

Philippians 2:1-11

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Main Idea

In Philippians 2:1-11 Paul challenges the believer to be humble by putting others first by following the example of Christ.

Outline

A. Paul's Challenge to Humility – 2:1-4

- a. United in the Spirit – 2:1-2
- b. The challenge of Humility – 2:3-4

B. The Greatest example of Humility is Christ – 2:5-11

- a. Christ's humility displayed in lowliness in mind – vs. 5, 6
- b. Christ's humility displayed in lowliness of position – vs. 7, 8
- c. Christ's humility displayed in glorifying God – vs. 9-11

Introduction

Have you ever been at this point? You show up to the church to help out with an event. You are taking time out of your day and your busy schedule is being set aside to help out with this event, and you walk through the front doors and everything changes, nothing goes as you had planned. As the leader gets up to start directing people and gives out some jobs, with

descriptions of how they should be done, murmuring starts among the crowd of workers. People start saying, "I am not going to do that." You start thinking, "Me... I am too good for that job, he must be crazy." The whole day is miserable because instead of doing what you thought you were going to be doing, you are doing the job that no one wanted. Humility, is one of the hardest things to grasp, implement, and to get a hold of. Paul challenged and commanded the believers in Philippi to be humble. Why? Because one of the fruits of humility is unity, the church as a whole needs to be of one mind and one spirit, believers as individuals need to place others before themselves. This is easier said than done. Remember the situation stated above, the event was not for you, but for others, and yet all you could think about was yourself. Humility calls each and every believer to a different life style. But what does this humility look like? Christ is our example in which humility was and is lived out. In Philippians 2:1-11 Paul challenges the believer to be humble by putting others first by following the example of Christ.

Historical Context

The Author of the book has been widely accepted as being Pauline in nature, and for the most part has always been attributed to being one of Paul's letters.¹ The history of the town to which it was written goes as far back as 356 B.C. In 356 B.C. King Philip of Macedonia took this town and expanded it, renaming it Philippi. The Romans captured the city in 168 B.C. and in 42 B.C. It was then turned into a Roman Colony and a military outpost. If one was a citizen of this city, they were considered a Roman citizen, which gave them a number of special privileges. Due to the military being so prevalent in this city, it was not a trading hub, which affected the number of Jews that were in the city.² In Acts chapter 16, one reads of how Paul and Silas are

¹ Packer, J.I. ; Tenney, Merrill Chapin ; White, William: *Nelson's Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995, S. 600

² Wilkinson, Bruce ; Boa, Kenneth: *Talk Thru the Bible*. Nashville : T. Nelson, 1983, S. 406

beaten, and then thrown into jail. Towards the end of the chapter it is stated that the jailer and his whole house accept Christ as their savior. Paul first came to Philippi about eleven years before writing this book, in which the date could then be set around 62 A.D., although in Nelsons complete Book of Bible Maps and charts it states, “More recently, however, some scholars have suggested that Philippians was written about A.D. 55 during Paul’s ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19; 20) or about A.D. 56–61 during his imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 24–26).³

Literary Context

In this portion of scripture we find the great theological principle of the kenosis of Christ. This principle is based of the Greek verb in verse 2:7, but even though it is important to understand should not become the focal point of what Paul was trying to convey to the reader. The main point in this passage is not the kenosis of Christ but more so if it may be said the kenosis of the believer, that is the humility of the believer. In chapter one Paul greets and shares of his afflictions have promoted the Gospel, and exalted the Lord. He then shifts at the end of the chapter to the one who is being afflicted. It is to the afflicted that Paul gives the challenge of having the mind of Christ in that we too should be humble.

Interpretative Questions

Verse 1 – Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion

³Thomas Nelson Publishers: *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts : Old and New Testaments*. Rev. and updated ed. Nashville, Tenn. : Thomas Nelson, 1996

Questions: *What is the “therefore” connecting? Are the encouragement, love, fellowship, affection and compassion limited? Is fellowship of the Spirit with the Spirit or through the Spirit with other people? Is it possible that none of the things are found in Christ?*

Verse 2 – make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Questions: *Are we to seek to make Paul’s joy complete? Was Paul being serious when he says make his joy complete? How are we united in spirit?*

Verse 3 – Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

Questions: *Does this mean that we can do nothing for ourselves? Does everything that we do have to have a point behind it?*

Verse 4 – do not merely look out for you own personal interests, but also for the interests of others

Questions: *Does this mean that even when you are in trouble or danger you cannot look out for yourself? What is he talking about the in regards to interests?*

Verse 5 – Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

Questions: *Are we to always be looking to Christ as our example? Will Christ help us meet his example?*

Verse 6 – who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Questions: *Was it in just for that he existed of God? Does this mean he is not equal with God?*

Verse 7 – but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men

Questions: *Did he give up everything? Who is he in reference to? Was he really a bondservant?*

Verse 8 – Being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Questions: *Did he have an option of not going to the cross? Was this obedience a one-time deal?*

Verse 9 – For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

Questions: *Can you be humble and exalted at the same time? How is it above every name?*

Verse 10 – so that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Questions: *Does this mean literally every knee shall bow? What is under the earth in reference to?*

Verse 11 – and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Questions: *When will this take place? What is to the Glory of God the Father?*

Paul's Challenge to Humility – 2:1-4

United in Spirit 2:1,2. Paul just got done stating the possibility the reader may be experiencing the same conflict as him, to where he then goes on to state if there any encouragement in Christ. Of course Paul is not suggesting that there is not encouragement in Christ for, just a few verses earlier he states that for him to live is Christ. Christ was everything in Paul's life and this includes encouragement, and the same as follows for consolation of love, fellowship of the Spirit, and affection and compassion. The word encouragement is *paraklesis*, which can mean: comfort that which affords comfort or refreshment. For the believer who is facing difficulty refreshment and comfort can be found in Christ. Paul continues on to state, "make my joy complete..." Was Paul really concerned with his own joy? Paul was more the less stating the it would bring him great joy; he was not say that is joy is more important then the joy of the believer. It would be a wrong interpretation to say that today the believer can still bring joy to Paul, but doing what he is about to state. What is it though that would bring him great joy? Unity is what Paul says would bring him joy. When believers are unified in mind, and love, and purpose it is joyful. The problem is that we focus to many times on one aspect of this. We are only unified in mind, because we all disagree, or we are unified in love and we become focused on ourselves, or we are unified in purpose and that is staying right were we are as believers. Paul is not say choose one but instead we are to have all of them.

