

5. The greatest example of humility

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None of us was born with humility. If that is the case, a baby would not cry in the middle of night because of his dirty or hungry. Rather he would think in his crib, "Mommy and daddy are tired from their work. Although I am hungry and dirty, I will just wait for them until in the morning." Do they do that? No way.

Why? Because we were born with selfishness and pride. Unless everything and everybody is centered around us, we wouldn't be happy. Before we came to know Jesus as our Savior, we were no different. Some non-believers are diligent in helping others. But in deep down in their hearts, they, too, are doing that to fulfill their own desires to make themselves feel good.

What would be the opposite words for selfishness and pride? Unselfishness, humility or submissiveness. Who would be the one portrayed these attributes best in the human history? That would be none other than Jesus Christ two thousand years ago. When we combine these three words – unselfishness, humility and submissiveness as one word, it would be Christlikeness.

However, a person with humility and submissive mind doesn't mean that he is at the beck and call of everybody else or that he is a "religious doormat" for everybody to use.

A. UNITY, NOT UNIFORMITY

Philippians 2:1-4 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Is there any consolation in Christ? Of course there is! Every Christian should know what it is to have Jesus console their soul. Luke 2:25 says that one of the titles for Jesus as the Messiah is the Consolation of Israel.

Luke 2:25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

By encouraging the Philippians to be "of the same mind," is Paul saying that there's no room for individuality and disagreement in the church, that we should all think, dress, and act the same? Not at all. It's unity he's pleading for, not uniformity. And there's a big difference.

Unity comes from within. It's the result of an inner attitude. Uniformity, on the other hand, comes from without, the forced product of external pressures.

Apostle Paul graciously offers his wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit to us about how to have unity in Christ in v3-4.

1) Don't let anything be done through selfish ambition or conceit.

Much of what we do is not done out of love for others, but out of our own desire for "advancement" or "selfish ambition". Not all ambition is selfish ambition. There can be good ambition to glorify God and serve Him with everything we have.

Conceit is thinking too highly of one's self, of having an excessive self-interest or self-preoccupation. It could be more literally translated "vain glory."

2) Let each of us esteem others better than ourselves.

This is completely contradictory to the attitude of the world.

3) Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Paul doesn't tell us that it is wrong to look out for our own interests, but that we should not only look out for our own interests.

B. THE HUMBLED CHRIST

Philippians 2:5-7 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

To highlight Jesus' lowliness of mind, Paul first reveals the height of glory the pre-existent Savior enjoyed in heaven.

'Being' is from the ancient Greek verb 'huparchein', which describes that which a man "is" in his very essence and which cannot be changed.

'In the form of God' is the outward expression of the inward divine nature. As the second member of the Godhead, Jesus is coexistent, coeternal, and coequal with God. His life didn't begin in Mary's womb. The only thing that began within Mary was the visible manifestation of the Son of God. For the first time, God became flesh and blood.

The idea behind this is that the pre-incarnate Christ already possessed equality with the Father and resolved not to cling to it in the incarnation. It wasn't that Jesus was trying to achieve equality with the Father. He already had it, and chose not to cling to it.

Jesus, did not, and could not, become "less God" in the incarnation. No deity was subtracted, even though he did renounce some of the rights of deity. Rather humanity was added to His nature.

Philippians 2:8 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.

Many people are willing to serve others if it does not cost them anything. But if there is a price to pay, they suddenly lose interest. Jesus "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". His was not the death of a martyr but the death of a Savior. He willingly laid down His life for the sins of the world.

Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. The person with a submissive mind and humility does not avoid sacrifice. He lives for the glory of God and for the good of others. And if paying a price will honor Christ and help others, he is willing to do it.

The test of the submissive mind is not just how much we are willing to take in terms of suffering, but how much we are willing to give in terms of sacrifice.

It is one of the paradoxes of the Christian life that the more we give, the more we receive; the more we sacrifice, the more God blesses. This is why the submissive mind leads to joy; it makes us more like Christ.

C. THE EXALTED CHRIST

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Our Lord's exaltation began with His resurrection. When men buried the body of Jesus, that was the last thing any human hands did to Him. From that point on, it was God who worked. Men had done their worst to the Savior, but God exalted Him and honored Him. Men gave Him names of ridicule and slander, but the Father gave Him a glorious name.

His exaltation included sovereign authority over all creatures in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. All will bow to Him.

Isaiah 45:23 I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath.

Notice that in Isaiah, it is to Yahweh that all knees bow and tongues confess. In Philippians it is to Jesus, showing that Jesus is Yahweh.

This portion of the Scripture is great to encounter the Jehovah's Witness, because it shows so much about the deity of Jesus Christ.

One day all will bow before Him and confess that He is Lord. Of course, it is possible for people to bow and confess today, and receive His gift of salvation. To bow before Him now means salvation and to bow before Him at the judgment means condemnation.

D. WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION?

Philippians 2:12-13 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; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

"Work out your salvation"? Is Paul losing it? Is he urging the Philippians to work hard to earn their salvation? Not at all. Remember that he is talking to the believers. He is exhorting his readers to build on the gift of eternal life that God has already given them. How? Walking in obedience just like Christ did. Then God will work in them, through them and for them. This is the balance we receive when we have our personal obedience and divine empowerment as the ultimate purpose...His "good pleasure" is achieved.

E. HOW TO BE THE LIGHT BEARERS OF CHRIST

Philippians 2:14-18 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 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, 16 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. 17 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. 18 For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

Apostle Paul could not make it any more simpler than this:

- 1) Stop complaining since God allows us to be here and now.
- 2) Be blameless and above reproach.
- 3) Follow the Word of God.

God's goal for His children is not that we retreat from this world into secluded communities of our own, nor we blend into the world so much that we darken our witness. The balance lies in boldly reflecting Christ's light where we find ourselves. Let's remember when we burn up our energy in grumbling and complaining, we won't have anything left over to shine His light in the midst of the dark world.

F. TIMOTHY COMMENDED

Philippians 2:19-24 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. 23 Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

When Paul sends Timothy, he sends his best, a man who showed a pastor's heart, that has greater concern for his sheep than himself. Paul recognizes just how rare this kind of heart is when he observes.

G. EPAPHRODITUS PRAISED

Philippians 2:25-30 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; 26 since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; 30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

Epaphroditus was never mentioned again anywhere other than the Book of Philippians. But he obviously was a great man of God for Paul to dedicate a good portion of his letter to him.

Epaphroditus came to Paul as a messenger with a gift of financial support from the Philippians, and became sick while he was with Paul.

Paul gives these important titles to Epaphroditus. He was a man Paul valued as a partner in the work of ministry. 'Brother' speaks of a bond to be enjoyed. 'Worker' speaks of a job to be done. 'Soldier' speaks of a battle to be fought. It is precious and rare when God grants to us relationships which operate on each of these three levels.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) Humility is not thinking less of ourselves, but thinking ourselves less.

We should not be obsessed with ourselves, but obsessed with God.

2) Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.

The person with a submissive mind and humility does not avoid sacrifice. He lives for the glory of God and the good of others.

3) We need to remember when we burn up our energy in grumbling and complaining, we won't have anything left over to shine His light in the midst of the dark world.