

Gospel Humility

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- [0 : 00] Now, while our boys and girls are heading back to their places, we can also be turning in our Bibles to the book of Philippians.
- Philippians chapter 2, and we're going to look at verses 1 to 11 together in God's words. Philippians 2, and the first 11 verses.
- Let's hear God's word together. Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in Spirit and of one mind.
- Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others.
- In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.
- [1 : 22] Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.
- Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- Amen. This is God's word. Now, let's once again come before God in prayer. Let's pray together. Our Father, we give you thanks for what we have just read, of the humility of Jesus in coming into this earth to become one of us, to lay down his life for us, to die on the cross for our sins before being exalted to the place of all glory and honour.
- Lord, we pray that as we see the pattern of Jesus' life, that you would help us to be a humble people, that you would help us to be ready to help other people and to sacrifice for them.
- Father, as we think about being built into a church, we pray that you would enable us to be having the time and the energy and the will to use our gifts, to use our opportunities, to help other people, to serve others in the name of Jesus.
- [3 : 22] Lord, we pray that you would establish our faith on your word of truth. We ask that you would make us attentive listeners, that we would allow your word to do its work in our hearts, that it would comfort us, that it would challenge us, that it would rebuke and correct and teach us, so that we might live according to your righteous will.
- Lord, we pray that you would have soft hearts whenever we gather around your word together, to hear your word read and preached.
- And we pray that you would give us soft hearts when we read our Bibles alone or with others. And we ask that you would help us to apply those truths that we learn to our lives.

Help us to meditate deeply on your truth, so that it would change our hearts and our will more and more. Lord, we give you thanks for the country in which we live.

And we thank you for the peace that we enjoy. Lord, we thank you for the peace that we live. Again, we thank you for the freedom that we have to gather together to worship. Lord, we thank you for the relative security that we have, even as we acknowledge turbulent times and times of crisis.

[5 : 02] Lord, we pray for our government today. We pray recognizing the struggles that continue, the need for wisdom that there is, for guidance as to how to steer our country through an energy crisis and a food price crisis.

Lord, we pray especially for the ability of government to care and to help for those who are the most poor and weak and vulnerable within our society.

Lord, we ask for compassion and for justice. Lord, we pray thanking you for the freedom that we have to worship and to live out our faith without fear of extremes of persecution.

Lord, we pray for the peace that we have to worship and to live out our faith in our faith. Lord, we continue to pray for our government towards that end, that we might be able to live with that peace, that the gospel might be able to flourish.

Lord, as we give thanks for the freedom that we have, we want to pray for the nations that don't have such freedom, where there is persecution and where there is opposition.

[6 : 30] Lord, we give you thanks that Jesus is a savior for all nations, that your word declares it wasn't enough that he would just be a light to the Jewish people, but he was to be a light for the world.

And so we thank you for wherever the gospel is spreading today. Lord, we pray for the church in hard places, where it is illegal to meet publicly, where to confess that you're a Christian could mean the loss of everything, including one's own life.

Lord, as we see the unfolding scenes in Iran and Ukraine and Russia, as we see troubled places, Lord, we recognize that Jesus is the only solid hope for the world.

And so we pray that you would protect your persecuted church, give them a solid and eternal hope, give them the ability to love you and to love even their enemies.

And may you turn hearts and minds towards Jesus as they see and hear the good news as it's lived out among your people.

[7 : 57] Lord, we pray for the nations to be glad in confessing Jesus Christ as Lord. Lord, help us to be prayerful.

Help us to be doing our part in supporting mission around the world. But we also pray that you would give us that boldness and that courage that we need, that love for the Lord Jesus and that love for other people that we need to be able to share good news in our communities, in our families, with our friends.

Lord, help us, we pray, so that you would be glorified among us and in every nation. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, let's sing together again a section from 119.

We're going to sing from verses 105 to 112. And again, we'll stand as we sing. Your word's a lamp that shines before my feet.

It is a light that guides me on my way. The oath that I have taken, I've confirmed, that all your righteous laws I will obey.

[9 : 42] O Lord, you know that I have suffered much. Preserve my life according to your word.

Accept the willing praises of my mouth. Instruct me in your righteous laws, O Lord.

I will not disregard your holy law, though constantly my life is in my hands.

Although the wicked set us near for me, I have not left the path of your commands.

Your statutes are my heritage always, And every day they make my heart rejoice.

