

## 15. The Book of Philippians 2:12-18

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### *Joy in Service-Part 3*

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier  
(9-10-23)

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We have begun a study in Paul's letter to the Philippians—looking at its theme of 'joy' topically.

So far, we've looked at:

- I. Joy in Fellowship—1:3-6
- II. Joy in Proclaiming the Gospel—1:12-18
- III. Joy of Faith—1:25
- IV. Joy in Unity—1:27-2:2
- V. Joy in Service—2:12-18

#### Philippians 2:12–18 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> 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; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. <sup>14</sup> Do all things without complaining and disputing, <sup>15</sup> 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, <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me...

So far in our studies on the topic of servanthood we've looked at:

- A. The heart of a servant—John 13:12-17
- B. The principle of servanthood—Matthew 20:20-28
- C. The humility of a servant—Philippians 2:3-11

#### Philippians 2:3–4 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

In a nutshell, this is what practical Christianity is all about—putting others above ourselves—which is essential to our joy (John 13:17).

This, of course, would be impossible without humility or as Paul called it—“**lowliness of mind**” which is the opposite of *pride* and *selfishness* which he describes as “**selfish ambition and conceit**”.

So, humility is the key to what Paul is saying here—but what is humility? *True* humility isn't going around putting yourself down.

A lot of Christians think that being humble means that you go around putting yourself down all the time—“*I'm nothing, I'm nobody, I'm a worthless worm, a wretch*”—or as one pastor put it— “*a vomitous puss sack!*”

Sometimes this is nothing more than pride masquerading as humility.

**Jesus said, “*Learn from Me for I am meek and lowly in heart...*”**

Jesus was the epitome of humility—but He certainly wasn't a worthless worm, and He didn't go around putting Himself down to everyone He came in contact with.

Humility isn't self-loathing. It's not beating yourself up all the time. Humility isn't the same as low self-esteem. Genuine humility doesn't focus on self at all—it doesn't put self *down*, it doesn't lift self *up*—true humility simply ignores self altogether while it focuses on others. Genuine humility simply says, “*You're more important to me than I am.*”

That is exactly what Paul said in v.3—“**Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.**”

Andrew Murray in his book, “*Humility: The Journey toward Holiness*” says—

*“It is a solemn thought that our love for God is measured by our everyday relationships with others. Except as its validity is proven in standing the test of daily life with our fellowmen, our love for God may be found to be a delusion.*

*It is easy to think that we humble ourselves before God, but our humility toward others is the only sufficient proof that our humility before God is real. To be genuine, humility must abide in us and become our very nature. True humility is to be made of no reputation--as did Christ.*

*In God's presence, humility is not a posture we assume for a time-- when we think of Him or pray to Him--but the very spirit of our life. It will manifest itself in all our bearing toward others. A lesson of deepest importance is that the only humility that is really ours is not the kind we try to show before God in prayer, but the kind we carry with us, and carry out, in our ordinary conduct.*

*The seemingly insignificant acts of daily life are the tests of eternity, because they prove what spirit possesses us. It is in our most unguarded moments that we truly show who we are and what we are made of. To know a truly humble person, you must follow that one in the common course of daily life.*

*This is what Jesus taught. He gave them an example when He washed their feet. He taught His lessons of humility by demonstration. Humility before God is nothing if it is not proven in humility before others.”*

It is sad that so much of the time, energy and work of the church is sapped away by having to deal with hurt feelings, resentments, murmurings, and retaliations because of pride. A lack of humility is the cause of all of the problems in the Body of Christ—including and especially in marriage.

Instead of serving one another and esteeming others better than ourselves, the Church is caught up in the pursuit of self-esteem rooted in self-love and has embraced the misguided teaching—  
“*I first have to learn to love myself before I can love anyone else.*”

**But self-love is never realized because self is never satisfied.**

If Satan can get us to spend all our time trying to learn to love ourselves more—we won't have any time left to learn to love anyone else. So, the Christians who have bought into the mentality that they first need to learn to love themselves before they can love anyone else—are Christians who never mature or move beyond the petty bickering and contentions that arise from a carnal mindset instead of the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5):

**1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NKJV)**

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ...For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

There is a great freedom that comes when we stop striving and fighting for our rights or to get ahead of others and we simply put others first and let God lift us up in His time.

Andrew Murray—

*“See that you humble yourselves and take no place before God or man but that of a servant. That is your work; let that be your one purpose and prayer.*

*God is faithful. Just as water seeks and fills the lowest place, so the moment God finds the creature empty, His glory and power flow in to exalt and to bless.*

*He that humbles himself—that must be our one aim—shall be exalted; that is God’s aim. By His mighty power and in His great love He will do it.”*

➤ *“Yes, but why would I want to be humble—that’s not the way to get ahead?”*

**Matthew 23:11 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

**Luke 22:24–27 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. <sup>25</sup> And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ <sup>26</sup> But not so *among* you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who *is* greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? *Is* it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.

