

# He Humbled Himself

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, many of us have just spent time celebrating the birth of Christ.! And we've also spent time marking the end of another year! And the start of a new one.

We go from meditating on Jesus' birth to reflecting back on the year behind us to anticipating what the year ahead may hold.

And in the midst of all this, we do well to remember what's most important. As the calendar pages turn, what is it that we should be aiming for with our living?

Well, God's Word gives us the priorities that we need to keep from wasting our lives. And through His Word, God calls us to continue looking to Jesus.

Not just His birth, but the whole good news of who He is and what He has done for us. The Gospel of Christ Jesus transforms our lives and fixing our eyes on Jesus can affect everything in wonderful ways in the year ahead.

[ 1 : 18 ] This morning, we're going to let the Apostle Paul focus our eyes on Jesus through what he wrote to the church in Philippi. We're going to see how the Gospel of Jesus can transform our relationships with one another.

And we're going to fill our eyes up with the goodness of Jesus again as we remember not only His birth, but His death and even beyond that.

As we read through Paul's letter to the Philippians, it becomes apparent that there is some conflict going on in this church. Paul doesn't give us all the details of the conflict.

He does at one point in this letter single out two individuals by name who are at odds with each other. That'd be a little bit embarrassing having that read out loud on a Sunday morning.

But what's the solution to the conflict in the church? Well, here in chapter 2, Paul lays out a solution and he urges the church to move towards this solution.

[ 2 : 32 ] Let's listen to what he has to say here in chapter 2. He says, 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.

Paul begins here by appealing to their own experience as followers of Jesus. He reminds them of the encouragement that they have from being united with Jesus.

He reminds them of the comfort that they have because of Christ's love for them. He reminds them that they all share together in the Spirit of God. He reminds them that in Christ and because of Christ, they should have some tenderness and compassion towards each other.

A deep love and sympathy towards one another. And then, on top of all that, he reminds them that their fighting with each other is a grief to him.

[ 4 : 22 ] As an apostle of Jesus in charge of helping establish churches, they can make his joy complete by putting an end to their conflict.

And then, finally, Paul gets to the main imperatives, the solution. Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind, doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility, valuing others above yourselves.

These are the things that Paul urges them to do in order to end the conflict. And it's an interesting way to urge someone to stop fighting. The first three or four things he tells them to do here have to do with unity.

Think about this. He could have simply said, stop fighting. Stop arguing and causing division. But he doesn't say it that way.

Rather than simply telling them to stop or what not to do, he tells them what to do. He says, pursue unity with one another.

[ 5 : 45 ] Be like-minded. Have the same love. Be one in spirit and purpose. One thing that catches my attention here is that he doesn't just tell them to agree with each other as if that were enough.

He calls them to a deeper unity than that. a unity that has love in it. The same love each for the other.

He calls them to have the same spirit and the same purpose. This is a deep unity. It's more than just stop fighting with each other.

Many of us here in this room have been parents of young children. Have you ever tried just telling your kids, stop fighting?

Nobody? Did it work? Does it work? Of course not. At least not in my experience anyway.

[ 7 : 04 ] Paul doesn't tell them to stop fighting with each other. Rather he tells them to pursue deep unity with one another. Are you in conflict with a brother or sister in the Lord?

Maybe even a family member. What would it look like for you to pursue deep unity with that person? God? How do we do that? Paul? Well in verse three and four Paul begins to get to the more tangible things.

Things that help us to achieve this kind of unity that he's talking about. We can only achieve this deep unity with one another by doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

We can only achieve it by having humility and in that humility valuing the other above ourselves.

The first thing that he mentions here is ignoring the selfish ambitions that we have.

[ 8 : 19 ] He says do nothing out of selfish ambition. What is selfish ambition? It's that inward desire to live for our own pleasure and comfort and interests as the top priority of our lives.

And Paul says do nothing out of selfish ambition. This really gets down to our attitude and our motivation. Paul's saying don't allow a selfish and self centered attitude to drive what you do.

To do nothing out of selfish ambition means to do everything out of love. And it's not just our selfishness that we're to sideline it's also our vain conceit he says.

Conceit is another word for pride. It's an over estimation of our own importance. It's an overvaluing of our own opinions or desires or interests in relation to the opinions and desires of others.

And Paul calls it what it is here. He says it's vain. It's empty. It's not a right or a good way to think of ourselves as though I'm the most important and all others should come second to me.

[ 9 : 55 ] Do nothing out of vain conceit he says. So there's two things here. One is thinking only about myself and what I want and the other is about thinking that I and what I want are more important than you and what you want.

These attitudes are what's causing conflict. And Paul says we need to stop operating out of these attitudes altogether.