[11 : 25] My heart is set on keeping your decrees.

And to the very end, they are my choice.

Now, can we turn once again in our Bibles to Luke chapter 18.

Luke chapter 18, and we're going to read from verse 9 to verse number 34. We're going to be thinking this morning about verses 9 to 14, thinking about gospel humility, but we'll read this whole section.

To some who are confident of their own righteousness and look down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable. Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

[12 : 34] The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, God, I thank you that I am not like other people, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. A certain ruler asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[13 : 39] Why do you call me good? Jesus answered, No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony.

Honor your father and mother. All these I have kept since I was a boy, he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.

Then come, follow me. When he heard this, he became very sad because he was very wealthy. Jesus looked at him and said, How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. Those who heard this asked, Who then can be saved? Jesus replied, What is impossible with man is possible with God.

Peter said to him, We have left all we had to follow you. Truly I tell you, Jesus said to them, No one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and in the age to come eternal life.

[14 : 47] Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles.

They will mock him, insult him, and spit on him. They will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again. The disciples did not understand any of this.

Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about. Amen. So we're thinking about humility and how that connects with the gospel.

Let me begin with an image, just to say that the church is to be like an accident, an emergency waiting room, not like an interview waiting room.

When we gather together week by week, we recognize that we all need help. We all stand in need of mercy and healing and wholeness.

[15 : 49] We come as a waiting room of sinners and sufferers looking to God, looking to Jesus for help. That's very different to the image that you find with an interview waiting room, where everybody is doing their best to put on their very best self, carrying the CV of our own personal achievements, perhaps eyeing up the competition in the room, ready to show that we deserve a place more than the next person.

John Stott once said that humility is another word for honesty. So we've been thinking for the last six weeks or so about the gospel and how time and again we've seen the gospel reveals our problem.

In the gospel we discover that by nature we are slaves to sin. Indeed we are dead in our sin and we deserve the wages of sin, which is death, which is eternal, separation from God and all that is good.

But we've also heard the good news. We've heard the good news of God's heart of love towards sinners and sufferers. We've heard of God saving by grace through sending his son Jesus.

To be our savior. We've heard of that great exchange that has taken place on the cross where Jesus takes the judgment and the wrath that we deserve and he gives us his righteousness and the glory that he deserves and all of that as a free gift.

[17 : 20] So that God's church should be a place of deep humility. Every Christian heart should be a place of deep humility.

Church culture should always look different to what we see in the world. And when Christians and churches live with pride and when we're boasting and we're criticizing and judging and we're comparing and competing, there's something desperately sad about that.

There's something so opposite to the character and the pattern of Jesus in that. And so we're going to look today at this parable, Luke 18, verse 9 to 14, which shows us that the way up in God's economy is to go down.

It's those who humble themselves who will be exalted. And of course, we read in Philippians 2 and we saw that was the pattern of Jesus' life as savior.

In his coming, he humbled himself. In his taking the place of a servant, in his being obedient to death on the cross, Jesus at every point in his life humbling himself and then God exalted him.

[18 : 37] Resurrection, ascension to the Father's right hand. So let's use this parable of Jesus to consider gospel humility. And let's think, first of all, in verse 9 about the problem.

So boys and girls, there's a first point on your worksheet, the problem of pride and prejudice. Look at how it's put here, to some who are confident of their own righteousness and look down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable.

Sometimes we don't know who the audience is that Jesus is telling the story to, but here we do. It's a group who are always confident. Confident that they are self-righteous.

That they are, in effect, saying, I, by myself, I'm good enough for God. And they are always despising those who are not like them, those who don't make the grave.

Most likely, the audience is made up of Pharisees. The Pharisees, with their badge of honour, we keep the law better than everybody else. We keep ourselves separate from the bad people better than anybody else.

[19 : 40] We are the great and the good, and God should be so happy to have us. The problem with that audience, and the problem with self-righteous pride, is a wrong view of goodness.

When Jesus spoke to the rich young ruler, he reminded him, no one is good except God alone. Pride compares with other people.

Well, I'm better than that person, I'm better than that person. When we're invited to compare against God, God's perfection, God's perfect standard, that should humble us. So religious pride always has this problem.

It's always going to have too high a view of self. I can, by myself, live to please God. And we'll always also have too low a view of God's holiness, too low a view of personal sin, and too low a view of other people.

