

Growing in Humility

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 March 2023

Preacher: Brady Owens

[0 : 00] Father, thank you for the privilege it is to study your word, to know more about you, to understand more of who you are. And I pray, Father, that as we look at your word, you would help us to know what we should believe and how we should live.

And we pray all this in Christ's name. Amen. All right. Well, we're in Philippians chapter two, chapter two. And we're going to take on a pretty big section here, verses one through eleven.

And let me read it first for us. And then then we'll get started here. It begins in verse one.

Therefore, if there's any encouragement in Christ, if there's any consolation of love, if there's any fellowship of the spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves. Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also the interest of others.

Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men, being found in appearance as a man.

[1 : 42] He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

For this reason also, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The Christian life is full of a lot of opposites. Full of a lot of opposites. Things that seem to be sort of contradictory. I think you'll get what I mean when I say that the Bible talks about that if you wish to inherit everything, you must be one who has poverty of spirit.

Right? If you wish to save your life, you have to lose your life. Right? If we wish to be happy and blessed, one of the things we have to do is mourn.

And so the biggest sort of opposite, I guess you could say, in the Christian life is that those who wish to be exalted actually must humble themselves.

And it's interesting to me because the word humble, the Greek word for humble, means to think or judge ourselves with a lowliness.

[3 : 10] With a lowliness. But here's the interesting thing. The interesting thing is that the Greeks, the Greeks did not actually have a word for humility.

They did not have a word for humility in their language. Matter of fact, a lot of people believe that Paul the Apostle here in Philippians 2 is the one who coined the term for humility.

Yeah, come on over. Not a problem. So that's what we're going to look at. We're going to look at humility. We're going to try to see if we can grow in our humility.

There's one person who said this. If you think you have humility, you don't. You don't. It's going to be those who recognize just how deep our pride goes.

And the crucifying of ourselves and our flesh to the Lord. That's when humility begins to grow for sure. So we're going to break this into four things.

[4 : 15] We're going to look at the grace for humility. We're going to look at the actions, the example, and also the end goal for humility. So let's get after this. The grace for humility.

So I want you to look at chapter 2, verse 1. I've got it up here on the... Well, actually, why have I lost connection? Let's try again.

Okay. Okay. There you go. There we go. All right. Back at it. All right. So in this first verse, there are...

How many different statements do you see in this verse? Consolation, comfort, fellowship. Okay. Four. Four different statements, right?

So here's all four of them kind of put together. What do all four of those things have in common? What's some of the things you see that they have in common? Encouragement in Christ, consolation of love, fellowship of the Spirit, affection, and compassion.

[5 : 24] Positiveness. Okay. Okay. There's some positiveness there. What else do you see? Fruits of the Spirit. Okay. There's some fruit of the Spirit that we're sort of seeing in there a little bit. A loving heart.

A loving heart. Loving. Yeah. Loving. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. So what's interesting to me is that these statements, the way Paul writes it and the way our English translation translates it, it says if. But in the Greek, it really should be something like since or because. So in other words, because you have encouragement in Christ, because you have consolation of love, because you have fellowship with the Spirit, because you have the affection and compassion.

So that's really what he's saying is that you've got these things. You already have these things. These are yours already. So it's really a description of the Christian life.

This is what is yours. What's interesting is the way that these things are, because you have Christ and you have the Spirit in there, you get it.

[6 : 34] But this is something divine. Right? If you have encouragement in Christ, then you've got something from the Lord himself. If you have this fellowship with the Spirit, and we know that the rest of the Bible tells us that Christ works in us by his Spirit.

Here's a good summary of what we've got here. This is Dr. Steve Lawson. He says, The encouragement and the consolation of Christ is given by the ministry of the Holy Spirit who indwells believers.

So Christ is giving us these things through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. By his Spirit, in times of greatest discouragement, the Lord Jesus Christ himself lifts up hearts and strengthens faith. In times of greatest despair and despondency, Jesus comes alongside his people and speaks words of hope and comfort, even in the darkest hours.

He pours joy into trembling hearts. Jesus has poured his all-sufficient peace into depleted souls.

[7 : 41] Jesus has a great way to describe these four things. This is who Jesus is, what Jesus does for you. This is the reality. You belong to him, and you have all of these things.

Now, the problem for us is that we don't believe it. We don't believe we have these things. That's one of the reasons we struggle so much. The Lord has promised to us his presence and grace for our encouragement and our consolation.

