

## **Humility Breeds Unity**

### **Philippians 2:1-11**

INTRO: From the moment of birth people urge others to meet their needs. Infants cry until mom comes to feed or change them. The toddler misbehaves until dad quits playing with little sister and gives full attention to him. When they get older they demand at least equal privileges, often greater privileges than their siblings.

Adults often seek the highest paying jobs, the most comfortable homes, the most prestigious cars, and the most extravagant vacations possible, and are willing to go to considerable trouble to achieve these ends. What begins as a survival instinct quickly becomes an expression of fallen human nature, but for people to live successfully in community with other people this instinct must be restrained in numerous ways. Many of the rules laid down in a well-functioning family and many of the laws in any larger society are attempts to restrain and channel the human desire to dominate others. The drive is so strong and so universal that the community that does not effectively accomplish this task of restraint self-destructs.

The incarnation of Christ Jesus represents the antithesis of this human drive to dominate. Although he had access to all the privilege and power to which his identity with God entitled him, and although he could have exploited that privilege and power to dominate his creatures, Jesus considered his deity an opportunity for service and obedience. His deity became a matter not of getting but of giving, not of being served but of serving, not of dominance but of obedience. The difficult part of all this for the twentieth-century believer is that Paul did not leave his description of Christ's astounding refusal to dominate in the realm of abstract speculation. Instead, he advised the church at Philippi, and through them the church of today, to follow Christ's example.

#### **I. The Exhortation to Unity (1-4)**

##### **a. The Foundation for Unity.**

In the original Greek these are 4 "if" clauses in verse 1 and most translations will put them there- should read "if any comfort from love;" "if any participation in the Spirit;" "if any affection and sympathy." These four "if" clauses aren't conditional, like you and I are used to; they mean more like "because" or "since." So let's look at the foundation for unity Paul speaks of.

##### **i. Because we are different than the world.**

1. V1 starts with the word "So", the GK= "oun" and is usually translated "Therefore." It connects it to what was just said.
2. Paul just spoke of the conflict that he is experiencing in the world- vv29-30.

3. The world is filled with conflict, but we are different than the world and we are to live in unity.

#### **ii. Because we are in Christ.**

1. “So if there is any encouragement in Christ.” We are “in” Christ, we belong to Christ and we make up the body of Christ. A body is connected, not disconnected (Paul in 1 Cor. 12).
2. Jesus’ prayer in John 17. John 17:22–23 (ESV) The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

#### **iii. Because of Christ’s love.**

1. “any comfort from love” is speaking of Jesus’ love for us. The word for comfort is “paramuthion” which has the literal meaning of speaking closely to someone and with the idea of giving comfort or solace.
2. The consoling or comforting love is that of what Christ gives unworthy sinners like ourselves.

#### **iv. Because of our fellowship in the Holy Spirit.**

1. “any participation in the Spirit.” The word for participation is “koinonia” meaning a strong fellowship.
2. Our fellowship is one of family, and we share in a connection that comes from God Himself through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit binds us together and is foundational to unity.

#### **v. Because we have received affection and sympathy from the Lord.**

1. This is the last if clause and again these terms refer to the mercies shown them by the Lord.
- vi. The four “if” clauses point to the 4 reasons we need to strive for unity. The combined effect of these statements is powerful.

### **b. The Formula for Unity.**

#### **i. The Don’t’s- what not to do with others.**

**We start off first with two things we shouldn’t do. These are the very two reasons that satan got kicked out of heaven- selfishness and pride- self-centeredness and conceit.**

#### **1. Don’t be Selfish.**

- a. Selfish ambition is striving to get your own way while disregarding everyone else’s needs and feelings and perspectives around them.

- b. Some people think, “this is my world and you’re only a supporting actor to make my dreams come true and to make my life more successful and more comfortable and more prosperous.” News: the world doesn’t revolve around you. And you can never be Christlike if you don’t burn away the selfishness in your life.

