

# Of Christ's State of Humiliation.

by John Gill

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*John Gill's sermon explores the profound humility of Christ from his incarnation through his life, emphasizing the significance of his lowly state and the lessons it imparts to believers.*

**Scripture:** Philippians 2:7

**Topics:** "Humility of Christ", "Sacrifice and Obedience"

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## Description

John Gill preaches on Christ's state of humiliation, emphasizing that it began at His incarnation and continued throughout His life until death. He contrasts Christ's divine glory with His humble existence as a servant, highlighting His birth in poverty, His life of obscurity, and the temptations He faced. Gill illustrates how Christ's willingness to endure such humiliation was a voluntary act, demonstrating His love and obedience to the Father. The sermon reflects on the profound depths of Christ's humility, which serves as a model for believers in their own lives. Ultimately, it calls the congregation to appreciate the significance of Christ's sacrifice and the grace that flows from it.

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## Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 5--Chapter 2

### OF CHRIST'S STATE OF HUMILIATION

Christ's state of humiliation began at his incarnation, and was continued through the whole of his life unto death, which is fully and clearly expressed in a few words in Philippians 2:7,8 "but made himself of no reputation," &c. and which the apostle illustrates and confirms by placing it in a contrast with his glorious estate previous to it; for by how much the higher he was in that state, the lower and meaner he appears in this; and higher it was not possible for him to be, than as described by the apostle, as "in the form of God," in his nature and essence; and as "equal with God" his Father; having the same perfections, names, works, and worship ascribed to him.

Now in his state of humiliation he appeared the reverse of this; he, who was in the form of God, was not only made in the likeness of man, and in fashion as a man, but took on him the form of a servant, of one of the meanest of men; and he, who was equal to his divine Father, made himself of no account among men, and became obedient in all things to his Father, and that even to death itself, the accursed death of the

cross. 1. The humiliation of Christ took place at his incarnation, and therefore in the above account of it, the phrases of being "made in the likeness of men," and of "being found in fashion as a man," are used as expressive of it; and which are to be understood of his being really and truly man, as has been observed in the preceding chapter; for though the assumption of the human nature into union with the person of the Son of God was an exaltation of it, and gave it a preeminence to all the other individuals of human nature, and even to angels themselves, as has been shown; (see Ps. 89:19) yet it was an humbling of the person of Christ to take a nature so inferior to his into union with him; for I see not why the phrase of "humbling" may not be used with respect to this matter of the person of the Son of God, since it is used of the divine Being (Ps. 113:6), and if it is an humbling of God, a stoop of Deity, to look upon things in heaven and earth; a condescension in him to dwell on earth, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain (1 Kings 8:27), it must be much more so for the Word and Son of God, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, and to whom the creation of all things is ascribed, to be made flesh and dwell among men (John 1:1-3,14). 1a.

First, The humiliation of Christ appeared both in his conception and birth; though there were some things relating to his conception which were very illustrious and glorious; as a remarkable prophecy concerning it some hundreds of years before it was (Isa. 7:14), the dispatch of an angel to the virgin to acquaint her with it, when near or at the instant of it, and that it itself was of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26,31,35), yet it was amazing humility that he who was the Son of God, lay in the bosom of his Father, should by assumption of human nature into union with his divine person, lie nine months in the womb of a virgin; and he that ascended on high, should first descend into these lower parts of the earth.

And though there were many great and glorious things that attended his birth, which made it very illustrious; as an unusual star, which guided the wise men from the east to the place of his nativity, who worshipped him, and presented gifts unto him; and an angel appeared in a glorious form to the shepherds, who acquainted them with his birth; and a multitude of the heavenly host descended and joined with him, singing "Glory to God in the highest" on account of it; yet, besides many things that followed it, very inglorious; as Herod's search after him to take away his life; the flight of his parents with him into Egypt, where they continued for a while in fear and obscurity; and the massacre of a great number of infants in and about Bethlehem: it may be observed, 1a1.

That he was "born of a woman," which very phrase is expressive of meanness (Job 14:1), born of a sinful woman, though he himself without sin; "made of a woman," as the expression is in Galatians 4:4 made of one that was made by him, and to whom he stood in the character of Creator, Lord and Saviour, as she herself owned (Luke 1:46,47). 1a2. Born of a poor woman; for though his mother, the virgin, was of the house of David, of that illustrious family, yet when that family was become very low, like a tree cut down to its roots; for when in such a state was the Messiah to spring from it, as he did, according to the prophecy (Isa. 11:1), that his mother was a poor woman, appears from the usage she met with at the time of her delivery in the inn, where there was no room for her to be received in, because of her poverty; and therefore was obliged to lay her newly born infant in a manger.

