

Power of Humility

Philippians 2

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Phil 2:1-4 – Unity Through Humility

Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

v1 – On what basis did Paul seek to encourage and exhort the Philippians?

Therefore: This draws back to v27-30, telling the Philippians how to stand strong for the Lord against external conflicts.

- *If there is any:* This introduces the basis for Paul's exhortation to unity, humility and love among believers.
- The idea is that if the Philippian Christians have received the things he mentions, then they have a responsibility to do what he is about to describe

What is the consolation in Christ?

Knowing that that the debt for our sins have been paid by Christ is great consolation. Knowing that God is in control and He *causes all things to work together for good* is great consolation.

What is the comfort of love?

It is great comfort knowing that God loves us and wants the best for us.

What is the fellowship of the Spirit?

This is the practical side of our relationship with Christ.

Romans 8:16 – *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*

Fellowship is the Greek word *kononia*. It means the sharing of things in common. We share life with the Spirit of God that we never knew before. The Holy Spirit fills and guides and moves in our lives in a powerful and precious way.

What is the affection and mercy of God?

We have experienced God's loving kindness to us in His provision that makes it possible for us to avoid the consequences we deserve.

v2 – What did Paul say would give him joy?

By being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind guided by the Holy Spirit.

- These together all speak of the same idea: a deep, abiding, internal unity among the Philippians.

v3 – What is the first step in achieving unity?

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition: In the flesh, we are often motivated by selfish ambition or conceit. Much of what we do is not done out of love for others, but out of our own desire for "advancement" or "promotion" (selfish ambition).

What is conceit?

This is the second step to this kind of unity. Conceit is thinking too highly of one's self, of having an excessive self-interest and self-preoccupation. It could be more literally translated "empty glory."

What is the third step for what we should we do?

In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself: This is completely contradictory to the attitude of the world, because lowliness of mind is about the least attractive thing to the thinking of this world.

- This rebukes the culture's concept of self-esteem.
- As we esteem others better, we will naturally have a concern for their needs and concerns. This sort of outward looking mentality naturally leads to a unity among the people of God.

v4 – How may we practically esteem others better than ourselves?

Not only *look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others:* As we put away our selfish ambitions, our conceit, and our tendencies to be high-minded and self-absorbed, we will naturally have a greater concern for the interests and needs of others.

- Paul doesn't tell us that it is wrong to look out for our own interests, but that we should not only look out for our own interests.

Phil 2:5-11 – The Humbled and Exalted Christ

⁵ *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,* ⁷ *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.* ⁹ *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,* ¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,* ¹¹ *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

v5 – What should be in our mind?

We should conform our mind to the mind of Christ when He humbled Himself to make it possible for us to spend eternity with Him.

v6 – What does it mean that Jesus was in the form of God?

This describes Jesus' pre-incarnate existence. We must remind ourselves that Jesus did not begin His existence in the manger at Bethlehem, but is eternal God.

- *Form:* The Greek word for form, “morphe,” refers to that outward expression which a person gives of his inmost nature

What does it mean that Jesus *did not consider it robbery to be equal with God*?

Jesus did not cling to the prerogatives or privileges of deity.

- Jesus did not need to achieve equality with the Father. He had it, and chose not to cling to it to do His mission on earth.
- Jesus' divine nature was not something He had to seek for or acquire, but it was His already.

v7 – What does it mean that Jesus made Himself of no reputation?

The more common (and well-known) translation of this is that He emptied Himself. From the ancient Greek word emptied (kenosis) came the idea that Jesus' incarnation was essentially a self-emptying.

How did Jesus empty Himself?

A bondservant is a servant by choice and that is what Jesus did. He came to serve humanity in the area of our greatest need.

- *Coming in the likeness of men:* We can think of someone who is a servant, but not in the likeness of men. Angels are servants, but not in the likeness of men. Jesus had to be a man to be a valid sacrificial replacement for us.

Does all this mean that Jesus divested Himself of the attributes of deity (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence) for His mission on earth?

Jesus did not (and could not) become “less God” in the incarnation. No deity was subtracted (though he did set aside some of the rights of deity); rather humanity was added to His nature.

John 5:19 – *the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner*

The attributes of deity Jesus had during His ministry on earth were due to His close relationship to the other persons of the Trinity. Jesus even attributed His miracles to the work of the Father...