## 2. Don’t be Conceited.

- a. God hates pride. Satan tried to make himself like God.
- b. **In Isaiah 14 speaking of Satan’s fall from favor with God it says in Isaiah 14:12–15 (ESV) “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! <sup>13</sup> You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; <sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ <sup>15</sup> But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.**
- c. Pride is acting independently of God and thinking of yourself better than anyone else.
- d. What a bad mixture- selfishness and pride. This is a concoction for division, not unity.

## ii. The Do’s- what we should do with others.

### 1. Do be Humble.

- a. Humility introduces a key theme in this entire passage.
- b. This went against everything their culture thought of about humility. The pagans looked at it as a weakness. But Jesus took humility and put beauty on it.
- c. Pride makes you an enemy of God, and humility makes you a friend of God. It says in **James 4:6 “...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”**

### 2. Do be Considerate.

- a. “count others more significant than yourselves.”
- b. If you want to know the opposite of this then go to Disneyland...(lines, rides, stores..)

## II. The Example of Christ (5-11)

This is one of the most amazing passages of scripture in the New Testament. They are both doctrinal and ethical. The apostle Paul has called the church to live in unity, primarily through humility. Understanding who we are in Christ and what we have in Christ we are called to live out that understanding in our lives, and it begins with an attitude, a mindset.

a. The **mind of Christ** (5)

(illus). I like what C.S. Lewis said in his book **Miracles to understand the unfathomable reality of Christ's incarnation**. In the Christian story God descends to re-ascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity.... But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him. One has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get himself underneath some great complicated burden. He must stoop in order to lift, he must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders.

b. The **humility of Christ** (6-8)

i. His **Renunciation** (6)

1. Renunciation is the voluntary rejection, abandonment, or surrender of a right, title, claim, or citizenship. Jesus enjoyed His preexistent exalted position, but He laid it aside.
2. Both before, during, and after His incarnation, He was, by His very nature, fully and eternally God.
3. The word for “form” in this verse deserves a comment. The Greek word for form is “morphe” and it refers to the outward manifestation of an inner reality. The idea is that, before the Incarnation, from all eternity past, Jesus preexisted in the divine **form of God**, equal with **God** the Father in every way. By His very nature and innate being, Jesus Christ is, always has been, and will forever be fully divine.
  - a. **John 1:1 (ESV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**
  - b. **John 5:18 (ESV) This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.**
4. “But He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.”
  - a. The meaning of **to be grasped** is not taking hold of but of holding on to, or clinging to. He had all the rights and privileges of God, which He could never lose. Yet He refused to selfishly cling to His favored position as the

divine Son of **God** nor view it as a prized possession to be used for Himself.

## ii. His **Incarnation** (7)

1. Two verbs in verse 7 and verse 8 that describe successive actions as Jesus gave Himself for humanity: “He emptied Himself” and “He humbled Himself.”
2. Verse 7 He emptied Himself. It tells us how He emptied Himself- “by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form.”
  - a. Jesus left glory to become a slave, the translation says servant, but it’s actually the word for slave. Jesus didn’t relinquish His deity, He laid aside His rights and prerogatives as God the Son.
  - b. **Mark 10:44–45 (ESV) and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**
    - i. **Illus. Bryan Chappell illustrates the idea of Jesus “emptying Himself” by relaying a story from an African missionary...(exalting Jesus in Philippians).**
  - c. He was born in Bethlehem through a virgin named Mary and was “found in human form.” Again, he didn’t just look like a human, He became human. This is the mystery of the deity and humanity of Jesus. The bible tells us He was fully God and fully man.
3. **Hebrews 2:14 (ESV) Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,**
  - a. When Jesus was beaten, it was real flesh ripped from His back. When Jesus bled, it was real blood- the Roman soldier pierced His side and blood and water came out, that was real blood.

**Illus. We took our kids and grandkids to Disneyland last week. I loved it when the kids would see a Disney character and get all excited. “Look, there’s Mickey Mouse!” But that wasn’t really Mickey Mouse, it looked like him, and to the grandkids he was real,**

but in reality it was someone wearing a costume. When Jesus became man he wasn't wearing a costume, He didn't look just like a man, He was fully human.