And so here's the question. So if he says that these things are ours, these are our things, he gives them to us. Not only does he minister to us in a kind of once-for-all way, but then ongoingly he gives us these things.

The question is, the comfort we get from Christ, how does that comfort come? Right? I know I've got it, but I don't feel it.

Like, you know, when it's difficult, and I get the news of whatever difficulty I'm about to go through comes. Like, immediately I don't actually feel very much comfort.

[9 : 02] So how does that comfort come? And I just want to highlight a passage of Scripture for you. It's in 2 Corinthians, chapter 1.

Paul's writing to the Corinthians, and he says this, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and look at this, the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort which we ourselves are comforted by God.

It is a lot of comfort. Here's the point, though. The point is, is that I get comforted by God.

Now, we're going to come back around to that in just a second, because I think this is a cycle. We get comforted by God so that I can comfort someone else. And here is the sticking point where we divide away from our culture.

Our culture wants to say that your suffering and your problem is specialized, and therefore needs someone specialized to deal with it.

[10:29] And what the Bible tells us is that I can be comforted in my affliction, so that I can comfort someone in any affliction.

In other words, God can use me to bring comfort to you, even if I have not experienced what you are going through. Why?

Because at heart, at heart, the suffering and the affliction we go through produces the same things in all of us.

If I'm struggling as a parent with my teenager, the experience of that produces in me certain feelings and emotions, temptations to sin, struggles with my faith, as someone who's experiencing something else.

So what has to happen is I've got to get to the heart of my problem so that I can help get to the heart of your problem. I don't have to have gone through what you've gone through to bring comfort to you.

[11:34] So why is it not very comforting? Because we're dealing almost always with just the surface issues. We're not getting to the heart of behavior.

So I just wanted to show you that this comfort is there and He gives this comfort to us through one another. He uses you with the Word and my life to give comfort.

He uses me and your life with the Word to bring comfort. That's how it works. Does that make sense? Y'all with me?

Okay. Let's then take a look at the second thing and let's talk about the actions of humility. The actions of humility.

This is verse 2 through 4. And let me just show you this. In verses 2 through 4, there's one primary verb. Okay?

[12:37] There's one primary verb and it's this make my joy complete. Okay? So Paul is wanting to be made happy. He wants the Philippians to make him happy.

And everything else that he says in here is about something that they can do to bring this about. As a matter of fact, there are seven things.

Seven things he tells them to do. There's four of them in verse 2. There's two of them in verse 3. There's one of them in verse 4. So tell me what these seven things are.

Being of the same mind and love. Okay.

Being of the same mind. Maintaining the same love. That's two. Conceit. Say that again. Conceit. Conceit. Right.

[13:34] So do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit. What else? Uniting in spirit. Be united in spirit. What else?

One purpose. Right? Intent on one purpose. What else? Humility of mind. With humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves.

So this goes with this as a description. And then we got one final one in verse 4. It's kind of the whole verse, isn't it?

It's got a negative and a positive. Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interest of others. In other words, you're going to be looking out after other people's interests.

Things that are important to them. Things that they need done. That's what we're going to do. So let's just walk through this just briefly. Okay? So the first one is being of the same mind.

[14:35] Being of the same mind. That shows kind of a unity. But what do you think? What do you think about that? Like, same mind? What does that mean? For me, I guess it means the same Christian beliefs, the same Christian love, the same Christian life together that we share and that we live and how we want to spread and all that.

Right, right. I think you're dead on. Because the idea of the mind is, you know, what we're thinking. And if we're thinking thoughts of God, thoughts of the Christian life, the Christian faith, then we have to have sort of unity of doctrine.

A unity of doctrine. Right, in unity. Exactly. Maintaining the same love then. That's that outworking of having love. But it's the same love in the sense that we're loving God and we're loving others.

Right? Okay, what about united in spirit, intent on one purpose? Take both of those phrases. What are you thinking? United in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Sharing your belief with each other. Okay. So united in spirit is sort of where you're seeing that. We're all part of the same church.

[16:06] We have the same Holy Spirit. And so we're uniting and therefore cross, I almost said cross-pollinating. That's really not the word I want to use. Being in union together.

Sometimes. Thank you very much. Just ignore me. Just ignore me. That's all I've got to say. Intent on one purpose. We're all headed in the same direction.

