

# The necessity of humility in the service of Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] So this is Kevin, Kevin O'Connor, for those who don't know Kevin. A word of advice this morning, Kevin, beyond your best behaviour. Alright.

Your in-laws are here. My in-laws are here. Yeah, yeah, okay. Kevin O'Connor from Valancholic, what do you do day-to-day, do you job, work? Yeah, so, morning everybody.

I work for an IT services company. We rent out nerdy engineers to larger companies. And my job is sales. So I basically am in charge of getting people to order our engineers and keep them busy.

So that's what I do day-to-day. So I like it. And you're involved in your church in Valancholic. Yeah. What do you do there? Yeah, so I preach there from time to time. But kind of week-to-week, I've been involved in kind of leading worship and just helping out with whatever needs to be done.

So, yeah. I've been there. I was, since I've been a Christian, I've been in that church. So it's nice to feel at home in a church like that. That's brilliant.

[ 1 : 06 ] Well, we're going to pray for you and for us all this morning as you come to speak. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for your word to us that has been written, recorded, so that we can hear your voice to us today.

Thank you for your servants, for people like Kevin, for the gifts that you have given to him to explain and teach your word.

We pray that through Kevin, we would know you speaking to us today, Father. And that we would understand, not just with our minds, but that you would change our lives to be more like Christ.

So help us all today, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, good morning, everybody.

If you'd like to turn your Bibles to the book of Philippians, so following on from your previous weeks, we'll be looking at the book of Philippians, particularly chapter 2. So you can be turned there in your Bibles.

[ 2 : 22 ] Amen. Amen. It's very good to be with you again.

So thank you, Johnny and team, for the invitation to come back and to preach again. It's good to be with you. It's page 1179 in the Church Bibles as well. Page 1179.

And we'll be looking at Philippians chapter 2, verses 1 to 11. So Philippians chapter 2, verses 1 to 11. I'll read through it, and we'll pause for a moment of prayer, and then we'll get stuck in.

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 is to be with you, 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.

[ 3 : 45 ] In your relations with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in the very nature, who being in very nature, God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

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.

He, by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has 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 acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Father, we thank you so much for preserving your word for us, that we can read it in a language we understand. We pray, Father, that you would help us by your Holy Spirit.

Be with us, we pray, for our joy in you, Lord, and for your glory in us. Amen. I'm very excited this morning. I really love this text, and so I'm really glad I was assigned this text, and when I got the email from Johnny, I thought this is a good one to get.

[ 5 : 18 ] So I'm very, very glad. I'd like to state up front what we'll be thinking about, or what we'll be looking at in this passage. So, if you'd like to give titles to things, then the title I would put on this is The Necessity of Humility in the Service of Christ.

I'll say that again. The Necessity of Humility in the Service of Christ. Now, because you've been going through Philippians, those of you who have been here the past few weeks, you're probably very familiar with the background, but just in case, it's no harm to jog our memories and go over some of the background, the context of this letter, before we actually go into what Paul is saying. So let's have a quick look at just the background of it. So as I mentioned, the Apostle Paul wrote this letter, and he wrote it to the church in Philippi. Now, if you look in Acts chapter 16, we can read there that the Philippian church was the first church to be planted by Paul and his team in modern-day Europe.

It's in Greece, Philippi. You can look it up on Google Maps. There it is. It's in Greece. Paul wrote this letter famously while he was in prison. Now, where was he imprisoned?

We don't know for sure, but it seems our best guess is that it was in Rome. In fact, it's funny. If you Google Paul prison, whatever, there's actually a place where they say, this is the prison where he was imprisoned, and this is where St. Peter was also imprisoned, and there's like a little shrine there, and you can go and visit it.

[ 6 : 47 ] They don't know that's really the place, but I just think it's funny how oftentimes with these places, they go, that was the place where this happened, and they don't really know for sure. But anyway, beside the point. But regardless of where Paul was imprisoned, all Roman prisons of that day were pretty horrible places to be.

They were nothing like today's modern prisons at all. They were poorly lit. They were damp. They were cramped and moldy.

And they were run over with all types of creepy crawlies. It was not a nice place to be. It wouldn't be a place that you would put your pet dog, let alone another human being.

It was a foul place for Paul to be for even a single day, let alone a few years of his life on earth. And yet it's from this dingy prison cell that we get this joyful letter.

Can you imagine being at the church in Philippi when this letter arrived? Everybody come around, we're going to read out. Paul just wrote us a letter. He's in prison, as you know. We sent to Epaphroditus.