Into what a low estate was our Lord brought! As also from her bringing the offering of the poorer sort at her purification. Persons of ability were obliged to offer a lamb on such an occasion, but if poor, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, which she did (Luke 2:7,24), hence the Jews upbraided Christ with the meanness of his parentage, saying, "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary?" plain "Mary;" and "his brethren James and Joses," and "Simon and Judas?" and "his sisters, are they not all with us?" do not we know them, what a low life family they are? 1a3.

He was born in a poor country village; for though it was the birth place of David, and called his city, and so famous on that account; yet in Christ's time was mean and obscure, and said to be "little among the thousands of Judah;" and he afterwards lived in a very despicable place, where he was brought up; despicable to a proverb; "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). 1a4. The nature he was conceived and born in, and which he assumed, though without sin, yet had all the sinless infirmities of human nature: his soul was subject to sorrow, grief, anger, &c. and his body to hunger, thirst, weariness, &c. it was a nature inferior to angels; at least he was for a while, through the sufferings of death, made a little lower than they (Heb 2:9), and who at certain times, when in distress, ministered to him and relieved him (Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43), into such a low estate and condition did Christ come in our nature. 1b.

Secondly, The humiliation of Christ appeared in all the stages of life into which he came; for he passed through the states of infancy, childhood, and youth, as other men do; he was wrapped in swaddling bands, as newly born infants are; hung upon his mother's breasts as soon as born, and received his nourishment from thence, as infants do; he endured the painful rite of circumcision when eight days old, and was presented in the temple according to usual custom; he continued in the infant state, both with respect to body and mind, the usual time, for ought appears: his case was not like the first Adam's; he was created as one in the prime of life, a grown man, and in the full exercise of his rational powers at once: but so it was not with the second Adam; he was an infant of days, he grew in body as children do; and his reasoning faculties were not opened at once, but gradually, for it is said, he increased in wisdom as well as "in stature" (Luke 2:40,52), as he grew up in his childhood and youthful state, though we have but little account of it, it appears to be attended with much meanness and obscurity, even to his manhood; we have but one circumstance related of him in this time, which is that of his coming up to Jerusalem with his parents at the passover, when twelve years of age; and though there were some things then appeared in him very remarkable and uncommon, in taking his place among the doctors, hearing and asking them questions; yet he returned with his parents, and lived in subjection to them (Luke 2:42-51), and it seems as if he was brought up to a mechanic business; it was a commonly received tradition of the ancients, that he was brought up to the trade of a carpenter; and there are some things which make it probable; it is a question put by the Jews, "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3), nor was it ever denied that he was; they suggest, that he had no liberal education, was not brought up in any of their public schools or academies: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

John 7:15), and it cannot be supposed that he should live an inactive life the greater part of his days; but besides the poverty of his parents, which would not admit of the maintenance of him without business, what greatly prevails upon me to give into this sentiment is, that the second Adam must bear the first Adam's curse, even that part of it which lay in getting his bread by the sweat of his brow (Gen. 3:19). O what a low estate was our Lord brought into on our account!

Add to all this, that his whole life, until he was thirty years of age, was a life of obscurity; for from the time of his coming out of Egypt and being had to Nazareth in his infancy, we hear nothing of him, excepting that single instance of being at Jerusalem when twelve years of age, until he came from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him; and then he was about thirty years of age (Luke 3:23). Now what astonishing condescension and humility is this, and how great was the humiliation of Christ in this state! that the greatest personage that ever was in the world, the Son of God in human nature, and who came to do the greatest work that ever was done in the world, should be in the world thirty years running, and scarce be known at all by the inhabitants of it; at least not known who and what he was (John 1:10), at most but by very few. 1c.