We'll always tend towards prejudice. How does this pride and prejudice show itself today? How does it show itself in us? Do we recognize a tendency sometimes to compare and to compete, where we're boasting about our own achievements or performance, where we build ourselves up, and in the process, we want to tear others down, where we have a critical or judgmental spirit?

[21 : 02] Do we know that? Perhaps we find ourselves being puffed up in pride. Tim Keller, in his wonderful little book, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, uses the image of people with pride being like a big balloon.

Boys and girls, think about a big balloon that you've seen at a party, and you just know it's ready to pop at the least moment. When we are like that, when we are puffed up, what's true about us? We are empty at the center.

If we make life all about me rather than God, that is too small a center. That is not a good foundation to build on. And if we don't have God at the center of our lives, our lives will also be very fragile.

We don't have that security that we know that we belong to God, that we are in right relationship to Him, and so we're going to feel every time we get snubbed or ignored, we're going to struggle to enjoy the success of other people, we're often going to feel deflated.

This pride and this prejudice can also lead to us living in the wrong courtroom, where what matters most to us is public opinion. What are other people saying of me?

[22 : 13] What do other people think of me? Or living in the courtroom of personal opinion, where my whole life and identity is bound up with what do I think about myself, and we forget, what does God think about me?

The problem of a proud and self-reliant heart is a deadly one. Jesus tells the parable against it because it goes against the pattern of the gospel. What have we seen week after week as we think about the gospel?

We've seen that we are so bad because of our sin, that we are so bad because of our pride that someone had to die for us. The sinless, spotless Lamb of God died for us.

We have seen time and again that our sin, our guilt, and our need is so great that we by ourselves could never earn God's salvation. But what we have seen is that Jesus came and He took the sin and death that we deserve and He gave us His righteousness and glory as a gift of grace.

And we're being led constantly to understand that all we have as a Christian comes from the mercy of God. So the only boasting we should ever make is to boast about the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ as Paul encourages us.

[23 : 28] So even as we consider the audience of the parable, we are invited to hear the call of Jesus today to turn from our pride, that instinctive pride, and to trust in Him.

To receive His mercy, to find our identity from Him, and to ask Him to be our Lord and our Saviour. Now let's get to the parable and let's get to the two prayers that we find here in verses 10 to 13.

Again, we find a setting for our story. Boys and girls, this is the second part of the worksheet. The setting for the story, verse 10, is the temple. So this is taking place in the context of public worship.

So we can imagine people sitting across the aisle from each other, but these two figures could not be more different as they gather for worship. There is, first of all, the Pharisee.

The Pharisee who was admired by everyone, part of the religious elite. Let's notice a few things about how he sees the world. First, what's his view of God?

[24 : 36] God. It's very interesting to look in verse 11 at the beginning of his prayer. Sounds like we're about to hear a psalm of praise. God, I thank you. But instead of, God, I thank you that you are holy and good and merciful and righteous and compassionate.

God, I thank you that I'm not like others. He glances briefly at God, but he stares at himself. God, I thank you that I'm so great.

Sounds really ugly, doesn't it, when it's put there so boldly. What about his view of self? Just to hear his prayer reminds us that for this man, as Jesus pictures him, I, me, is right at the center.

I thank you that I'm not like other people. I fast. I give a tenth of all I get. He compares with pride. I'm better than that person, better than that person.

Here's my religious record of achievement. What's his view of others? He doesn't hide his disgust of them, does he?

[25 : 44] In his prayer, he's actively pointing fingers. God, I thank you. I'm not like that tax collector over there. And his posture says it all. He stood by himself. I'm a cut above everybody else.

If we were to ask what's his view of his need, we would have no answer. He doesn't feel any need, certainly nothing that he asks God for, except that he comes expecting a reward.

I've lived this way. I've done this thing. Therefore, I expect reward. Augustine, in his day, said if the church was like a hospital waiting room, the man in this parable is sitting there in the waiting room saying, well, I'm glad my disease isn't that bad as that person.

I'm glad my sickness isn't like that person. And he never talks to the doctor and he never gets help. In the sickness of sin, he never gets help.

He is so full of himself. Think about our catechism. He cannot see that he does not love God. He cannot see that he is not loving his neighbor.

[26 : 55] He does not recognize that he is actually far from God, even as he comes to the temple to worship. He has a very deadly blind spot.

