

Philippians 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν, γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, kai schēmati heuretheis hōs anthrōpos etapeinōsen heauton, genomenos hypēkoos mechri thanatou, thanatou de staurou)—Schēmati ("appearance, fashion") differs from morphē ("essential form")—Christ appeared outwardly as human. Heuretheis ("being found") suggests others' recognition of His humanity.

Etapeinōsen heauton ("he humbled himself")—tapeinoō ("to humble, lower") answers v. 3's call to tapeinophrosynē ("humility"). Christ's humility wasn't passive circumstance but active choice. Genomenos hypēkoos ("becoming obedient") identifies the essence: obedience to Father's will. Mechri thanatou ("unto death")—obedience extended to death itself. **Even the death of the cross** (θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, thanatou de staurou)—de ("and, even") intensifies: not just death but crucifixion, Rome's most shameful, agonizing execution for slaves and insurrectionists. This is the hymn's nadir—from divine form (v. 6) to slave-form (v. 7) to cursed death (v. 8).

Historical Context

Crucifixion was designed for maximum shame and deterrence. Victims were stripped, displayed publicly, mocked, and left for days. Deuteronomy 21:23 declared hanged men cursed by God. Paul emphasizes this shame (Gal 3:13; 1 Cor

1:23). Romans reserved crucifixion for slaves, rebels, and non-citizens. That God incarnate died this death is history's greatest scandal and deepest mystery. The cross was foolishness to Greeks, stumbling to Jews (1 Cor 1:23).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's obedience 'unto death' (mchri thanatou) define true obedience versus half-hearted compliance?
2. Why does Paul specify 'even the death of the cross'—what's the theological significance of the method?
3. How does meditating on Christ's cross-humility produce the humility Paul commands (v. 3)?

Interlinear Text

καί	σχήματι	εὐρεθείς	ὥς	ἄνθρωπος	ἐταπείνωσεν	ἑαυτὸν
And	in fashion	being found	as	a man	he humbled	himself
G2532	G4976	G2147	G5613	G444	G5013	G1438
γενόμενος	ὕπηκοος	μέχρι	θανάτου	θανάτου	δὲ	σταυροῦ
and became	obedient	unto	death	death	even	of the cross
G1096	G5255	G3360	G2288	G2288	G1161	G4716

Additional Cross-References

John 10:18 (Parallel theme): No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Hebrews 12:2 (Cross): Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Romans 5:19 (Parallel theme): For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

1 Peter 2:24 (Parallel theme): Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

1 Peter 3:18 (Parallel theme): For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

2 Corinthians 8:9 (Parallel theme): For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Acts 8:33 (Parallel theme): In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

Matthew 26:39 (Parallel theme): And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Titus 2:14 (Parallel theme): Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Galatians 3:13 (Parallel theme): Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: