



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

"Jesus: The Model of Servanthood"

This passage, indeed all of chapter 2, continues the exhortations in 1:27-30 about living the transformed life. Paul offered Jesus as the perfect model of servanthood, a key element of the transformed life. This passage likewise teaches us some profound theological truths about Jesus.

The Call to Servanthood and Unity, 2:1-4

This passage contains a four-fold appeal, based on the virtues of the Philippian believers Paul had observed, followed by a four-fold set of intended results he hoped they would exhibit.

2:1—The verse begins with the term "if." In the Greek language, this term introduces a first class condition, which means that the clause is commenting on virtues assumed to be true. These are qualities, character traits Paul had observed among the Philippian believers. Although we must be careful here, one could translate the term, "since."

- "encouragement in Christ"—because of their union with Christ, the Philippian believers were able to encourage one another. [The term translated encouragement is related to the work of the Holy Spirit as our "comforter," discussed by Jesus in John 14:16]
- "comfort from love"—God's love (*agape*) manifested in believers' lives enables them to comfort one another.
- "participation in the Spirit"—"participation" is *koinonia*, which gives focus to the intimacy and fellowship believers enjoy because of the indwelling Spirit
- "affection and sympathy"—another result of the Spirit is a "tender compassion" for one another in the body of Christ.

2:2—This verse summarizes the intended results of the four-fold appeal of v. 1; in a word it is a call for unity among believers. This call to unity is summarized by four phrases:

- "same mind"—the diversity among believers should be driven by a like-minded focus on the glory of God in all we do (see Romans 12:16).
- "same love"—for God, for Christ and for one another
- "in full accord"—in harmony of mind, of one spirit (*sympsychoi*)
- "of one mind"—being concerned for one thing; one purpose. "Christians, like clocks, strike at the same moment."

2:3-4—Paul now expanded on the theme of unity by emphasizing the heart attitude necessary for facilitating unity—nothing was to be done out of “rivalry” (“selfish ambition”) or “vain conceit” (“empty glory”). Instead, humility, putting others first, as “more significant,” should be the Spirit-energized virtue of the believer. Concentrate on the “interests of others,” not self, Paul exhorted. In other words, it is a contrast between a life of selfishness versus a life of selflessness.

Jesus, The Model of Humility, 2:5-11

Expositors often observe that this passage may have been an early hymn of the church: There are several rare Greek terms and there is a clear structure and cadence to these verses. Nonetheless, it is a call to imitate the profound humility and selflessness of Jesus Christ.

2:5—Paul exhorted the Philippians to have the same “mind” (identical term used in v. 2) that was evidenced by Jesus. As Paul explained the nature of this mindset, he gave an exposition of deep theological truth about the nature of Jesus as the Godman (=undiminished deity plus perfect humanity united in one person).

2:6-11—This passage contains important terms that relate to and explain both the deity of Jesus and the humanity of Jesus.

Jesus, as the second person of the Trinity, enjoyed all of the benefits of being coequal, coeternal and coessential with the Father and the Spirit. But He chose not to “grasp,” selfishly hold on to those privileges; rather, He “made himself nothing” [or “emptied Himself,” “stripped Himself” (*kenoo*)] of His glory as God (see Matthew 17 on the Transfiguration) and added to His deity the “form [*morphe*] of a servant,” born in the “likeness of men,” the essential nature and attributes of humanity. [The term “likeness” suggests similarity but difference, in that Jesus was fully human yet without sin—see Hebrews 4:15.] In addition, in the incarnation, Jesus was in “human form” (*schema*), which emphasized His outward appearance as a human being.

The condescension of Jesus in the incarnation included not only His birth, through which He became the Godman, but also His death—death on the horrific cross at Calvary. He did so in obedience to the Father. There is no greater model of humility or selflessness than Jesus the Godman dying on the cross for us.

As a consequence of Jesus’ obedience and humility, detailed in vv. 5-8, the Father “exalted” Him. This exaltation refers to Jesus’ resurrection, ascension and glorification at the Father’s right hand as the Lord of the universe, fulfilling Isaiah 52:13, Psalm 2, Acts 2:33 and Hebrews 1:3. In addition, the Father bestowed on Jesus “the name that is above every name,” which refers to His person and His position of dignity and honor as LORD (Yahweh), the Sovereign Ruler of Creation.

This exaltation will have two results:

- At the name of Jesus every knee “should bow in heaven, on earth and under the earth”—an act of reverence, respect, adoration and submission involving the entire cosmos of God, fulfilling Isaiah 45:23
- “every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father”—For holy angels and redeemed humanity, this confession will be one of worship and praise. For fallen humanity and fallen angels, it will be a confession of absolute submission to the Sovereign Lord. The pattern of this clause resembles 1 Corinthians 15:23-28, where the Father gives Jesus messianic dominion over all creation and then at the completion of the millennial kingdom, Jesus gives that kingdom over to the Father, who then ushers in the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21-22).

When will these two results be fulfilled? At the establishment of the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Questions:

1. Paul calls for unity among the Philippians, but ties that unity to a spirit of servanthood and humility. In your relationships with others, are you selfish or selfless? What does a spirit of selflessness look like in your life, in your relationships?
2. Memorize the definition, “Jesus is undiminished deity plus perfect humanity united in one person.” This is an essential doctrinal truth that every Christian should know and defend.
3. Look for ways in your life to exhibit humility. Why is Jesus such a perfect model for us in this virtue of humility?
4. Jesus also exhibited a profound obedience to the Father. In what ways? How is His obedience an inspiration for you to walk in loving obedience with the Father?
5. Make a list of ways in which you can exhibit humility and obedience in your life.