### iii. His Crucifixion (8)

1. We're now taken all the way down in this text. "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death."
  - a. Christ's whole life was marked by humility. Look at His birth. He wasn't born in an influential city like Alexandria, Rome, Athens, or Jerusalem. He was born near a feeding trough in Bethlehem. He lived for 30 years in relative obscurity. Then, in His earthly ministry, He was known for loving unlovable people and humbly serving others. At His death, He was nailed to a cross alongside two criminals.
  - b. Christ humbled Himself voluntarily. Neither Herod, Pilate, nor the Romans humbled Him; no one can humble Jesus. Jesus humbles us. He chose to empty Himself. Therefore, don't look at this passage and feel sorry for Jesus, as if He were to be pitied. Jesus stands over you; you don't stand over Jesus. He humbled Himself. We must humble ourselves now before Him. We, too, must choose humility.
  - c. Paul adds that He demonstrated this humility by becoming obedient to the point of death, and that death was the most vile of all—crucifixion. This phrase serves as the rock bottom of Christ's humility and the most gripping part of His obedience. Roman citizens couldn't be executed, and Jews believed a person was cursed if he died by crucifixion (Gal 3:13). For some, the cross was a total embarrassment. Paul goes on to say that some live as "enemies of the cross" (3:18). Yet here is Jesus, the preexistent One, the Lord of glory, dying on the cross for sinners. He endured the physical agony of the cross, the abandonment, the shame, and He received the wrath of God in the place of sinners.

**TRAN: But it didn't end there. That was not the end of the story. We continue with the exaltation of Christ.**

### c. The exaltation of Christ (9-11)

Christ's humility follows the spiritual principle, "Whoever humbles himself will be exalted." His incomparable self-humiliation leads to His super-exaltation.

i. His **Position** (9)

1. "Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name."
2. The question comes up what name? Scholars are divided on this issue. Some say the name is Jesus, others say it's Lord. I can't tell you for sure- but one thing I can tell you is that Jesus is Lord.

ii. Universal **Adoration** (10)

1. The entire universe is called to worship Jesus Christ. Angels
2. Every week when we gather for worship and encourage one another in the gospel, we are uniting with Christians who have gone before us. And as we make our confession, we are anticipating the future, in which everyone affirms this declaration.
3. **Isaiah 45:23 (ESV) By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: 'To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.'**

iii. Universal **Confession** (11)

1. Everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Those who have died throughout history, those who will die until He comes, and those who are alive when He does come. Some will confess Him as Lord with great joy and humility. Others will confess Him as Lord with despair and anguish. Pilate, Caiaphas, Stalin, Hitler, and every other evil dictator will confess Him as Lord. Everyone from every age will do the same.
2. In this world, Jesus Christ may be used as a curse word, Jesus Christ may be ridiculed, and many may die for declaring Jesus Christ is Lord, but there is a day coming when everyone- including the enemies of Jesus and His followers, will confess Jesus Christ as Lord. This flies in the face of the culture at that time because they looked at the emperor as the Lord. But even emperors will have to bow their knee and confess Jesus as Lord.
3. To confess Jesus as Lord in the first century meant that Caesar was not Lord. And as a result of such confessions, many were persecuted and killed. The same fate exists for many today

around the world who claim that Jesus is their Lord and Savior. But those who confess Christ as Lord now will not regret it when they see Him. Contrastingly, those who refuse to bow to Him now will wish they had heeded the message.

4. One thing is for sure, you're better off to bow your knee now and confess Jesus Christ as Lord now as Savior, the window closes. **Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed for man to die once, and then the judgment."**

**CLOSE: In closing today I want to encourage you to follow Christ's example as you live and grow in the community of Christ Community Church. Secondly have you bowed your knee to the Lord Jesus Christ and confessed Him as Lord?**