[ 8 : 01 ] He's come back now, Epaphroditus. And he's got a letter from Paul. We're going to read it out. And he's in prison, in a Roman prison. And you know what that is, or whatever, being there at the time.

Everyone gathers around, eager to hear how Paul is doing in prison. And they read this letter. And Paul doesn't complain once. He doesn't moan about being stuck in a tiny room.

Or that all his clothes stink from the mold. Or that he doesn't know what's going to happen next. But instead, he writes to them. And begins his letter by giving thanks to God for them.

His letter starts with thanksgiving. And he goes on in chapter 1. He tells them he wants them to know that his imprisonment has actually turned out to be a really good thing.

It's served to spread the gospel. So that he can actually witness to the guards and those people around him. He rejoices. And on top of that, he encourages them to rejoice in the Lord with him.

[ 9 : 04 ] He calls on them to live a life that is worthy of the gospel of Christ. Chapter 1, verse 27. And then towards the end of chapter 1, in around verse 28 onwards, he calls them to continue faithfully in suffering and defending the gospel just as he is doing.

This is not the kind of letter that you would expect to get out of a Roman prison. I don't know back then, you know, nowadays when prisoners send mail, it gets read on its way out. I don't know if they did that back then, but if you imagine being one of the people reading the mail.

Or this guy Paul, he's a bit of a nutcase. Reading his mail going, this guy must be insane. He's happy. This is a happy letter. But it's not that.

It's because his joy, his contentment, is not based on his circumstances. It is attached to the Lord Jesus. That's what it means when he says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I can sit in a disgusting cell and not know what's going to happen with my life. Because it is Christ who strengthens me. And so that's a bit of the background.

[10:13] And so I want to begin our first main heading this morning, as it were, having looked at just the verses building up to chapter 2 where we begin. I want to ask this question. What does Paul want for the Philippians?

He wants unity. What does Paul want for them? He wants unity. Verse 1. He begins this passage, chapter 2, verse 1. 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. So he said, it's sort of a poetic way of getting their attention and saying, look, if you see God's grace at work in your life, if you answer yes to any of these questions, make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in Spirit and of one mind.

He says, he's happy with the Philippians. He says, you want to make me super happy, full of joy, be unified. Obviously, unity is a great thing, but why is Paul asking for it here at this point in his letter? Well, in the verses just beforehand, chapter 1, verses 29 and 30, we read that the Philippians are suffering for the sake of Christ. They're involved, Paul says, in a conflict with outsiders because of their faith.

[11:39] The same conflict that Paul was involved in. That's why when he gets to chapter 2, verse 1, he says, so, or therefore. In other words, you're being attacked, you're under pressure from outside.

Therefore, I want you to be unified. Later on in the letter as well, he also makes mention of two women, Euodia and Sintech, who are fighting.

And he says, I implore you, please, come together. It's not a time, there's never a time for disunity in a church. But it is essential and key when the church is under attack, when it's under persecution, when they are suffering for the sake of the gospel, they need to be united together as a body.

So there are external issues and internal strains on the unity of the church, and Paul wants them to be united. Unity, but not uniformity. To borrow an illustration from Paul's letter to Corinthians, we're one body, he uses the illustration of a body, but many parts.

He says, we're not all ears, we're not all feet, we all have different purposes, but we together serve one purpose, like the different parts of a body. May I ask you a question this morning?

[12:58] How do you achieve church unity? If I stuck a whiteboard up here and we did a brainstorm and said, let's write down all the things that you must do to be a unified church. What would you put up on that board?

Keep your fingers in Philippians, but turn over to Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4, verses 1 to 6. I want to read you what Paul would say in answer to that question.

At least in part. Ephesians chapter 4, verses 1 to 6. Again, writing from prison. As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Be completely humble and gentle. Be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

[14:19] One thing we can say for sure, you cannot have unity without truth. I think it was Luther said, unity where possible, truth at all costs.

We cannot, as Christians, have unity with anyone who denies the central truths of Christianity. I cannot have fellowship with a Jehovah's Witness who tells me that Jesus is not God.

That's heresy. But if I need a brother who has a different view of the end times, or has a different view of how the gifts of the Spirit are manifested in today, those are tertiary issues.

But on the core truths, the virgin birth of Christ, His atoning death on the cross, His resurrection, His deity, we agree on those core truths of the Gospel, we can have fellowship.

So truth is indispensable. Would you notice what he said in verse 2, and this is pointing us back to Philippians chapter 2. Be completely humble and gentle.

[15:30] Be patient, bearing with one another in love. Humility and gentleness with others. So if you turn back to Philippians 2, you'll see from verse 3 onwards now, Paul begins to drive home how absolutely necessary, or the absolute necessity of humility in our lives together.

