

Undercover Boss has nothing on Jesus. In that popular show, big-time CEO's and VP's of major companies give up their title and perks, disguise themselves, and go to an average franchise or location or factory of the company they run, and spend a week or two as a new trainee, learning from their lowest level employees how to perform the simplest, most menial tasks that their job requires. After their short time is up, there is a big reveal, and the bad employees who cut corners slink off into the undergrowth, and the hard-working, underprivileged employees are praised and rewarded.

It's a fun idea, and makes for good television, but it cannot compare to the true story of the Undercover God, where the Second Person of the Trinity doesn't just *disguise* himself as a man, but *becomes* a man, and not just for a week or two, but for a lifetime. What's more, the life of Christ is not a PR move, but an act of salvation. After the big reveal at the Resurrection, Jesus doesn't just go around giving out bonuses or vacations; He pulls His people from darkness to light, from death to life. Structurally, it's the same story that the tv show tells, but it's a bigger story: it encompasses the world. It isn't just meant to amuse and entertain, but to change the eternal destiny of humanity.

Our passage from Philippians gives us one of the most sweeping, big picture overviews of the work of Christ in the whole Bible. It begins in heaven, with Christ in the form of God, and then takes us through the incarnation, the atonement, Christ's exaltation, and into the future glory where every knee bows and every tongue confesses Jesus Christ as Lord.

And at the beginning of this passage is an exhortation from the Apostle Paul, instructing us to have the same mind among ourselves that Christ demonstrated throughout this journey. Paul is telling us to be like Jesus, and his first instruction is to *have this mind*, to *think this way*, to *adopt this mindset*, the mind of Christ.

And so Paul is saying, "Think about your life the same way Jesus thought about His." And notice also that Paul actually speaks to the *communal* mind, the church mind. *Have this mind among yourselves. Share this mind.* Paul is not saying, "Find someone who thinks this way, and keep them around." No, his command is for the church: all of you *together*, think this way. This is what Paul is imagining: a church filled with people who have rebooted their minds so that they have abandoned their old mindset, and replaced it with that of Christ.

And what sort of mind is it that we see in Christ? What are the characteristics that mark a Christlike mind? I think Paul specifically points us to two things: *humility* and *obedience*. *Self-emptying* and *submission*. A Christlike mind is one that lets go of the need to make much of itself, and instead gives itself away for others. And a Christlike mind is one that submits to the will of God in complete obedience, even when that will includes something as dramatically opposed to the mind's natural self-preservation as death, even death on a cross. A Christlike mind says these

two things: “I am here to serve others.” and “Death is better than disobedience.” Can you imagine what God can do with a church filled with people who share that mind among themselves?

This is what Christ's self-emptying looked like: although He was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God something to be grasped or demanded. Jesus looked at the choice between *receiving all the honor and blessing due to God on the one hand*, and *becoming a servant and being treated as just another man on the other*, and in His mind, it made perfect sense to choose the path of servanthood, to give up His rights and privileges. It wasn't a long agonizing internal struggle; that's just how His mind worked.

This is not the mindset that people are born with. This is a profoundly alien way of thinking! Jesus gives up His seat in first class, and goes and stands in the back of the plane. Jesus gives up His front-row tickets, and sits in the nosebleed section. Jesus lays aside His royal robes and crown, and puts on a towel and washes feet. Nobody thinks this way naturally!

This is why thinking like Jesus requires a *changed* and *transformed* mind. Your old mindset will never get you there. Your old mind says, I worked hard to get here, and I deserve the respect and recognition that accompanies my status. When someone disrespects me, or treats me as if I were someone of a lower status, I feel offended. Outwardly, I may *act* like it's no big deal, but inside, I'm ticked off. But that's right where Paul goes – to your inner life, the life of the mind. The problem is not your proud actions; that's the symptom. The real problem is in your proud mind, where even if you obey outwardly, inwardly, you start feeling morally superior. So get rid of *that* mind – let that mind be crucified with Christ, and instead have His mind.

And then, once your mind is renewed, the actions of humility start to become more natural, and the natural expression of humility is obedience. We see the mind of Jesus working just this way: first came the humility, the commitment not to insist on honor and privilege, and the obedience followed.

We can see the close connection between obedience and humility when we consider *disobedience*. Disobedience says: “Not *your* will, but *mine* be done.” It is an assertion that my wishes take precedence and outrank the wishes and commands of others. Obedience says just the opposite: “Not my will, but yours be done.” And of course that phrase comes from the lips of Jesus at the culmination of His obedience, obedience that included His entire life, but was most clearly demonstrated when He obeyed His Father's will and died on the cross. **Humility shows itself by glad obedience.**

And so this is what this command mean: “have this mind”. It means that when you feel annoyed or angry that someone has disrespected you or treated you lower than *you* treat you, you commit to *emptying yourself* at that moment. Give yourself away. Don't grasp for your privileges; let them go!

And this is what humbling yourself in obedience looks like: children, your mindset should be this: what my parents ask me to do is more important than what I want to do. My chores are not an unfair imposition. Students, consider the work your teacher assigns to be more important than how you would have chosen to spend your time. Don't think writing out paradigms 100 times is beneath you. Employees, if your boss asks you to do something, by definition it is not unworthy of you. Do it with all your might. Jesus obeyed unto death. A little menial work won't kill you. Christian, you can think of all sorts of spiritually beneficial things to do for yourself, or things for the Church to be doing – Bible studies, ministries, service projects. Maybe you think that you should be in charge of the spiritual direction of your own life, but God tells you to obey your leaders. Humble yourself, and follow their lead. Repeat this in your mind and in your life until it becomes the way you think: Empty yourself, and become obedient. Empty yourself and become obedient.

When think deeply about what these verses say, desperation should set in pretty quickly. We don't have sacrificial, self-emptying minds that naturally direct us towards the path of obedience; we have self-interested, grabby ones that tell us to serve ourselves. We struggle to obey those in authority, and even if we go through the motions, we are confident that we know better, and resentment starts to pile up under outward obedience. So how do we change out our minds?

Here's the good news: look back to verse 5: have this mind *which is yours in Christ Jesus*. You might have been thinking “that's not my mind. I just don't think that way, or react that way.” But if you are in Christ Jesus, this mind *is* yours. It belongs to you. It might feel uncomfortable for a while, like a pair of new shoes, but they really are your shoes! Because this mind is yours in Christ, is no longer a question of ability (can I think this way?) it is now a question of obedience. Christ Jesus, speaking through Paul, tells you to have a humble and obedient mind. Here's what you need to do: humbly obey! Whenever you find yourself grasping for glory, rebuke your mind, confess your sin, and follow Christ.

And if you are not in Christ, then you don't have this mind. You really *can't* think this way. Your mind is set on self, and you are not able to throw the switch. But there is good news for you, too. The mind of Christ is freely offered along with the gospel – repent of your grasping, greedy attitude, and ask for Christ's mercy. Part of the mercy He gives is the mercy of a new mind.

And notice as we close the *reward* of humility: *Therefore, because Jesus thought and acted this way*, God exalted Him to the highest place. Do you really think that by emptying yourself and obeying God that you will end up losing out? Is that what you think of God? That He's trying to cheat you out of a fulfilling life by telling you to live for others? No, paradoxically, God knows that emptying yourself is the only way to fulfill yourself. There is no glory in grabbing glory for

yourself, but by refusing to exalt Himself, Jesus made room for *God* to exalt Him, and God's exaltation is better than any honor you could possibly give yourself! Humble yourself, Scripture says, empty yourself, submit to God in joyful obedience, and He will lift you up.

- In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.