Wanting to accomplish the same goal. And that's one of the things we saw in chapter one. A bunch. Right? Paul is like, listen, you've partnered with me in the gospel. You've partnered with me in the gospel.

So we're together. We're intent on this purpose. Here's what I find interesting. Verse three. Do nothing from selfish or empty conceit. But with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit. That is a crazy sort of idea.

[17:05] Is it possible that we do stuff from selfish ambition? All the time. All the time. Wow. I'm shocked at y'all. Wow. Never loneliness.

Regard one another as more important than yourselves. I think that we know that we're probably at our best, though, when we're thinking of others and put others first.

And that's hard to do. It is. I'm very guilty of not doing it. I'm proud of what I do do. Right? You're proud of your humility.

That's awesome. I love it. So, so, so, um, here's the way I would summarize all of this.

Okay? And I think I put this on, on your notes. That really, verse two is about developing unity. So we can see the unity of mind, soul, hearts, purpose. It's, it's, it's not the oneness of a football team.

[18:08] Where they only have just that sort of drive for that, that, that season. But it's a oneness of spirit that lasts and is intent on bringing the gospel to bear in this world.

The, verse three is really about developing lowliness. Lowliness. And there's an example in the gospels where Jesus has this, uh, story that he tells.

He says that he began speaking the parable to the invited guests when he noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table. And when they were invited by someone, when you're invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him.

And he who invited both will come to you and say, give your place to this man. And then in disgrace, you proceed to occupy the last place. But when you're invited, go and recline at the last place so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may see, say to you, friend, move up higher.

Then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and who humbles himself will be exalted.

[19:20] That's what I think verse three is really getting at is that we should, we should pursue the last place. We pursue, we should pursue putting ourselves down.

Now, when I say putting ourselves down, I don't mean that we walk around going like, well, I'm just dumb. You know, I'm not talking about self-deprecating thoughts and ideas and words.

I'm just saying that given the opportunity to take first place, don't. You know, being the one to be in the place of honor, well, don't. Just wait. Go sit here.

And if somebody wants, no, no, we want you up here. Well, then that's fine. You may go. But as you look at how we interact with each other, think about how that then works out in personal interactions.

Well, like a parent, you put your children above yourself. You, you know, you don't go out and put all the money on your back.

[20:17] You make sure your kids are clothed, their medical needs are, you take care of your family before yourself. Right. Right. You know, when we were growing up, my parents tell me that I was poor, but I don't think I was ever poor.

Like, I think my life was super blessed, but they tell stories about how they would let us eat. And if there was anything left, then they would eat, you know. And so I think about, I think about that and I think, okay, so interactions within the church body, as we interact with one another.

Let me give you one example, a super clear way that we can sort of play ourselves down to be sure that we're lifting up someone else. And that's this.

You call someone on the phone. And the first thing that you should ask is, is this a good time?

Because what that does is that recognizes they have other things going on in their life, and you

don't want to assume that you're the center of their world by just hauling off and start talking about whatever you want to talk about.

You should always say, is this a good time? You know? And in that way, it shows that, I think, in a practical way. The Christian life is not a life about promoting ourselves, but it's a life about promoting Christ and others.

[21 : 37] The fourth verse, then, I would summarize this way, that is about developing helpfulness. Helpfulness. He talks in verse 4.

Let me go back and find verse 4. Where are you, verse 4? I think I passed it. There we go.

There we go. Verse 4. One of the things that he says here is personal interest and interest of others. Here's the way I thought of this. I have to take care of myself.

I have to take care of my family. I have to do the things that are important for that. Right? Because we know in 1 Timothy chapter 5 that a man who will not take care of his own household is worse than an infidel.

So we have to take care of our own families. We have to do what we need to do. However, that's not the end of what we should do. We should be helpful to others. So I may spend time working towards my family, helping them.

[22 : 39] But I've got to also look out for the interest of other people as well. Here's where this sort of hit me really strong back years ago. So we were at a church up in the Panhandle and we were working on Vacation Bible School.

And I think I may have told you all this story. But it just accentuates this. I go to this lady. She and her husband, they were just retired. I mean, they were running around the country in their RV and all this kind of stuff, which is great.

That was fine. But they were going to be in town for Vacation Bible School. And I went to ask her if she would help serve in Vacation Bible School. And her response to me was this. You know, I've done my time when my kids were little serving in Vacation Bible School.