How little this is *preached*—and how seldom it is *practiced* in the Church today. That’s why it’s getting harder and harder to find people who are willing to serve because humility is not being stressed and valued in the church anymore.

A lot of Christians are looking to *be* served and so they seek out churches that offer the most services and amenities where they can be constantly blessed by the service of others while they themselves never lift a finger to serve and bless anyone else.

The result is that the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God are being cheated out of servants—servants that help to strengthen the Body and build the Kingdom:

**Ephesians 4:11–16 (NLT)**

<sup>11</sup> Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup> Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup> This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be

immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.<sup>15</sup> Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.<sup>16</sup> He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

So, when you don't serve you're cheating the Body—but you're also cheating yourself.

Now starting in verse 5 Paul goes on to use Jesus as the ultimate example of humility and the mindset that led Him to be the quintessential Servant of all time:

**Philippians 2:5 (NKJV)**

**<sup>5</sup> Let this mind ['mindset'] be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...**

What was Jesus' mindset that Paul is referring to—he goes on to explain:

**Philippians 2:6–8 (NKJV)**

**<sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,<sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.<sup>8</sup> 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.**

The one characteristic that best describes the life of Jesus was humility.

One author put it well—

- *“What was the Incarnation but His humility in emptying Himself and becoming Man?”*
  - *“What was His life on earth but humility in taking the form of a servant?”*
  - *“What was His death on the cross if not the supreme demonstration of humility— “He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*
- Even His ascension says that He humbled Himself and therefore God highly exalted Him in heaven.”*

Everything about the life and ministry of Jesus spoke of *humility*.

What could speak of humility more than a lion becoming a lamb! The Lion of the Tribe of Judah becoming the Lamb of God—the Sovereign of the universe becoming the sacrifice for our sins?

Again, Jesus said, *“Learn from Me for I am meek and lowly in heart...”*

Andrew Murray—

*“I cannot too greatly impress upon my readers the need of realizing the lack there is today of humility within Christian circles. There is so little of the meek and lowly Lamb of God in those who are called by His name... We must study the character of Christ until our souls are filled with the love and admiration of His lowliness. We must believe that when we are broken under a sense of pride and our inability to cast it out, Jesus Christ Himself will come to impart this grace as a part of His wonderful life within us.”*

Jesus was the ultimate example of servanthood—He laid down His life on Calvary's Cross to serve fallen sinners so that we could be saved—the innocent dying for the guilty.

### **Matthew 16:24-26 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

At a religious festival in Brazil, a missionary was going from booth to booth, examining the wares. He saw a sign above one booth: "*Cheap Crosses.*" He thought to himself, "*That's what many Christians are looking for these days—cheap crosses. My Lord's cross was not cheap. Why should mine be?*"

**"Let this mind ['mindset'] be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"**

One pastor said,

*"Remember that the next time you think you're being unfairly treated by God because He asks you to give too much; to forgive too much; put up with too much and to sacrifice too much. Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing...if there is going to be blessing there must be some bleeding".*

Paul summed up his ministry in speaking to the elders of Ephesus when he said:

### **Acts 20:18–20 (NKJV)**

"You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, <sup>19</sup> serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; <sup>20</sup> how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you..."

## **D. The requirements of a servant**

### **1 Corinthians 4:1–2 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> **Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.** <sup>2</sup> **Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.**

Paul addressed the leaders of the various factions in the church when he called himself, Peter, and Apollos "**servants of Christ.**"

One author described Paul's use of the word 'servants.'

*"**Servants** (hupēretēs) means literally, "under rowers," originally indicating the lowest galley slaves, the ones rowing on the bottom tier of a ship. They were the most menial, unenvied, and despised of slaves. From that meaning the term came to refer to subordinates of any sort, to those under the authority of another."*

A galley slave (under-rower) didn't set the course or sail the ship—they simply served the captain of the ship.

*"We are not the captains of the ship,"* said Paul, *"but only the galley slaves who are under orders—no slave is greater than another slave".*

The same is true with the servants of Christ—we don't set the course or sail the ship, but rather we simply do what the Captain of the ship, Jesus Christ, tells us to do, knowing that *He* will bring us to the right destination.

**"Stewards"**—a steward is a servant that has been put in charge of another man's household—as Joseph was the chief steward of Potiphar's household (Genesis 39)—i.e., "a manager".

A steward didn't *own* anything, he simply took care of what belonged to another. (Galatians 6:10)

A major requirement in stewardship is to be “**found faithful.**”

One pastor said, “*Man values cleverness, wisdom, wealth, and success—but God is looking for those who will be faithful to Jesus in all things.*”

**Luke 16:10–11 (NLT)**

<sup>10</sup> “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities. <sup>11</sup> And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?”

(Listen for the pencil story.)

It doesn't matter how big or important your ministry is—are you doing it out of a love for Jesus and are you faithful?

If so, you will be rewarded as greatly as any other faithful servant of Jesus!

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If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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