So verses 3 to 4, how do we move towards greater unity? Humble service. Verse 3, 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 others. I don't think I need to convince anyone in this room this morning that we live in a society that doesn't really celebrate humility all that much.

We don't, do we? It's not the world we live in. In fact, the very opposite, I think, would be true. We are a radically egocentric society. To borrow a phrase from a friend of mine, we live in the age of the selfie.

We have a second camera on our phones that's designed to point towards us so we can take pictures of ourselves. Do you remember when camera phones came out first? I don't remember them all having that.

[16:55] No, every camera phone has them. Camera on the front and camera on the back so you can take a picture of yourself. Selfishness and vain ambition are celebrated and applauded as good things in our culture.

They are seen as signs of strength and success. My self-esteem is of highest importance. My happiness is the most important. I'll only believe those things that I decide are best for me. I will only be with the people who make me feel good. And to be fair, things weren't all that different in Paul's day.

One of the most devastating effects of the fall of man when sin entered into humanity is that it turned us inward. Adam and Eve enjoyed a perfect marriage, but when sin entered, they ran from God and distance was between them.

Apart from the grace of God, we are naturally born selfish. I don't have kids, but I know this to be a fact. Hands up any parent in here who had to teach their child to be selfish.

[18:10] You don't, do you? We don't have to put an effort into that one because by nature we are selfish. But part of God's work when we are born again and put our faith in Christ, he begins a new work in us.

And part of that is to turn us outward again, to look to other people, not just to our own interests. You do have to take care of yourself, obviously, but to the interests of others. It's counter-cultural to do nothing out of selfish ambition or for glory for ourselves.

Nothing. He doesn't say try not to do things out of selfish ambition. Paul is basically laying down a law that you can set your watch to. If you're doing something out of selfish ambition, stop.

It may not be a wrong thing to do, but you're doing it wrong. If you are looking for your own glory in preaching a sermon or playing a guitar or doing anything, and that is not befitting of Christ's people. It's counter-cultural to consider other people as more important, more significant than ourselves and to truly look out for other people, genuinely look out for them.

[19:29] that's not normal in this world. Are you humbly serving others in this church?

It's easy to be the guest preacher and ask questions like this. I have to ask these questions of myself. Am I humbly serving others in my church? Or is it possible that my selfishness is a hamper to the unity of this church?

Is my ambition a blockage? Do you consider all the other people in this room right now this morning as more significant than yourself?

Not just some of them, the rest, all the other people who are not you. Do you consider those people more significant than yourselves? Paul says that this is the mind of Christ.

Paul goes on now for the rest of our time this morning, verses 5 to 11. Paul goes on and he lifts up Christ before us.

[20:38] This is the point that I'm really looking forward to. The perfect picture of humble service. I think he holds this up to us not to condemn us, not to make us grovel and say woe is me, but to say look at him.

That is my saviour. That's my boss. Verses 5 to 11. Christ, the perfect humble servant. Roxy was telling me during the week she works in Mahan and the building that her business is based in is a shared building.

They share that building with other businesses. Roxy, over the last few months, she's come back. She's been telling us about one of the other businesses there, the receptionist there. She's had some dealings with her and she's just been a very cranky person.

The other receptionist is not my wife. This lady's been very rude to Roxy and to others. There's nothing personal to Roxy. This lady's just been very irritable, jumping down people's throats without any proof of wrong.

And then it wasn't until this week, I think it was, Roxy's boss came to her and said, you do know why that is. She said, I've seen how her boss treats her.

[ 22 : 00 ] Her boss jumps down her throat. Her boss constantly talks down to her, tries to blame her for things that aren't her fault. And so the boss sets the tone for the company, doesn't he?

Jesus sets the tone of humility for his church. He's our boss. He's our master and commander. And what Paul is about to tell us, I think will be humbling to us to look at what he did for us. Let's read verses 5 to 8 again.

In your relationship 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 for his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as man.

[ 23 : 10 ] He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. This is the mindset of Christ, says Paul. This attitude, this mindset of humble service is perfectly displayed in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. This is one of the most incredible passages in the whole New Testament. These verses are often referred to as the hymn of Christ because of the way that Paul structured it and the language he uses.

It seems that he intended it to be a hymn that we would actually sing. It's one of the most important sections in the New Testament in teaching us about the mystery of Christ's incarnation.

It's beautiful and it can be quite intricate. We were in holidays last week, we did summer holidays, and we spent one day, two weeks ago, we spent one day in Geneva.