And it's time for these younger people to step up and serve. Now here's the interesting thing. Most of the kids who were coming to that church, their parents were not members of that church.

And they're lost people. And so there's a thought. There's a thought in American society that retirement means I don't have to work anymore.

[23 : 49] That is an unbiblical concept. In the garden, before there was sin, we were given work to do.

Where it was perfect, we were given work to do. When we go on to be with the Lord, we're not sitting on clouds strumming harps and humming little tunes.

We will be working with the Lord. Work is a part of our creation. And so long as we're living in this world, we're to continue to work.

Now, obviously you can't do what you used to do. And it has to modify. It has to change. But how can you be helpful to other people?

That's the point. How can I not just take care of myself, but how can I be helpful to somebody else? You say, well, I can't go move furniture anymore. Well, then don't do that. Nobody's saying go move furniture.

[24 : 48] But how can you be helpful? Because if you're still here, the Lord has got something for you. He's got something for you. Well, so those are the actions of humility.

We want to be lowly and helpful. We want to be united in our thoughts. Let's move on to the third category, the example of humility.

This example of humility comes in verses 5 through 8. Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men, being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

Now, verse 5 tells us to do what? What are we supposed to do with everything we just read? Let this mind be in you. Right. We need to have the same mind.

We need to have the same mind, or have this attitude. Okay, so whatever else we see about Jesus, that should then be something that describes us.

[26 : 03] Okay? Now, if you read this whole description, and by the way, I don't know if you know this, but this was a hymn, one of the first hymns in the church. This was a song that they used to

sing.

What's that? These verses. Oh. This used to be a song that they sang in the time of Paul the Apostle and Peter and that kind of thing. I don't know how it goes, but it was a song.

Verse 6 through 8 has kind of a movement, right? Jesus goes from one place to another place.

Where does he end in verse 8? Where does it end for Jesus? On the cross.

On the cross. So he goes, he goes down, right? It starts, where does it start? It starts with him being equal to God.

And it ends with his death. This is what theologians call the humiliation of Jesus. It's his going from being equal with God to death upon the cross.

[27 : 05] Let's talk about a couple of these statements here just so we understand. He existed in the, let's see, let me do this. Pull those off there. He existed in the form of God, but he also was in the form of a bondservant.

Those two ideas were not saying that he kind of looked like that. He was a bondservant. So he was God, right?

I mean, he is God now too, but I'm just saying from the perspective of this text, right? He existed in the form of God, which does not mean that he was sort of like God. It meant that he was God himself. He existed, or he took on the form of a bondservant.

It talks about that he regarded his equality with God as a thing, not a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself. So here's what we have to understand. When it says that he emptied himself, he didn't lose his divinity, but he did not selfishly grasp his divinity.

Now that's a little difficult for us to understand, but let me see if I can give us an example. One of the things that Jesus did when he was here is he healed people of diseases, right?

[28 : 18] And he cast out demons. Here's the question. How did Jesus do that? What about him made it so he could do that?

Because he was God. So that is what we would normally think. He is God, but he did not selfishly grasp his divinity in order to accomplish the things that he was here to accomplish.

In Acts chapter 10, verse 38, you know that Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him by the Holy Spirit, anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

So he has his own divinity, but he did not use his own divinity to cast out the demons. He did not use his own divinity to heal people of their diseases.

He had the Holy Spirit, his Father with him, and by the Holy Spirit, he did these things. And that would blow your mind if you think about it long enough.

[29 : 27] It's like, wait a minute, but he's God. Yes? And if you look, I'll give you one other thing to think about. How did he take on flesh?

By being through the Holy Spirit, but by being born by a virgin, selected by God. That's exactly right. But notice your first words.

By the Holy Spirit. Was he divine? Could he have taken on flesh by himself? Well, sure. But did he do it by himself? In his own divinity? No.

But by the work of the Holy Spirit. That is a super important thing because we have to maintain his true humanity. That humanity was not a deified humanity.

Truly human. Truly human. He's made of the likeness of man, humbled himself to the point of death and death on the cross. One of the ways that I like to imagine or think about this whole section here is that he goes from being equal to God, not grasping it, emptying himself, laying aside his privileges, and humbling himself, taking on the form of a bond servant.

[30 : 44] You can almost see his hands getting tied. And at that point, then offering himself up to be crucified. And that's the criminal's death.

