly review it...In our review we saw the Greek Text says; **"tou-to phro-nei-te ehn humin ho kai ehn Chris-toh Ie-a-sou."**

tou-to = **This...**

phro-nei-te = **reflexive response of knowledge to experience**

ehn = **keep on having in...**

humin = **you ...**

ho = **which**

kai = **also is**

ehn = **in**

Chris-toh = **Christ**

Ie-a-sou = **Jesus**

In other words, we are to keep on following the mindset that Christ Jesus used in coming to the earth to minister to us - we are to maintain that same mindset. Our mindset is to be developed with the application of the teachings and actions of Christ. The example of that mind set is identified here in verses 6-8. Then in our next study we will examine the result of His mindset in verses 9-11.

I. Exposition of Philippians 2:6-8:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Verse 6: *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*

"Who," (hos) = **Who** (a reference back to Christ)

"being" (hup-ar-chohn) = continuing to exist

This is a participle meaning to exist, which always involves a pre-existent state prior to the fact referred to and a continuance of the state after the fact. Therefore it should read....

"Who continually existed in the past and will always exist in the form of God."

"in the form of God,"

The English translation of this phrase presents a problem... We readily admit that Christ existed before His human birth and that that existence was, **"...in the form of God."** But, what about when He was on the earth in a human body? And, what about now that He is in Heaven in a glorified body? Is not God Spirit!

This problem is cleared up when we discover that the word “*form*” is a special word in the Greek text. Actually there are five different Greek words translated *form* in the King James Version:

(mor-phe) = is used with reference to the inner nature or essence - not the outward appearance.

(mor-pho-sis) = expresses an outward similarity or likeness

(tu-pos) = a pattern or mold of an item

(ei-dos) = an outward appearance or external form

(hupo-tu-poh-sis) = an outline or sketch

The word used here is the first ‘mor-phe’ - a reference to the inner nature or essence. Thus, the meaning here is...

Christ existed in the past and will always exist with the essence of God.

This is a reference to the fact that the three members of the godhead all share the same attributes: sovereign, omnipotence, righteous, eternal, omniscience, omnipresence and love,

Now let’s get an accurate understanding of the last part of this verse...

“...thought it not robbery to be equal with God:..”

“thought it not” (hae-gae-sa-to) = **considered it not**

“robbery” (harp-ag-mon) = **an illegitimate acquisition to be clung to**

“to be equal with God:” this equality with God.

Corrected translation: *Christ ... who existed in the past and will always exist with the essence of God considered it not an illegitimate acquisition to be clung to - this equality with God...*

This Is A Profound Doctrinal Truth: Christ did not regard his equality in manifesting his attributes as God as something He had to cling to. Although Christ has been and will continue to be God in essence, He was willing to deprive Himself of the use of those attributes and function as a human, as we will see in the next verse....

Verse 7: *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

“But” (alla) = **BUT...**

This is the strongest conjunction of contrast in the Greek language... The contrast is between what Christ was inwardly (God) and what he was willing to become in order to become our redeemer (man).

made himself of no reputation, = **deprived himself of his proper function**
(heau-ton)(eke-nohsen) - this is a Greek idiom

See? Now it makes sense! Christ did not consider His equality as God as a thing he had to cling to, but deprived Himself of His proper function ...

Now, this is very important - Christ did not cease to be God. He did not set aside His essence.. He simply deprived Himself of His proper function under that essence.

“and took upon him the form of a servant,”

“form” (mor-phen) - **nature or essence of a....**

This is a form of the same word we had before. While Christ restrained His Godly nature He took up the nature of a slave

“servant” (dou-lou) = **volunteer bond slave**

“and was made” (gen-o-me-nos) = **became something He had not been before...**

“in the likeness of men:”

Caution needs to be exercised here so we don’t consider Christ to be less than a man. He was perfect man (Romans 5:15; I Corinthians 15:21; I Timothy 2:5)

So, Christ deprived Himself of His natural function as God and took upon Himself the function of a bond slave and was made in the likeness of men.

II. The God Man (Hypostatic Union):

1. There are a number of passages of Scripture that indicate that Jesus Christ is the God-Man (Philippians 2:5-11; John 1:1-14; Romans 1:2-5; Romans 9: 5; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14).
2. The incarnate Christ is deity. He is God co-equal with the Father and The Holy Spirit; He possess the same essence (Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 48:6; John 8:58; 10:30-38; II Corinthians 13:14; I Peter 1:2; II Peter 1:1; Revelation 1:12-18; Revelation 22:13-16).
3. The incarnate Christ is also true humanity - He had body, soul, and spirit. But, through the virgin birth he had no imputed sin of Adam and no Old Sin Nature (I Timothy 2:14-15).