If we're going to have deep unity with each other and resolve conflicts and put an end to arguments this is where we have to begin. I have to seek to change my own heart.

my own attitude. No more can I do things out of selfishness out of pride as if I'm the most important.

Now you might hear this and wonder as I did how can Paul be serious here? Do nothing out of selfish ambition? That's a pretty tall order.

[ 11 : 09 ] What about me? what about my life? What about the things that I want? At least sometimes isn't it right that I put myself first?

Paul says no. Do no thing, do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Think like this instead. Rather in humility value others above yourselves. Pride would have me believe that I'm more important than others.

The reality is that we're all equally important one to another. But the solution is to go beyond even that to valuing others above ourselves.

That's what he says. In humility value others above yourselves. Treat one another as more important than yourself.

[ 12 : 17 ] That's what an attitude of humility will do. I make myself lower than you by caring about you and what you want more than I care about myself and what I want.

And this is exactly how Paul explains this attitude of humility as he goes on. He says in humility value others above yourselves not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of

others.

Care more about others than about yourself. Care more about what others want or need in the moment than what you want or need.

This is humility. This is love. This is the solution to conflict and division. This is the path to that deep and true unity that he's talking about.

And the tough thing about this is it's not something that we can make each other do. This is an attitude and a heart that each of us has to work on in ourselves first.

[ 13 : 39 ] But I believe that if we as Christ people master this one thing alone verses three and four we would have such amazing peace and joy and fellowship and friendship and encouragement and participation in the church that it would be like a true taste of heaven for us.

People can hardly even imagine that. A family with no arguments no fights no conflict where each so deeply loves and serves the others that people would just be dying to be a part of that family. Well how can we do this? Paul could at this point remind us of the power of the spirit who lives in us and in fact he's already done that a little bit back up in verse one but instead Paul goes a different way he points us straight to Jesus verse five in your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus have the same attitude that he had look to him he's the example for us he's the ultimate example of what it looks like to do nothing out of selfish ambition he's the ultimate example of what it looks like to humbly consider others as more important than yourself he's the ultimate example of what it means to look to others interests and not just to one's own and then Paul reminds us of the very mindset and attitude of Jesus and what Jesus did verse six have this mindset 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 so here's what Jesus did Jesus existed as God he was in very nature God divine and yet he did not consider that equality he had with God something to be used to his own advantage he did not cling so tightly to his divine privilege and glory putting himself first though in his case it would have been right to do so in relation to us rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness so as God he was more important than us he was superior to us he was worthy of the greatest honor and glory and yet what did the son of God do he made himself nothing other translations say he emptied himself and of course there's debate about what exactly that means what did he empty himself of but I think many recognize that it's a metaphor he made himself nothing relative to who he was he humbled himself massively how by taking the very nature of his servant and by being made in human likeness he was God which means that it's good and it's right for us human beings to serve him but he lowered himself he humbled himself and came down to serve us he treated us as more important than himself looking to our interests our needs he became one of us a man one of his own creatures he was made in human likeness which is a shockingly humble thing for

[ 18 : 06 ] God the maker of all things to do the son of God took for himself the weakness and frailty of human flesh in order that he might serve the human beings that he made theologians debate this mystery of how there could be this union of God and man in Jesus but it's beyond what we can grasp we never want to minimize the divinity of Jesus he didn't give up being God to become a man neither do we want to minimize the humanity of Jesus he didn't just take on the body of a man he was truly human truly one of us but what Paul wants us to understand is that doing this was a massive step down from the glory that he had as

God it was an act of humility self humiliation compared to who he was and that's just the first step down Paul keeps going he humbled himself even lower than that verse eight and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself by becoming obedient unto death even death on a cross Paul emphasizes one aspect of what it means to be a human being it means that Jesus who was God now had to obey God the one who gave the commands to be followed by us put himself in the position where he had to obey the commands that were given he was so truly man that he was bound like we are to obey

God or else face the consequences and finally Paul wants us to understand just how far he obeyed God unto death to the point of death he gave up his very life in obedience to God he died what happened leading up to the cross where Jesus dies was the ultimate example of what we were just reading in verses 3 and 4 it was the ultimate in humility value others above yourselves just think through the events leading up to the cross the trial the beatings the way he was mocked and insulted the carrying of the cross

I can't help but think of what Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane when he said father if it is possible take this cup from me yet not what I will but what you will your will be done Jesus had a will of his own just like you and me he had interests of his own like not being falsely accused and not being beaten and treated terribly like he was but he was looking to the interests of God your will be done father and he was looking to the interests of us this is my body given for you this is my blood of the covenant which is for you and this wasn't a death that was noble in appearance it wasn't a hero's death in the way that we usually think of it he humbled himself becoming obedient unto death even death on a cross crucifixion was an execution method for the worst of criminals impaling someone on a pole or hanging them to to die on a cross was a form of shaming and symbolic of a person being under