And Geneva, if you've ever been there, it's where the watchmaking world basically has its kind of home. So very high-end watches and stuff.

[ 24 : 27 ] Unfortunately, the 50 euro I had on me didn't buy me anything, especially not in Switzerland. But I love watches. I've always loved watches. I get it from my dad. I just love how they're made. I don't ever care if I own a nice watch.

I don't think I ever will. I don't care. I just love how they're made. But if I held up for you a Patek Philippe watch, one of the best watchmakers in the world, and tell you, it kind of looks like this. It doesn't really, but just pretend for my own sake. It's that simple looking, okay? And it'd be worth about 40 or 50 thousand euro. You said to me that's a waste of money, and we could argue about that.

That's fine. I'm not saying we should buy one. But if I turned it around to you and took off the back and showed you what's inside, I think you would start to see the value of it a bit more. Hundreds and hundreds of pieces, all working in perfect harmony, handcrafted, ticking away, not machine, they're made with machines, but they're not assembled by machines.

All to do one purpose, which is to tell the time perfectly. To look at it, you go, it's complicated, but it's beautiful. But the more, I'm just starting to learn a bit more about them. This analogy is going on too long, sorry.

[ 25 : 39 ] But the more you understand about them, the more precious you realize it is. Even though on the front it can look simple, its intricacy makes it more beautiful.

Christ's incarnation to earth is in one sense very simple. And yet it is such a deep and profound mystery when we start to explore it.

It's sort of like when you go to the Great Barrier Reef. I know someone who's, I've never been there, I know someone who's been there and they said you get to the point where there's just this big drop off the end. There's the reef which is a few feet behind you and then you swim out and it just drops off.

Sort of like this with the incarnation. You wade in and you look down and you look at all the beauty that's there and it drops down beyond your understanding. Truly we'll spend eternity plumbing the depths of these things.

So let's begin. Paul begins by speaking about Christ before he came to earth, the pre-incarnate Christ. The word incarnate means in the flesh, *carneia* means flesh, Jesus in the flesh when he became a human.

[ 26 : 50 ] So before that, verse 6, Jesus being in the very nature of God did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Other translations say something to be grasped.

Before his incarnation, Jesus was, as he always will be, fully God. Jesus is not like God, God. He is God. He is the second person of the Trinity and has existed in the fellowship of the Godhead from eternity past.

Therefore, all the glory and all the worship and all the sovereign authority that is rightfully belonging to God belongs to Christ because he is God.

All the privileges of divinity were and are rightfully his along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And when it was decided by the triune God before the foundations of the world that the Father would send the Son to die to save sinners, Jesus did not protest.

He didn't say, I'm not going down there. Do you realize Jesus was not obliged to save us? God did not owe us salvation. The angels fell from him and he sent them no savior.

[ 28 : 20 ] When man fell, he decreed before the foundations of the world, try and get your head around that, to send his Son in the likeness of human flesh and Jesus agreed.

He left heaven. He left heaven for us. God he didn't refuse to leave the praise and glory of heaven. Rather, he made himself nothing. In verse seven, by taking the very nature of a servant. What does that mean that Jesus made himself nothing? We have to very clearly say one thing.

It does not mean that Jesus emptied himself of his deity. humanity. When Jesus was incarnate, when he became a man, he added humanity to his person. He didn't swap being God for being a man.

He became a man as well as being God. So what does it mean that he poured himself out, that he made himself nothing? It means that he willingly chose to set aside that glory, that worship, that sovereign authority that was rightfully his.

[ 29 : 30 ] not to get rid of it, but to set it aside. To be very clear from the language we use here, he did not set aside being God, he didn't get rid of being God or give up, he set aside some of his privileges and rights.

In taking on human flesh as part of his mission to save you and me from our sins, he willingly chose not to exercise his privileges and rights as God to make things easier for himself.

When I was in college, friends of mine, some of the guys in my class, used to get grants from the government to help pay their fees, or if they lived far away from the college, they would get grants. And so if you met the requirements, they would get sent checks about three times a year in the post. When the checks arrive in the post, they usually are right on the same basis, they all come into college super happy because they just got sent money, which they probably weren't going to spend on fees.

But anyway, when they arrived in the post, it was up to them to take the checks and cash them in at the bank. The money was rightfully theirs for the entire time that they were in college, but they had to choose to take that money, take that check and cash it in.

[ 30 : 52 ] When Jesus came to earth, the checks that were written to him of praise and glory and honor and full authority, they were still rightfully his, but as it were, he did not cash them in for his own sake.