Thirdly, The public life of Christ began at his baptism, for by that he was made manifest in Israel; and for that purpose John came baptizing with water; and who had this signal given him, that on whomsoever he should see the Spirit of God descending, the same was he; which when he saw he bore testimony of him that he was the Son of God, and pointed him out as the Lamb of God, that, takes away the sin of the world; and though there were some things attending the baptism of Christ which made it illustrious, as not only John's testimony of him, but the descent of the Spirit on him as a dove, and a voice from his Father heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (John 1:29-36; Matthew 3:16,17), yet his submission to the ordinance itself was an instance of his humiliation; his coming many miles on foot, from Galilee to Jordan, to John to be baptized of him, is a proof of it; he that had the power of baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire, was baptized in water; he that knew no sin, nor did any, was baptized with the baptism of repentance, as though he had been a sinner; and he that was John's Lord and Master, was before him, and preferred to him, and whose shoe latchet John was not worthy to unloose; and who could have ordered him to attend him at any place convenient for baptism, which for some reasons he thought fit to submit unto; yet took the pains and fatigue of a journey to go to him for that purpose; and though John modestly declined it at first, having some hint of him who he was, yet being pressed by him, he agreed to administer the ordinance to him, and did; and which was done to fulfil all righteousness, and in obedience to the will of God, and to set an example to us, that we should tread in his steps; and in all which appear wonderful humility and condescension; (see Matthew 3:13-15). 1d.

Fourthly, Immediately after his baptism Christ was harassed with the temptations of Satan, which was another branch of his humiliation and low estate he came into; for "he suffered being tempted;" and he "was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 2:18; 4:15), that is, with all sorts of temptations, though not altogether in the same manner, nor had they the same effect on him as on us. Satan tempted him, not by stirring up any corruption, or provoking any lust in him, as he provoked David, stirred up the lust of pride and vanity in him to number the people; for in Christ was no sin, lust, or corruption to stir up; Satan could find nothing of this kind in him to work upon: nor did he tempt him by putting any evil into him, as he put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray his Lord, and into the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira to lie unto the Holy Ghost; nor could he get any advantage over Christ by any of his temptations; he was forced after all his temptations in the wilderness to leave him, and in the garden and on the cross, he was foiled by him; yea he, and his principalities and powers, were spoiled and triumphed over; but inasmuch as by these temptations Christ in his human nature was harassed and distressed, they are a part of his humiliation, and require a particular consideration; and those we have the clearest account of are they which began in the wilderness; for he was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matthew 4:1), that is, he was influenced and directed by the Spirit of God, who had lighted on him at his baptism, under an impulse of his, both inward and outward, to go up from the habitable parts of the wilderness, where John was preaching and baptizing, and where he himself had been baptized, to the mountainous and uninhabitable parts of it, which were quite desolate and uncultivated; where were no provisions, nor any man to converse with, none but wild beasts, to whom he was exposed, and with whom he was (Mark 1:13), another instance of his low estate.

The time when he was here tempted was quickly after his baptism; Matthew says "then" he was led to be tempted, that is, when he had been baptized; and Mark says it was "immediately;" and thus as it was with Christ the head, so it often is with his members; that as he was tempted, after his baptism, after the Spirit of God had descended upon him, and filled him with his gifts and graces without measure; and after he had had such a testimony from heaven of his divine Sonship: so his people, after they have had communion with God in ordinances, and have had some sealing testimonies of his love, fall into

temptations, and fall by them; as the disciples of Christ after the supper, who, when tempted, all forsook him and fled, and one denied him.

Moreover, it was after Christ had fasted forty days, and when he was hungry, that the tempter came to him and attacked him; two of the evangelists say he tempted him forty days; so he might tempt him, more or less, all the forty days, at times; but when they were ended, and Christ was an hungry, then he set upon him with greater violence, as judging it a proper opportunity to try the utmost of his power and skill with him: so Satan suits his temptations to the constitutions, circumstances, and situation men are in. 1d1.

The first temptation was by putting an if upon the Sonship of Christ; "If thou be the Son of God;" though there could be no doubt made of this, since a testimony of it from heaven had just been given; and the devils themselves have acknowledged, that Christ is the Son of God (Luke 4:41). And thus the children of God are sometimes tempted to call in question their sonship, because of inward corruptions and outward afflictions: or it may be, Satan argued from hence, "if," or "seeing," thou art the Son of God, as has been testified by a voice from heaven, and thou thyself affirmest; as a proof of it, "command that these stones be made bread," or "this stone," as Luke expresses it; that is, one of the stones which lay near by, and were in sight: and Satan might hope to succeed in this temptation, since Christ was now hungry, and he might insinuate a concern for his welfare; and the rather as he succeeded with the first Adam, in tempting him to eat of the forbidden fruit; and as he might suggest, he would, by such an act of omnipotence, give proof of his divine Sonship: but though Christ could have done this, as well as God could raise up out of stones children unto Abraham; yet as it was needless to do it in proof of his Sonship, since that had been so well attested already, by a voice from heaven; nor for his sustenance, since he had been sustained by the power and providence of God forty days without food, he might be longer.