God's curse he was stripped naked and left up on the cross to suffer in agony a torturous slow death in front of everyone it's the very opposite of honoring someone it is in fact a deliberate degrading of a person public torture and execution Paul saying that Jesus obeyed God and his plan of salvation by allowing himself to go through this Paul saying that Jesus of his own choice chose this humiliation setting aside his own interests for ours so that we could be saved and our sins atoned for and forgiven and now this is what

[ 23 : 46 ] Paul is saying with all this he's saying have this same mindset this same attitude as Christ Jesus had have this same mindset and attitude towards one another this is love this is the way to achieve real and deep unity with one another just imagine for a moment that Jesus had the attitude that we often have what about me what about my life what about what I want at least sometimes isn't it right that I put myself first we would have been lost forever and left to face God on judgment day with no way out of the punishment that we deserve from him because of our sins Paul is saying look to Jesus look to his love for you and what he did for you how he humbled himself for you and now love each other like that don't be afraid to die if that's what it takes to put others interests and ambitions ahead of your own

Christ did it for you we're going to take a few moments now to go to the Lord's table the bread and the cup Jesus passed those around the table to his disciples on the night before he died and they're both tangible symbols reminding us of what Jesus did for us how he suffered for us for our forgiveness and if you're a believer if you're a follower of Jesus then we invite you to eat and drink with us in these moments if not please abstain and just let the elements pass you by we're going to take a few moments now just to reflect and to pray quietly this is a time to confess the selfishness and the pride that we've lived out of recently this is a time to praise and thank

God for his gracious gift once we've had a few minutes to do this we'll have Dave and Rod come up and serve the bread and the cup and we'll just ask and then we can eat and drink all together at once it's easy to stop right here and just glory in the death of Jesus and how wonderful that is for us what Jesus did on the cross there's so much love here there's such wonderful peace and joy knowing that our guilt is gone everything that we've done wrong every way that we've blown it gone and dealt with but as

Paul puts Jesus forward as the model of the attitude and mindset that we should have toward one another he doesn't stop at Jesus death he keeps going and I want to read this part for us too because Jesus willingly humbled himself in this way for us verse nine 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 there's such a striking contrast here in these words Jesus humbled himself in the greatest way possible though he was God he made himself nothing taking the form of a servant and a man and even dying on a cross he humbled himself in the greatest way possible and so

God exalted him in the greatest way possible to the highest position God raised him up lifted him high and gave the greatest of glories to his son here's the answer to that question what about me God does not overlook us when we give our lives away in service of others God does not allow us in the end only to suffer and die he is a God who humbles the proud and lifts up the lowly God rewards our humble love towards one another and he will give us honor and glory for it and that's a good motivation for us the scriptures speak of how we should look to our heavenly reward and let it motivate us in doing what is right and what is good but never mind us for a moment look at

[ 29 : 32 ] Jesus look at the reward that he has received for humbling himself like this Paul says that God has exalted him to the highest place and given him the name above every name that's higher

than every earthly king ruler president you name it I can't help but think of Donald Trump I won't say too much about him we all know him well enough from the news but if there's one thing he likes to say over and over again it's that America is the greatest nation on earth and of course one can debate whether it is or not but Trump takes great pride in America and sees himself as the leader of the greatest nation on earth the commander in chief of the world's greatest superpower to borrow his own language and probably most of us would agree that Trump is among one of the most powerful men on earth as president of the United States but there's a name that is far far above the president of the

United States far greater in power and authority it's so high and exalted that every knee will bow before him including the knees of Putin and Trump and Carney and Musk and whoever else we deem powerful every knee will bow before Jesus and it's not even an option as to whether we do or not his name is so high that sooner or later God will make every knee bow before him he will make every tongue confess what is true of King Jesus that he is Lord of all what better truth to face a new year with then with this with than this the one who loves us so deeply that he humbled himself like this is now Lord of all in charge of everything in the universe he's forgiven us of our sins and he's bringing his kingdom with power and great glory soon may our hearts know the peace that comes from believing in his death and may our lives reflect and our mindsets especially our attitudes reflect his mindset more and more in this new year let's pray

Lord Jesus it's an awesome thought to think that you are seated on the throne of heaven right now and that if we were somehow to bridge the gap between heaven and earth and be in your presence all of us would fall flat to the floor before you and one day that moment will happen so we give you praise and glory that you are the great Lord and King of all the King of Kings we can't help but think of our friends family neighbors and others who who won't bow today to you we pray that you would work in their hearts and reveal yourself to them just as you have to us that they would give their lives to you we ask that you would direct our paths and keep us in this year ahead we're so thankful for the year behind and all your provision help us not to be anxious about what's coming in the future but to trust you with all our hearts and direct our paths we ask in Jesus name amen