John 14:10 – *the Father who dwells in Me does the works.*

Why didn't Jesus retain some of His attributes of deity while He was on earth?

Jesus totally identified with those He came to save...

Hebrews 4:15 – *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

You have to ask yourself, if He retained His prerogatives of deity, why did He come to earth via having to spend 9 months in the womb and being a child?

v8 – How did Jesus humble Himself?

Jesus humbled Himself when He became obedient to the Father. Jesus had to leave heaven's glory and be found in appearance as a man in order to become obedient.

- He was humble in that he took the form of a man, and not a more glorious creature like an angel.
- He was humble in that He was born into an obscure, oppressed place.
- He was humble in that He was born into poverty among a despised people.
- He was humble in that He was born as a child instead of appearing as a man.
- He was humble in submitting to the obedience appropriate to a child in a household.
- He was humble in learning and practicing a trade – and a humble trade of a builder.
- He was humble in the long wait until He launched out into public ministry.
- He was humble in the companions and disciples He chose.

- He was humble in the audience He appealed to and the way He taught.
- He was humble in the temptations He allowed and endured.
- He was humble in the weakness, hunger, thirst, and tiredness He endured.
- He was humble in His total obedience to His Heavenly Father.
- He was humble in His submission to the Holy Spirit.
- He was humble in choosing and submitting to the death of the cross.
- He was humble in the agony of His death.
- He was humble in the shame, mocking, and public humiliation of His death.
- He was humble in enduring the spiritual agony of His sacrifice on the cross.

v9 – How has God exalted Christ?

Jesus has returned to the glory He had before His incarnation...

Colossians 1:16-17 – *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, ...All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

Jesus is our Creator and is actively involved in holding the universe together...

John 5:17 – *Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”*

What does it mean that Jesus was given a name which is above every name?

This goes beyond giving Jesus the Divine name Yahweh (LORD). When we consider the Hebrew concept of the name, it also implies that God declares that Jesus has a character and person above all.

v10-11 – When will everyone bow their knee at the name of Jesus?

Every person will ultimately confess Christ’s lordship, either with joyful faith or with resentment and despair at the Great White Throne judgment.

What does it mean that Jesus Christ is Lord?

Jesus returned to heaven with more than He had before. Not only did He return with His humanity still added to his deity (although a resurrected humanity), He also returned with the recognition planted among men of who He was and the worship He deserved – something unknown until the Incarnation and the full revelation of His person and work.

- We also should not miss the significance that in the Roman Empire, residents were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the Emperor, declaring that

Caesar is Lord. Though the Roman state saw this only as a display of political allegiance, Christians rightly interpreted it as idolatry – and refused to participate, often paying with their lives.

How is that declaring Jesus Christ is Lord glorifies the Father?

This picture has shown them how to follow Jesus’ pattern of patient, humble obedience – something Paul will call them to continue in the following verses.

Phil 2:12-18 – Light Bearers

¹² *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;* ¹³ *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

¹⁴ *Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.*

¹⁷ *Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.*

v12 – Why had Paul described Jesus humbling Himself?

We should not miss the connection between the obedience Jesus showed and the obedience Paul expected of Christians as followers of Jesus.

Is Paul advocating salvation-by-works in saying we should work out our own salvation?

No, such a statement would contradict the whole of Paul’s gospel. He was not talking about earning glorification, He is talking about sanctification.

How do we work out our own salvation?

By responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and growing in our relationship with Christ to be more like Him.

Why should we have fear and trembling as we work with God in our sanctification?

This does not mean that we should live our Christian lives with a constant sense of fear and terror, but that we should live with a fear of failing to work out our own salvation.

v13 – How is it that God works in us?

Since God is doing a work in the Christian, the Christian therefore has a greater responsibility to work diligently with fear and trembling regarding his own salvation and walk with the Lord.

- *Both to will and to do:* God's work in us extends to the transformation of our will, as well as changing our actions (*to do*); this is not a passive transaction.
- *For His good pleasure:* The motive behind God's work in our life: it gives Him pleasure to do it.

v14-15 – How may we be blameless and harmless?

Do all things God is prompting us to do without complaining and disputing.

- *In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation:* This seems to refer back to Deuteronomy 32:5: *They have corrupted themselves; they are not His children, because of their blemish: A perverse and crooked generation.* Modern Christians should not be like rebellious Israel, who complained and disputed with God during the wilderness sojourn.