If you cycle in the city, you probably notice on the back of buses or lorries those warnings to cyclists to beware of a driver's blind spot. There is danger.

If you find yourself in the blind spot, well, when it comes to God, there are some spiritual blind spots. If we fail to see our sin, if we fail to acknowledge God's great holiness, if we fail to acknowledge a need of mercy of Jesus as the Savior that we need, like this Pharisee, we stand in eternal danger.

And so we are invited out of pride and to humble trust in Jesus. Jesus, when he tells stories, likes to use contrasts.

So if the Pharisee shows us pride and a pride to avoid, let's see the tax collector in his humility that we should embrace and practice. So let's think about this tax collector.

[28 : 09] Who is the tax collector? Well, the people in Jesus' day, instantly they would know this is the villain of the piece. He's one of the lowest of the low. He's one of the bad guys in society. So we need to ask the question, why has Jesus made a bad guy the hero of the story?

Why does Jesus often do this? Think about the story of the good Samaritan who shows love to his neighbor. Think about the wild younger son who receives the welcome from the father.

Why does Jesus choose to do that? To show us that grace is amazing. To show us that grace is shocking. That actually grace is outrageous in the way it comes to us.

Here is Jesus in the flow of Scripture saying anyone can be saved. They choose the way of humility. Even the lowest of the low.

Even the tax collector. Now let's think about this man. Let's think again about his view of God. Look at verse 13. The tax collector stood at a distance.

[29 : 21] He would not even look up to heaven. He has a proper sense of who God is. The holiness of God. The majesty of God. He knows that he has no natural right to approach God's mercy seat.

What's his view of himself? Look on at verse 13. How does he talk about himself? He talks about himself as a sinner. Or the sinner.

He's not busy looking around as a way to boast. Well at least I'm not as bad as that person. No he's looking in and he's looking up and he's comparing himself to God. In God's holy law.

What's his view of others? We're not told. Because he is doing business with God. He's not looking to judge and criticize.

Not looking to make himself feel good by making others seem worse. He understands God is holy. He understands he is the sinner. What's in the middle between God and the sinner?

[30 : 30] It's mercy isn't it? It's mercy. Have mercy on me. That's really significant language. In the temple this is temple language.

This is atonement language. This is an acknowledgement. I need a sacrifice to cover my sin. I need a substitute to take my place.

I need for one to turn away the wrath of God that I deserve to take it on himself. He understands the gospel. In this spiritual hospital he is looking to Christ.

Not to himself. for the cure that he needs. He needs mercy. We all need mercy. Where is mercy to be found?

For sinful people. For suffering people. Mercy is found in Jesus. The humble savior. Look at verses 31 to 33. And we are reminded of the humility of Jesus as he predicts his death.

[31 : 34] A third time. As we are being reminded of Jesus in his humility coming as a suffering servant. Coming to give his life as a loving sacrifice.

Coming to be the sin bearing substitute. Coming to pay the penalty of sin in full for his people. For all who would trust in him. All the way back in 1779 John Newton wrote a diary entry.

He was aware on that day I imagine every day of his sin and of his guilt. And that prompted him to write this. He said I may I must I do mention the atonement.

I have sinned but Christ has died. There's mercy. I have sinned but Christ has died. That we might enjoy mercy.

Friends, our daily diary entry should be Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of which I am the chief. The gospel, when it does its work in our hearts will always serve to kill pride and to cause us with humility to look to Jesus our humble saviour.

[32 : 57] Let's move from there to the verdict how this story finishes. Verse 14. Luke in his gospel loves the reversal theme.

And so we read I tell you that this man the tax collector rather than the other went home justified before God. Showing us the way up is down in the gospel.

So there's this picture of these two men they've been at the temple and they've been in the place of worship and they're going home and they're going home to two very different verdicts in God's law court.

This Pharisee who had the view well I'm good enough I'm a religious person I try my very best to keep the law and I certainly keep it better than others God's verdict on him he was not justified.

He's not in right standing with God. Why? Because he never sought God's mercy. He presumed that he could please God by himself and he never looked to God for mercy.

[34 : 16] To ask the question why should God accept me is to ask one of the most important questions we ever could. How do we answer that question is equally vital.

If we answer that question God should accept me because of my efforts because of my morality because I come to church because I read my Bible because I try and be a good person those answers miss the point.