The challenge to Humility 2:3,4. In verse three the parameters for the following verses are set. "Do nothing from selfishness..." this very statement goes against the very thing that makes us human. The normal thing to do is to only think of you, but is that what we are to do, are we only concerned with your own well-being? In light of living of for the Gospels sake

others have to come first. One cannot think of him when it comes to sharing the Gospel, when it comes to furthering the Gospel. In every aspect of the believer's life we are to conduct ourselves worthy of the Gospel (Philippians 1:27), and we cannot do this if we are selfish. More important in verse three has the idea/meaning of holding one higher than oneself, what a great picture of selflessness. Picture this, two people are on one side of a wall and on the other side is the glory of God. The only way that one of them can see it is for one of them to lower himself and place himself as a stepping stone so that the other person can see over the wall. That is the idea here, placing one higher than you. Regarding someone else as more important is crucial when it comes to being united in mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit and intent in the same purpose. Verse 4 expands the thoughts of verse three. Being others minded is the idea of humility. Warren W. Wiersbe says this in his book *Be Joyful*;

“The Humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself; he simply does not think of himself at all! (I think Andrew Murray said that) Humility is that grace that, when you know you have it, you have lost it. The truly humble person knows himself and accepts himself (Rom. 12:3). He yields himself to Christ to be a servant, to use what he is and has for the glory of God and the good of others. ‘Others’ is the key idea in this chapter (vv. 3-4); the believer's eyes are turned away from himself and focused on the needs of others.” (Pages 58, 59)

The Greatest example of Humility is Christ – 2:5-11

Christ's humility displayed in lowliness in mind vs. 5, 6. In verse 5 the best example is given of all, Christ. When it comes to Humility, no one displays it better than Christ. It is in the following verses that we see such a great example but also some important theological truths are

stated. In verse five we are point to look towards Christ as our example. What type of attitude is that Christ displayed, which we are to have? In verse six it states that Christ existed in the form of God. This goes agrees with John 1:1 in that the word was with God, and was God. This is showing that Jesus Christ was divine. He was and is the Son of God. He was and is God. But here in this verse we find proof for the doctrine of the trinity, the Godhead three in one. Christ although existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God that is God the father. Christ as God, but not equal with God, this is a part of the mystery of the trinity. But this also shows a whole mindset that Christ had. Not that he was not God or not equal to, but instead He had the mindset of being lower than God the Father. Christ was humble in the way that he viewed himself.

Christ's humility displayed in lowliness of position vs.7, 8. It is here in these verses that the Kenosis Of Christ is found. This doctrine although is important, is not the main point of the passage. Charles C. Ryrie address this doctrine in his Systematic Theology:

“Notice that whatever the emptying involved, it was self-imposed. No one forced Christ to come into this world and eventually die on a cross as our Sin-bearer. Other uses of the verb empty are found in Roman 4:14 (void); 1 Corinthians 1:17 (void); 9:15; 2 Corinthians 9:3: but they do not contribute to the understanding of this passage...The movement of the passage starts with Christ's preincarnate glory and proceeds to His shameful death on the cross. Obviously, in order to die, He had to become man. In order to do that he had to empty Himself of His preincarnate position, yet without diminishing the Person. There was no way He could become a man and remain in the position He had in His preincarnate state. But He could and did become a man while retaining the complete attributes of His preincarnate Person, that is, of full Deity...In the kenosis

Christ emptied Himself of retaining and exploiting His status in the Godhead and took on Humanity in order to die.” (Pages 300-3001)

Christ’s humility displayed in glorifying God vs. 9-11. In verse 9 it states, “For this reason...” When the reason is actually stated in verse 11, “to the glory of God the Father.” It can be read this way, “For this reason to the glory of God the Father, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name...” The name of Jesus Christ does not bring glory or recognition to himself but instead to God the Father. “At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow...” The choice is left up to the person either you bow in submission to Him here in this life time or you will bow before the Great White Throne Judgment stated in Revelation 20:11-15. At the Great White throne Judgment this verse will be fulfilled in that even those who do not accept Jesus Christ will bow before him when they receive their judgment. This could also be in reference when it talks about those under the earth that is those who do not bow their knee in submission before Christ here in this lifetime. One day all will proclaim that Christ is Lord whether they want to or don’t.

Application

So how does this apply to the believer of today? Be Humble!!! The example has been set, Christ Jesus. Be Humble as Christ was Humble. Be humble in the way that you think about yourself. Never think that you are too good, to do a certain ministry or Job at an event at your church. Be the first one to do the job that no one will do, practice humility. Be humble in position, just as Christ lowered himself to our level, be humble and at times lower yourself the level of a child for the Gospel's sake. Be Humble in that if a teen needs help, Humble yourself from your adult status and connect with them for the Gospel's sake. It is only when we as believers start practicing humility as Christ did will we be one in spirit, same in mind, and intent in one purpose. The question then is this: Will you start practicing Humility?

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