

“Philippians – Week 4”

SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2026 - MICHAEL BOWERS



Summary - “Press On: Christ Modeled Gospel Humility”

When we exited our time of teaching last Sunday (Philippians 1:18-30), we continually kept coming back to Paul’s insistence on our rejoicing, taking J.O.Y, yet Paul also continued to preach suffering. But what if the greatest threat to our joy isn’t suffering, but rather our pride? Paul knows sinful people, and people are prone to becoming divided, distracted, prideful, and to pursue their personal direction and desires rather than the one given to the church. Paul teaches us this week (Philippians 1:27-2:11) that if we want unity in the church, we must embrace humility, particularly the humility modeled by Jesus Christ. We will see that Jesus Christ stepped down, dove down, into humanity, in order to bring us up with Him for worship, submission to Him, and repentance and forgiveness of sins. This is the example of humility we are called to embrace, and we are also invited to model it to others. If we want Gospel unity in the local church, then it must be formed by Gospel humility. If we want unity in the church, peace in our homes, and influence in our community, we must first kneel before King Jesus, whose name is above every name.

Scripture - Philippians 1:27-2:11

1 ²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

2 ¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

Further Scripture Study

Psalm 25:9; Proverbs 15:33; Micah 6:8; John 13:14–15; Romans 12:10-16, 15:1-6; 1 Corinthians 1:10, 10:24, 13:5; Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 1:27-2:11; Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Peter 5:5

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

Key Thoughts

J.O.Y. → Jesus, Others, Yourself

- Jesus - a relationship with Jesus Christ that is for eternity, but also for every day.
- Others - How can we help others? How do we approach a broken, sin-filled world?
- Yourself - Are we growing and living in partnership and in obedience to Christ and His word, trusting that he who began a good work in us will bring it to completion?

What if the greatest threat to your joy isn't suffering, but pride?

Paul wants to hear or see that the church of Philippi is standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side for the gospel (vs. 27). The idea of standing firm (steko) is to be stationary, in a fixed position, but to be side by side with another warrior. Because, as Paul says in vs. 28, the opponent is coming.

Many believers today treat church as a place to visit occasionally rather than a family to belong to. If this is your thought toward the local church, you are missing something in your life. Paul envisions believers standing shoulder to shoulder in the battles of life; people of the same mind who are willing to lock arms with one another when things are difficult.

Paul goes on to say, when you face harm, suffering, and difficulties, be unified with other believers. It's hard to stand beside someone when we don't know their heart/mind. We must be united as believers in the same mission and message that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We see in Philippians 2:1-4 the same mind, same love, in full accord (unison) and with one mind. Paul knew the sin that would tear apart our unity as believers: the sin of pride; therefore, he taught on humility...often.

Paul says, because of Jesus Christ and his encouragement, because of the love of Christ, because of the fellowship through the Holy Spirit, because of the mercy and affection Christ showed to us: Paul will have the most joy when the example of Jesus Christ flows in and through the church of Philippi in unity and humility.

As a local church, we must be unified in our preaching of Jesus, standing on the authority of His word, which guides our actions toward each other and our church family. And what is the secret to unity? Humility.

We see here that Paul is a leader in the local church, guiding those under his care down a narrow path toward humility. No one struts down the narrow path. Humility does not come naturally to us.

Key Thoughts

In verses 2:5-8 Paul has just laid out for us exactly who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for us, while also showing us the perfect example of humility.

Jesus Christ existed in the form of God. Fully divine, full of all power from before time began. Scripture says Jesus was in this role from before the foundation of the world. Jesus has always been and always will be. He is not separate from God; He is God.

Jesus had nothing to prove; He could not become greater, He was fully God, yet now, He would become obedient to the Father. He would empty Himself, by taking on the form of a servant. The word "servant" conveys that Jesus took the position of a slave to a master. A servant took on certain rights and privileges, but Jesus came as a duolos, a slave.

We see furthermore Jesus being born in the likeness of men and found in human form (vs. 7-8). Jesus steps down the ladder from His eternity in heaven of creation, stepping down: emptying Himself for the time of His divine action, becoming a servant-slave, and then being born into the world through mankind, which He created at the beginning of time.

The God of creation displayed humility and walked the earth as a man. This brings us hope, connection, and trust because 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ entered this world in a manger to a teenage mother, and the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us.

In verse 8 this picture from Paul comes down further; God is the God who walked this earth as a man. Philippians 2:8 - "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Jesus humbled himself; no one can humble Jesus, because he is God. He had to allow this to be done on behalf of mankind.