How is it the children of God shine as lights in the world?

John 8:12 – *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

We are to reflect the light of Christ to the world...

- Lights are used to make things evident.
- Lights are used to guide.
- Lights are used as a warning.
- Lights are used to bring cheer.
- Lights are used to make things safe.

v16 – How are we to hold fast to the word of life?

Study God's Word, meditate on it, apply it, share it.

Why should we hold fast to the word of life?

So that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain: The idea that Paul's work might some how end up to be in vain was a troublesome thought to him. He knew that his work really abided in people, so that if those people did not continue on strong with the Lord, there was a sense in which his own ministry was in vain.

What is the day of Christ?

That is the day Paul would find out if his work was fruitful. The day of Christ is when Jesus is revealed to the world when He returns; it begins with the rapture of the church. Many will recognize Jesus as the Messiah as a result of this supernatural events. But most will embrace the "great

delusion" (2 Thess 2:11) that explains away the rapture, probably as alien technology.

v17-18 – Why should the Philippians rejoice with Paul?

Paul looked forward to what might be his imminent martyrdom, and expected the Philippians to be glad and rejoice with him. Paul essentially was asking the Philippians to see his death as something that would bring glory to God.

What does the imagery of being poured out as a drink offering represent?

Paul here alluded to a practice among both Jews and pagans in their sacrifices. They often poured out wine (or sometimes perfume) either beside (as in the Jewish practice) or upon (as in the pagan practice) an animal that was sacrificed to God or pagan gods.

Phil 2:19-24 – Timothy Commended

¹⁹ *But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.* ²⁰ *For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.* ²¹ *For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.* ²² *But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.* ²³ *Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me.* ²⁴ *But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.*

v19 – Why did Paul send Timothy to the Philippians?

That I also may be encouraged when I know your state: Paul didn't expect problems from the Philippians, as if they were one of his problem churches. Instead, he expected that he would be encouraged when I know your state.

What did Paul think of Timothy?

He was like-minded with Paul meaning they were on the same page when it comes to spiritual matters. Thus, he knew Timothy had a pastor's heart who would show great concern for his sheep.

v23-24 – Why did Paul say he was confident in the Lord that he'd be able to visit the Philippians?

Perhaps Paul was being careful to avoid the accusation, "Paul wants to send Timothy because he really doesn't want to be here himself." He clearly told the Philippians that he also wanted to come.

Phil 2:25-30 – Epaphroditus Praised

²⁵ Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; ²⁶ since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷ For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. ²⁹ Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; ³⁰ because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

v25-27 – Who was Epaphroditus?

It looks like it was Epaphroditus who took this letter to the Philippians. It seems that Epaphroditus came to Paul from the Philippians as a messenger and became sick while he was with Paul.

- *My brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier:* Paul gave these titles to Epaphroditus. He was a man Paul valued as a partner in the work of ministry.

What had Epaphroditus done for Paul?

Epaphroditus had brought a gift of financial support from the Philippians to Paul (Philippians 4:18).

Why was it important that Epaphroditus was the one who delivered Paul's letter to the Philippians?

Epaphroditus was concerned because the Philippians learned of his sickness and worried about him. The return of Epaphroditus would give them peace of mind that their valued brother was in good condition.

v28-30 – Why was Paul eager to send Epaphroditus?

Paul was eager to re-unite the Philippians with their beloved brother Epaphroditus, and reminded the Philippians to give him proper recognition when he returned (hold such men in esteem).

Why should Epaphroditus be held in high esteem?

Because for the work of Christ he came close to death: It was for the work of Christ that Epaphroditus came close to death. Even though his work was mostly that of being a messenger and not anything particularly spiritual, it was still the work of Christ.

- *Not regarding his life:* The willingness to put the work of Christ first and his own personal safety second displayed the noble heart of Epaphroditus.

What applications stand out from our discussion today?

- It is necessary to be humble like Christ modeled in order to have unity.
- The humility of Christ is putting others ahead of yourself.
- Jesus is unique as 100% God and 100% human... He was the only one who could be the substitutionary sacrifice of all who would trust in Him.
- All will eventually recognize that Jesus is Lord but it is much better to come to that recognition sooner rather than later.
- In order to be a light-bearer of Christ we need to work with the Holy Spirit to be more like Christ while in our mortal bodies.
- A noble heart is one who puts the work of Christ ahead of even their own personal safety.