So he offered himself to death and death on a cross. So with each step, it's this humiliation and this downgrade. And so you and I are to have an attitude that says, my privileges, I set them aside.

I am a servant. So kill you. Even if I don't deserve it. I mean, what if we had that kind of attitude in our marriages?

We looked at one another and said, you know what? It doesn't matter what I have the right to do. It doesn't matter what privileges I feel like that I have.

It doesn't matter what I feel like I deserve from you. I'm your bond servant. Kill me. I'm here for you.

[31 : 45] I mean, what would that do to our parenting? Our grandparenting? What would that do inside a church if we had that kind of an attitude? I mean, that is just revolutionary, I think.

The last part has to do with the goal of the humility. This is verses 9 and 10, or 9 through 11. For this reason, also God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, so that the name of Jesus every knee will bow of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue would confess that Jesus Christ is Lord with the glory of God the Father.

Anybody know the song that is sometimes sung from this? Just out of curiosity, you recognize it as a song? There's a couple of them.

I was thinking about, there's a little chorus. He is Lord, He is Lord, He is risen from the dead and He is Lord. Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Ah, I love that song. It's a short little ditty, and I hate that it's so short, but it's so full of so much good stuff there. Look at this. He starts with this idea here, right?

[33 : 11] For this reason. This is His conclusion. What is He concluding? What's the conclusion for? What is, what's, what's here and what's here, right?

That's what a conclusion is, right? You had something here, therefore this. So, from this, He's concluding this. What is His conclusion for? Jesus Christ is Lord. Man.

So, all of His humiliation, therefore, His exaltation. Okay, that is the work of Jesus, if you want the theological terms. It's His humiliation and His exaltation.

He goes from death upon the cross, He's highly exalted, now He has the name above every name and every knee is going to bow and every tongue is going to fetch to the glory of God the Father. All the way back.

In other words, Jesus goes through all of this so that God is glorified. Now, we normally don't talk that way.

[34 : 13] We normally talk about how great we are. God did all this for us. I want to tell you something quite radical. God loves Himself more than anything.

God, the triune God, loves Himself more than anything. And what I mean by that is I mean He loves us, yes, don't get me wrong, but He loves, it's for His glory.

So, as we then think about our trying to be humble, the goal is not just sort of self-deprecating thoughts, the goal of our humility is that God would get the glory.

If we're to have the mind of Christ which results in the glory to the Son and to the Father, then my being humble should be to the glory of the Father and the Son.

it ought to warn us against false humility. Now, I know a lot, I know a lot, I am an expert in false humility.

[35 : 29] You know, when I was a kid, when I was a kid, and then we'll, we're gonna, I'll tell you this story and then we'll, we'll do some questions. I used to go sing at a lot of churches.

And when I say I used to sing a lot of churches, my junior and senior year of high school, I sang at about 34 different churches out of 52 weekends in both years. I was a part of this group that we went and I would sing and people would have me and they would call me and want me to come sing, want me to come sing.

That's back when we used the canned music. You know what I'm saying? Like, we don't do a lot of that too much anymore but we did it a lot back in the 80s. Lots of canned music. And I love the attention and I love the limelight.

I love the spotlight. I loved it. I'm just telling you, I did. And people would come up to me and they would say all kinds of compliments.

And the way that I dealt with it is I just kind of went, oh no, no, no, no. I mean, no, I didn't do very good. It was not good. It does not say anything about me. That's okay. That's okay.

[36 : 41] And literally my mind was fixed upon the idea that I wanted to say that because I knew that somebody would say, oh no, but really, they would gush even more. Because when somebody, when somebody puts themselves down, we all feel awkward and we want to go like, no, but really, no, really.

And we've just fallen into the trap of somebody who is massively prideful. And understand, I'm an expert in false humility. That was me.

I had to learn and see that that was a massive issue in my life. And so back when we were in college, after Michelle and I were married, I stopped, I just stopped all that singing.

I just, I don't do it anymore because of where it takes my heart. we, we, to be humble, we have to get our minds off of ourselves.

We think about God, we think about others. And we leave it at that. We leave it at that. Well, on your paper, there are some discussion questions I have for you and hopefully what we've talked about will help you.

[37 : 54] So I'm going to let you talk as tables and go through those questions together and then after a little bit we'll close our time and pray for our food and then we will chow down.

We have to pray for the food? Yes?

Thank you.