Paul conveys, at every turn, the magnificence of this truth that Jesus died, the Word made flesh. From the flogging, the shame, the extreme bleeding, the horrific condition of the flesh and body, the trek to the cross, and the hanging of Jesus, in public, for all to see, Jesus would die an agonizing death due to many physical failures. Jesus suffered physically, but His greatest pain was the weight and suffering of our sin.

Jesus Christ is now at what the world would have defined as the lowest place for humanity. However, it was there at the cross where He redefined humility. We also see that His death on the cross, His resurrection, began to show that although He humbled Himself, He never lost any divine nature; in fact, on the cross, He displayed His ultimate power - conquering sin and death.

Key Thoughts

This act of God, through the death of Jesus, was the most humbling action of all history, because Jesus Christ had the power, the authority, the might, and the right to take hold of the moment and not allow Himself to die this form of death. This act of humility is also our only hope for eternity!

We saw in verses 5-8 the humility of Jesus Christ as He came down, emptying Himself, laying Himself low on our account in order to become a servant, making a way into the hearts of sinful man through His crucifixion and resurrection. We see in verses 9-11 Christ being restored to glory and exalted with the name above all other names in which all men will bow.

The way up was initially down.

- The name of Jesus is exalted (1) -
- Every knee shall bow (2)
- Worship will happen in all the earth, above the earth, and under the earth. (3)
- This does not mean those in denial of Christ will worship out of repentance, but out of submission to the power and presence of Christ. (4)

In verses 3-11 Paul takes us down the ladder and back up through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to lay out the ultimate example of humility and unity, desperately missing in our world, that ultimately leads us back up the ladder to the ultimate picture of Jesus. Jesus Christ, the Lord, is worthy of all worship, glory, and honor.

This was a huge deal at the time because of the historical context. Paul is writing to Philippi, a Roman city within a Roman society, in which the greatest name would be that of the Roman Emperor; Nero at the time. To bow one's knee to any man other than Nero would be at minimum a challenge to Roman authority, but more than likely would be seen as absolute treason requiring death.

Paul says, "There is a name that is above that name of Nero. There is a man who is above that man. That at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, both on the earth alive when He returns, under the earth, those that have died apart from Jesus in Hell, those saints who were before Jesus worshiping Him today, that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of God the Father." That means even Nero would bend the knee to Jesus and raise his voice to Him.

And so the question is not, "Will you bend your knee to Jesus and confess in acknowledgment that He is God and He is Lord, and He is over all and above all?" The question is, "Will you do it today for salvation? Or will you do it on the other side of the grave for condemnation? Will you do it today as a friend of Jesus? Will you do it then as a foe of Jesus? Will you do it today for your joy? Will you do it then for your shame?" Make no mistake: all of creation will bend the knee to the name of Jesus.

Key Thoughts

Jesus Christ stepped down, dove down, into humanity, in order to bring us up with him for worship, submission to him, and repentance and forgiveness. This is the example of humility we are called to embrace, and we are also invited to model it. If we want Gospel unity in the church, then it must be formed by Gospel humility.

How do we apply Christ's humility in our lives: First, we surrender to the death and resurrection today! We humble ourselves at the foot of the cross. Let's be honest, how can we stand in pride and arrogance at the foot of the cross?

Jesus Christ stepped down from heaven to the lowest place so that He could lift us to the highest place. He took our sin, our shame, and our judgment upon Himself. And now the risen Christ invites us to bow before Him in repentance, trust Him for salvation, and follow His example of humility. If we want unity in the church, peace in our homes, and influence in our community, we must first kneel before King Jesus, whose name is above every name.

Reflect & Respond

How did you and/or your family do this week in the weekly challenge to read Philippians daily (Jesus)?

Reading vs. 2, how do you look be of the same mind and the same love with other believers? Where in your life has this at times been a struggle? How did you manage to keep Christ the focus?

What is the hardest area of your life to be humble or to lay yourself low (e.g., in traffic, with your spouse, at work, on social media)? Reading vs. 3, how and where does selfish ambition and conceit creep into your life as a believer? How does looking to lay yourself low and serve others help to pull you out of your selfishness?

As we read through verses 5-8 we see what it means to "have the mind of Christ". Jesus did not cling to His own rights, but rather emptied Himself for others. Where in your life are you holding onto your own rights instead of serving others? Where have you learned to die to self in order to lift others up?

What would it look like for you to "step down" this week in humility in order to lift another up? (In your marriage, as a parent, with a friend, at work, in your community, in your church, etc.)