Besides, he never wrought a miracle for his own support; nor would he do it now, at the instance of the devil, which was what he wanted him to do, in obedience to him, and at his motion; wherefore Christ's answer is; "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Deut. 8:3), which signifies, that men may live by that which is not properly bread, as by manna, on which the Israelites lived in the wilderness, to which the passage quoted refers: nor does man live by bread, when he has it, abstracted from the blessing of the mouth of God with it, which gives it nourishment; and besides, without bread, in any sense, a man may be supported by the power and providence of God, as Moses and Elijah were, and as Christ now had been; and therefore, to take such a method as he was tempted to, would have seemed to have been a distrust of that power and providence by which he had been sustained; and thus, by quoting scripture, to repel Satan's temptations, Christ has taught us to make use of the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, to withstand the temptations of Satan also. 1d2.

The second temptation was, after Satan had prevailed on Christ, or he condescended to go along with him, or he suffered him to take him to the city of Jerusalem, and place him on the pinnacle of the temple, or on the battlements of it, to cast himself down from thence; in order to give proof of his divine Sonship, in a public manner, before the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Priests, Scribes, and common people; by which he might suggest it would gain him great credit and esteem; and as for his preservation in it, he quotes, in imitation of him, a passage of scripture, where it is written, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee," &c. which, however applicable to Christ, as well as to his members, is perverted, since a material clause is omitted, "to keep thee in all thy ways;" whereas Satan was endeavoring to lead him out of the right way, tempting him to the sin of suicide; which he did, either out of envy and malice, and the malignity of his nature; or to prevent, if he had any notion of it, Christ's dying in the room and stead of his people, in

a judicial way, for their salvation: however, Christ resisted the temptation, by saying, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Deut. 6:16), as Christ was; which was testified by a voice from heaven, declaring him to be the Son of God, and so Lord and heir of all things.

In like manner the children of God are often tempted by Satan to destroy themselves; which shows the similarity between Christ's temptations and theirs. 1d3. The third temptation was, after the devil had taken Christ, by his permission, to an exceeding high mountain, one of those about Jerusalem, or not far from it, and had showed him, by a diabolical and false representation of things to the sight, "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;" alluring him with a promise of these to "fall down and worship him."

To promise Christ these was impertinent; since the earth is his, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein, as the maker of them; and all power in heaven and earth is given him as Mediator; to pretend that these were in his power to dispose of to whomsoever he pleased, as it is in Luke, was intolerable arrogance; when he had not the least thing in the world at his dispose; could not touch any of Job's substance without permission, and a grant from God; nor go into a herd of swine without leave: but to propose to Christ, that he should fall down and worship him, was the height of insolence and impudence!

This shows what the original sin of the devil was, affectation of Deity, and to be worshipped as God; hence he has usurped the title of the God of this world; and has prevailed upon the ignorant part of it, in some places, to give him worship: and, indeed, to sacrifice to idols, is to sacrifice to devils: but, not content with this, he sought to be worshipped by the Son of God himself; than which nothing could be more audacious and impious; wherefore Christ rejected his temptation with indignation and abhorrence; saying, "Get thee hence, Satan;" or, as Luke has it, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Deut. 6:13), upon which the devil left him, finding he could do nothing with him; and angels came and ministered to him.

After which we hear no more of him, till the time of Christ's death drew nigh, when Christ observed to his disciples, that "the prince of this world cometh," to meet him in the garden, where he was in an agony, and had a combat with him; and his sweat was as drops of blood falling to the ground; and when were the hour and power of darkness, when all the posse of devils were let loose upon him, and cast their fiery darts at him; but he got the victory over them all; yet, notwithstanding that, these various assaults and temptations of Satan, to which he was subject, and by which he was harassed, must be considered as a part of his humiliation, and of that low estate he was brought into. 1e.

Fifthly, Christ's humiliation appeared in the reproaches, indignities, and persecutions he endured from men, even contradiction of sinners against himself; the reproaches with which God and his people were reproached, fell on him; and these so thick and fast, and so heavily, that, in prophetic language, reproach is said to have broken his heart (Ps. 69:9,20). Sometimes his enemies the Jews upbraided him with the meanness of his descent and pedigree, the low estate of his family, as has been observed; with his illiberal education, and the illiterateness of his followers: sometimes they attacked his moral character, affirmed they knew him to be a sinner: charged him with sabbath breaking, with being a glutton and a wine bibber, and an encourager of men in sinful practices; they traduced his miracles, which they could not deny as facts, as if done by the help of the devil; and said he had a devil, and was familiar with one, by whom he did his works; they called him a deceiver of the people, and charged him with preaching false doctrines, and delivering out hard sayings not to be borne with; nay, they endeavoured to fix the imputation of blasphemy on him, because, being a man, he made himself God, and equal to him; they

represented him as a seditious person, that went about teaching men not to give tribute to Caesar; as well as having an intention to destroy their law; and as setting men to pull down their temple.