Those answers miss God's grace. the only answer is because Jesus because Jesus loved me because Jesus died for me because Jesus paid the price for my sin.

That's the only basis for our acceptance. The tax collector who prayed God have mercy he was the one who was justified.

He humbled himself before God and he was the one who would be exalted. He came to the accident and emergency room in his sickness and in his distress.

[35 : 30] He asked the doctor for the help that he desperately needed and he received the cure. Humility coming to Jesus is the way to find the cure from the sickness of sin.

The way to be right with God the way to healing and wholeness is not entrusting in ourselves it's entrusting in Jesus.

So the tax collector and the Pharisee teach us about humility about humility in the gospel. Now as we finish three lessons for us to begin to think about when it comes to gospel humility.

One for our heads something to believe something for our heart something for our hands a point of action. So first of all for our head we are Philippians 2 called to have the mind of Christ.

We are called to this humble way of thinking and to do that according to Philippians 2 what we need to do is we need to fix our mind on our humble Christ.

[36 : 49] We need always to have our mind fixed on him the one who gave up privilege to rescue us. The one who humbled himself to become one of us.

The one who gladly became an obedient servant for us. The one who in love died to save guilty people like us. And when our mind is fixed on him that's when God by his grace and by his spirit is able to bring an end to the selfish ambition.

The end to the self interest. This is where the beginning comes to value others above yourselves. Gospel humility begins with having the mind of Christ by having our minds fixed on Christ.

The second thing, to think about what we need in our hearts, we need to believe the gospel. And when we truly believe the gospel and as it transforms us, we recognize that as we reflect on what Jesus has done for us, it is impossible to have pride at the foot of the cross.

There is a wonderful fact for us to treasure that should always humble us. That Jesus loved me and gave himself for me.

[38 : 22] There is also a wonderful truth for us to treasure about Jesus right now. That Jesus who humbled himself to become one of us, to die in our place for our sins, he is now exalted as the Lord of glory.

He rules and reigns in heaven. And that's where our hope of salvation is found. That God exalted him and gave him the name above every name.

That at the name of Jesus every knee would bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. We need to believe the gospel for our own sense of identity and security.

To remember every day that in God's law court the verdict on your life is already in if you're trusting in Jesus.

We need to relive that reality that in Christ I am loved, I am welcomed, I am accepted. When I'm tempted to pride and despair, when I'm tempted to become anxious about how people view me, here's where security is found, here's where our identity rests, here's how we can live with humble confidence as we remember that in Jesus God's verdict on our life is already in.

[39 : 44] And then something for our hands, we are called to follow Jesus' pattern of humility. That begins with what we've been thinking about, since Christ did that for me, since he humbled himself for me, surely there is nothing too low for me to do, or for you to do.

There is no sacrifice that we can make for others that will ever compare with the greatness of Jesus' humble sacrifice. The gospel says that Jesus was humble so that you and I could be humble too, so that you and I could live our lives making the gospel seem good and beautiful and true as we love others, as we sacrifice for our others, as we put the interests of others ahead of our own.

So this week, can you and I find one person to sacrifice for in order to put their interests first? Can we begin to put this gospel humility into practice in our lives?

gospel humility changes everything. It means we look across the aisle, not to compare and criticize and judge or boast, but in humility, we're looking for opportunities to extend the grace and mercy of God that we have come to discover to others.

We want to spend ourselves and to be ready to go low in order to lift others up. because we know that the church is a place of mercy and we have come to find mercy and we want to extend that mercy to others.

[41 : 37] Let's pray about that together. Lord, our God, once again, we want to praise you for the humility of the Lord Jesus, for his readiness to leave the glory of heaven, to be born of the Virgin Mary, to live a life of humble obedience, to suffer and die for us before being exalted once again to his Father's right hand.

Lord, we pray that the humility of Jesus would move us, would remove pride from us, would instill a humble confidence in us as we trust him as Savior and as we understand that we are justified as our faith is in him.

Help us to wrestle with pride and anxiety that we feel, prejudice that we can show. Help us to pursue this kind of humility.

for the sake of our church, for the sake of our community, for the sake of our world, to make the gospel look good and beautiful as we have discovered that it is.

Please help us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now we're going to close with a wonderful hymn to help us to reflect on these truths when I survey the wondrous cross.

[43 : 24] And let's again stand together to sing. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.