4. There are three basic reasons why Jesus had to become humanity:
 - a. To be our Savior (Hebrews 2:14-15; Philippians 2:7-8)
 - b. To be our Mediator (Job 9:32-33; I Timothy 2:5-6)
 - c. To be our high Priest (Hebrews 7:4-5; 7:14; 7:28; 10:5, 14)

Verse 8: *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

His purpose for this action was that He might become the sacrifice for our sins. We will explore this more next time. Right now we need to summarize the message of these verses and observe its application to us.

III. Thinking Like Christ:

1. We are commanded to have the same mindset Christ had in leaving Heaven and depriving Himself of His natural function as God in order to become our Savior (Philippians 2:5-8).

Thus we are to have an attitude of humility that will regard our position in Christ, in an unselfish manner - one that will cause us to lay aside our own piousness as saints and children of God and become volunteer bond slaves to God.

- a. Because of our union with Christ we already have Heaven made and salvation assured. We are described as the **'Body of Christ'** on the earth; the **'Bride of Christ'** in eternity; **'Children of God'**; **'Joint Heirs' with Christ**.
 - b. The mindset exemplified for us by Christ is that of a volunteer bond slave to others.
2. Christ's mindset was one of humility. He deprived himself of His function as the sovereign of the ages and became the volunteer bond slave of man. He was willing to take up a form of life even lower than the angels (Philippians 2:6-7; Hebrews 2:9).

Thus, we, like Christ, are to deprive ourselves of our natural function as 'heirs with Christ' and serve as bond slaves.

- a. Some believers are so 'heavenly minded' they are of no earthly good. Others are so 'earthly minded' they are of no heavenly good.
 - b. The proper mindset is one of a bond slave of our Lord in serving Him by ministering to others.
3. Christ's attitude of humility expressed itself physically in the death of Christ on the cross (Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 2:9). This is self-sacrificial love.

Thus we are to manifest that self-sacrificial love to others in His name.

- a. Until there are outward manifestations of our love through self-sacrifice for others, we have not responded to the command “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

IV. Developing The Mindset of Christ:

The Bible is described as the ‘Mind of Christ.’ And our study has attempted to understand the basic function of that mind. However, our study began with the command of verse 5 - Let this mind be in you. Therefore, we need to review the means by which we can develop that mind. We do that through a process I call ‘Faith Transfer.

1. **COMMUNICATION:** First, you must have communication of the Word of God. This can occur in two basic ways; reading or listening.
2. **COMPREHENSION:** Second, the Word of God must be comprehended. As you read or listen you must understand it. The Holy Spirit helps us as He teaches our spirits. This stage simply involves understanding the facts as stated in the Word of God - knowing Scripture.
3. **FAITH/TRANSFER:** Third, those things which we comprehend we must cycle from the left frontal lobe of the brain where comprehension occurs to the right frontal lobe where behavior is dictated. What we comprehend does not change our behavior - it is what we truly believe that changes our behavior.
4. **WISDOM:** Fourth, we must seek wisdom (an ability to understand how the facts of God’s Word relate to our circumstances and situations). James 1:5 tells us we can have wisdom simply by asking God in faith. Scripture alone will not change us - we must see how specific passages relate to our circumstances in order to make the proper application.
5. **CONSCIOUS APPLICATION:** Fifth, we must make a conscious application of God’s Word to the circumstances. As we mature in the Lord this becomes reflexive. But, to begin with, we must make a conscious application. That is, we must bring to mind certain truths and promises found in the Word of God that fit our situation

Conclusion:

Proverbs 23:7 *says as a man thinketh in his heart so is he....*

We are born the product of a fallen race and must be born from above by

faith/acceptance of the virgin birth, the sinless life, the sacrificial death, the victorious resurrection, the glorious ascension, the present intercession, and the soon coming of our Lord.

As a result of our fallen nature we have developed a mindset influenced by our sin nature and in order to experience the Joy God has designed for us we must we program our mind and establish the norms and standards of Christ. Through this process of re-formatting our mind we are able to develop the very mindset of Christ and experience the Joy God has designed for us even though we are living in the midst of a spiritual battlefield and are the target of attack in the Angelic Conflict.

But it All Begins at Salvation:

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...

With the heart man believes unto righteousness...

But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!

“... and your joy no man taketh from you...”
(Luke 16:22)