In short, they not only rejected him as the Messiah, with the greatest contempt and abhorrence of him; but sought to take away his life in a violent manner; sometimes by having him to the brow of an hill to cast him down headlong; and at other times they took up stones to stone him; nor were they satisfied until they had brought him to the dust of death. 1f. Sixthly, There was a very great degree of meanness and poverty which appeared throughout the whole life of Christ, private and public; to which the apostle has respect, when he says; "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus," &c. (2 Cor. 8:9), where he puts Christ's riches and poverty in contrast, that by so much the greater his riches were in his former state, by so much the more does his poverty seem to be in his low estate; he was rich in the perfections of his nature, in the possession of heaven and earth, and all therein; and in the revenues of glory arising from the kingdom of nature and providence; and yet he who was Lord of all became poor to make us beggars rich.

And this is to be understood of poverty in a literal sense; for Christ was not spiritually poor. Some instances of his meanness and poverty in private life have been observed before; as, that he was born of poor parents, had not a liberal education, and was brought up to a mechanic business. When he came into public life, it does not appear that he had any certain dwelling house to live in; so that "the foxes, and the birds of the air," enjoyed more than he did (Matthew 8:20).

To what a low estate was our Lord brought! though he could have supported himself, and his twelve apostles, by working miracles for his and their sustenance; yet he never did, but lived upon the contributions and ministrations of some good women, and others, mentioned in Luke 8:2,3. When the collectors of tribute came to him for the tribute money, he had none to pay them, but ordered Peter to cast his hook into the sea, and take up a fish, and out of that a piece of money, and pay the tribute for him and for himself (Matthew 17:24-27).

At his death he had nothing to leave to his mother for her support; but seeing her, and his disciple John, when on the cross, said to her, "Behold thy son;" and to him, "Behold thy mother;" signifying, that he should take care of her; and from that time that disciple took her to his own house (John 19:26,27). Nor had he any tomb of his own, or family vault to be interred in; but was laid in one belonging to another, even Joseph of Arimathea. And this poverty of his was signified by hints, types, and prophecies, that he should be thus poor and needy; and which were hereby fulfilled (Ps. 40:17; Eccl. 9:14; Zech. 9:9). 1g.

Seventhly, Upon the whole, it clearly appears, that Christ indeed "humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation," as in Philippians 2:7,8 or emptied himself; not of the fulness of grace it pleased the Father should dwell in him; this was with him, and seen, in him, when he became incarnate; and still continues with him; out of which saints receive grace for grace (John 1:14,16), much less of the perfections of his divine nature, the whole fulness of which dwells in him bodily (Col. 2:9).

Every perfection in Deity was asserted by him in his state of humiliation, as omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, &c. (John 2:24,25; 3:13; Rev. 1:8). Christ did not lay aside the form of God, in which he was; or lay down his divine nature, which was impossible; nor deny his equality with God, which would be to deny himself; but he consented to have his divine glory covered and veiled, as to the ordinary manifestation of it, and in common; I say as to the ordinary manifestation of it; for it sometimes did break forth in an extraordinary way by miracles (John 2:11), and there, were some, though but few, which saw his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father; the greater part saw no form nor comeliness in

him, wherefore he should be desired by them (John 1:14; Isa. 53:3).

He did not give up his equality with God the Father; but he was content that that for a time should be out of sight; and so behave, and be so treated, as if he was not his fellow; he was willing, in the human nature, and in his office capacity, to act in subordination to his Father; to say what he bid him say, and do what he bid him do; even to the laying down of his life; for which he had a commandment from his Father; yea, he owned that in that his present state and circumstances, his Father was greater than he (John 12:49,50; 10:18; 14:28).

He was content to be had in the utmost disesteem by men, to be emptied of his good name, character, and reputation, to be reckoned a worm, and no man; to be a Samaritan, and have a devil; and to be called and abused as if he was the worst of men; and to be made sin, and a curse for his people, to repair the loss of honour sustained by the sins of men; so that Christ's humiliation was his own voluntary act and deed.

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