He chose to set them aside. He never, ever exercised his divine power to make life easier for himself.

Consider this, in Matthew 4, when Jesus is in the wilderness being tempted, he's fasting for 40 days, 40 nights, and then the devil comes to him. The devil says to him, if you're the son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.

And Jesus refuses. But in John chapter 6, when Jesus sees the crowd, when he's preaching to them and he sees that they're hungry and that they're far away from town, they can't get any food, he miraculously makes a feast out of a few loaves and fishes.

What's the difference? Think of when the disciples were out on the Sea of Galilee in a storm about to die, and Jesus gets up and he calms the storm for them and saves their lives.

[ 32 : 16 ] But in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the crowd come to arrest Jesus and Simon Peter lobs off the ear of one of the guys who was in the crowd, Jesus says, put away your sword. And he says these words, do you think that I cannot appeal to my father and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels?

A legion is about 3,000 to 6,000. That's a lot of angels. Jesus said, in a word, I could end this. but he did not because out of his love for you and for me, he would have broken the rules of engagement if he had done that and he would not have gone to the cross to die for our sins.

It would have been contrary to his mission, going to the cross to die for us. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

I hope there's no one in this room this morning that doesn't include themselves as in that word many. I hope that everyone in this room is trusting in Christ as their Savior.

Consider the humility of Christ in becoming a man. We'll never be able to fathom the glory of that mystery. But as if that were not enough, Paul continues in verse 8, he said, and being found in appearance as man, just look normal, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

[ 34 : 00 ] Not only did Christ humble himself by taking on human flesh and living a perfect life for us, but he went far beyond that again and humbled himself to the point that he died for us.

He was obedient to the Father's commission to the point of death, but not just any death, death by crucifixion. Jesus was absolutely humiliated for you.

It's the most ignoble and shameful death possible. You're practically naked, nailed onto a propped up piece of wood for everyone to see, flanked on both sides by criminals, even though he was innocent.

Jesus did that for you. And it was not just the physical pain that atoned for our sins. Bad and all as that was, it was that on that cross, God poured out all of the wrath that we deserved for our sins. God made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for us.

[ 35 : 34 ] God the Father laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. God the Father did what the law weakened by the flesh could not do, by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, flesh, and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.

All this Jesus did in obedience to the Father for you. Paul says this is the mindset of Christ.

And he says I want you to have that mindset when you deal with one another. What did Jesus deserve when he came to earth? God the earth?

Could there have been a red carpet long enough? Could there have been music good enough to welcome him? If the whole world bowed down and worshipped to him, it wouldn't have been hardly enough.

And yet he came to a back alley place in the middle of nowhere, essentially, born to humble circumstances, circumstances, and lived a life of relative obscurity, ministered for three years, and died, died?

[ 36 : 56 ] Which one of us who are in Christ this morning can say that any act of obedience or service is beneath us? is there anything that Jesus could ask you to do, call you to do in your life, that you could say, no, that is too low for me.

Someone else could do that. Jesus has set us the perfect example of humble service, and by his death and resurrection he has secured for us all the grace that we need to be humble.

Jesus doesn't just give us a good example and say, try that. He gives us the grace we need by his Holy Spirit to change and to become more humble. we might ask ourselves, how can I be a more humble person?

That's a good question, but can I offer a better question? How can I serve others in my church or in my life, those around me, in the way that Jesus has served me?

May we never doubt the absolute necessity of humility for unity in our church? Our risen Savior deserves our wholehearted obedience.

[ 38 : 29 ] In closing, I'd like to read verses 9 to 11, and we'll pray and sing. 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 acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Father, we bow before you in our hearts. We praise you that before the foundations of the world that you had decreed that you would send your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ in the likeness of human flesh, that he lived a perfect life for us, and that he died the death that we ought to have died, that he suffered your wrath, which we ought to have suffered.

That although there was no one who deserved more praise and glory on that earth, on this earth, that there was no one, Lord, at the same time who showed such perfect and complete humility.

I lay down my life for the sheep, he said. No one can take them from me. Thank you, Father, that we are safe in Christ. And Lord, I pray, where we are proud, Lord, may we this morning, over the Lord's Supper, as we reflect on Christ's work, may we humble ourselves before you, look to our

master and commander, and love one another.

Help us, Lord, not to be selfish, not to be selfishly ambitious, but to look to the needs of others.

Thank you for Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer.

[ 40 : 31 ] We pray to you in his name. Amen. I think we're going to stand to sing a closing hymn, the Serving King. That's a wonderful hymn.

Amen. It's a wonderful hymn. Amen. It's a wonderful hymn.