



SUPER JOY - A STUDY IN PHILIPPIANS (Week 4) - The Way Up is Down

Introduction - Michael Horton, one of my professors at Westminster seminary, once wrote, "To be a Christian today doesn't just mean swimming against the current of contemporary culture, but it often means swimming against the stream of contemporary church culture."

I am amazed at how Christians refuse to get along. Now, my first thought was, "I shouldn't be surprised, because humanity is sinful by nature." But we are not humanity. We are new creations. If anyone is in Christ he or she is a new creation, a new type of humanity with

the Spirit of the Living God residing in us. That's not humanity in general. That's humanity once you've believed the gospel and been born again.

I could give examples from personal experience of this lack of unity in Christian practice, but they are sad and depressing stories.

Still, I remain shocked at how Christians refuse to get along, ignoring clear Scriptural imperatives and examples.

All it displays is lack of humility. And I am convinced that lack of humility is just evidence that we lack a consistent relationship with the risen Christ. It's simply a lack of love for Jesus.

It has been said, "Unity isn't the result of preaching on unity; it's the result of people adoring and emulating Jesus."

When we say we love God what we often really mean is we want just enough of God to be comfortable. This is what consumeristic Christianity fills churches with — the appearance of Christianity without the power of Christianity. This is why churches are filled

with Christian who refuse to get along, who don't want to work it out.

But that mindset is not possible if you take the gospel seriously.

Loving one another is only hard when we lack humility. Humility requires a vibrant relationship with the Lord. So, when we lack a daily relationship with the Lord we lack humility.

Let me begin by reading the verses we covered last week.

Philippians 1:27-30

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.

Because you love Jesus you have unity and you're engaged in this spiritual battle...

Philippians 2:1-11

2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,

If you like each other at all...

2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Get along.

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.

Stop being so self-centered and think about others.

Think humbly.

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,

Don't use your position or status to your own advantage, because Jesus didn't.

7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Nothing is beneath you to do and no one is beneath you to love, because no one is beneath Christ to love.

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Obedience takes humility. You can be obedient to God even when it will cost you your life... but it will probably only cost you your pride.

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.

There is nothing to fear in the service of our King for He is the King of the universe.

1. The Foundation of Unity (1-4)

Philippians 2:1-11

2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ,

Do you know the benefits of your salvation? This is what growing in the gospel is all about — understanding what Christ has done for you and in you so that you love Him out of gratitude.

any comfort from love,

Have you been comforted by the love Christ has shown you? Or have you been comforted by the love the body of Christ has shown you?

any participation in the Spirit,

Have you worked together for the sake of the gospel? You know, Captain American lowers his shield, Thor hits it and the vibrations knock down the enemy.

any affection and sympathy,

Do you like anybody? Do you feel for anybody?

2 complete my joy by being of the same mind (**thought**), having the same love (**action**), being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit (**thought**), but in humility count others more significant than yourselves (**action**). 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests (**thought**), but also to the interests of others (**action**).

2. The Humility of Christ (5-8)

Clearly, the foundation of unity is humility.

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

Notice here, Paul says, “Have the same mindset as Christ.” In other words, we can have the same mindset that displayed His humility.

We don't need to worry about how to use our omnipotence because we're not all-powerful, right? But we do need to worry about how to use our human positions of power in humble ways, not using our positions for personal leveraging or for personal gain.

6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, —

this just means he didn't hold onto His status as God for the sake of power.

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

Now, to even begin to appreciate the humility of Christ we need to understand this — He was in very nature God.

John I

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

You exist by the hand of Jesus Christ, Lord of heaven and earth.

4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

He gives light to everyone. This doesn't mean everyone is saved, but it means everyone will be without excuse because deep down we know there is a Truth Giver.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as

of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Then Paul writes:

Philippians 2:7

7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

This is something that is hard for us to get our minds around, but we should get a glimpse of what an amazing thing Christ has done for us, because everything that God is Christ is.

He is all-present, the universe itself cannot contain Him because He created the universe and everything in it. Thus, going from this aspatial existence to taking on human flesh was like becoming nothing, especially when we see how He was treated.

As soon as God the Son took on human flesh, He became less in people's eyes.

Philippians 2:8

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Our obedience will probably not lead to our deaths, but if we are obedient it will lead to the death of our pride and our egos.

Mark 15:1-5

15 And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. **2** And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." **3** And the chief priests accused him of many things. **4** And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." **5** But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Jesus made no defense of the charges brought against him. This is astounding, because we know that whatever charges they brought against Him (and it says they

brought many charges) were either misconceptions or complete lies.

Here we have people using their power against an innocent man. It's the complete opposite of a humble mindset.

3. The Exaltation of Christ (9-11)

Philippians 2:9-11

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.

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

This leaves no room for doubt, but one day every spiritual being (in heaven) whether angel or demon, (on earth) every living person, (under the earth) every dead person, every person who believes in Christ and every person who denies Christ will one day

confess that Jesus Christ is the Word become flesh, Lord of heaven and earth.

Deuteronomy 4:39

39 know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

That's what Paul is writing to the Philippians here — Christ is this God and there is no other.

Many people are offended by the proclamation that everyone will one day acknowledge that Jesus alone is Lord and Savior and there is no hope in any other religious figure. That is not an arrogant proclamation. It is a theological reality if what John wrote in his gospel is true.

If Jesus is the Word and the Word is God and the Word took on human flesh — Jesus Christ is Lord, which means He is the only God.

So the humility of Christ in the flesh is an astounding thing. God asks us to do the same thing that Jesus did, humble ourselves under His mighty hand.

1 Peter 5:6

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

Humility is essential to an authentic Christian life. Let's do a brief Scriptural survey that shows why.

Deuteronomy 8:16

who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.

You must have humility to grow in Christ.

2 Samuel 22:28

You save a humble people, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down.

You must have humility to be saved.

2 Chronicles 7:14

if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways,

then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Christians have to have humility if they want to see God at work in their midst.

2 Chronicles 34:27

because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the Lord.

It takes humility to hear the word of the Lord, so that the Lord of the word hears you.

Psalms 25:9

He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

It takes humility to learn spiritual truth.

Psalms 147:6

The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.

This is completely counterintuitive, but the way up is down.

And all this humility leads right back to Jesus.

Matthew 11:29

29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

There should be no fear in being humble because Jesus was humble. And yet we fear being humble because we're proud.

But the way up is down.

Jack Miller writes, "Only as you get down on your knees in prayer and acknowledge your neediness does God really teach you and use you. Sadly, we often go in the opposite direction. We try to build ourselves up so we can be strong and minister to people out of our strength. Our idea of salvation is to get stronger, clean ourselves up, and get nearer to God, all in our own strength by our own willpower. Instead, the gospel is that Jesus went all the way down to the pit to save you. He doesn't save good people; he saves sinners. There's where the power is: when you

know who you really are, you tell him the truth, and he meets you."

Are you willing to tell God the truth about yourself today?

Seeking God - page 33