

# The Humility of Christ

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Date: 22 December 2019

[ 0 : 00 ] Would you turn your Bibles to Philippians chapter 2 verses 1 to 11.! It was a mature church, very stable, spiritually mature, and it was to further their health that Paul exhorts them like this.

Philippians 2 verse 1. So if there is any encouragement in Christ and comfort from love, any participation in the spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant.

Being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[ 2 : 10 ] Jesus Christ is Lord. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so 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.

Lord. To the glory of God the Father. Every now and then the Bible gives us very crisp, pointed definitions of spiritual things.

It happens every now and then. Take, for example, sin. 1 John 3, 4. Sin is lawlessness.

Romans 14. Sin is anything that does not come from faith. Then other times what it does is it tells us what things are not.

Take, for example, grace. Romans 11. If grace were by works, grace would no longer be grace.

[ 3 : 29 ] Take, for example, hope. Romans 8, 24. Hope that is seen is not hope.

Then finally, there's in the Bible this other way of defining things. In this way, it's not so much telling us the one thing something is, or the one thing something's not.

It sort of tells you lots of things something is, and lots of things something's not. Take, for example, love. 1 Corinthians 13.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. Verse 7. Love bears all things. Believes all things.

Hopes all things. Endures all things. Love never ends. Well, here in Philippians 2, 1 to 11, we have that second kind of definition. Actually, the third kind of definition.

[ 4 : 26 ] It's a definition that's telling us what humility is. It's telling us what it does, what it doesn't do, what it looks like, what it acts like. So you know it when you see it.

And of course, what's so helpful about this particular definition is that it's tied to a supermodel. It tells us who in human history modeled it for us perfectly.

So let's consider this definition under two main headings. Number one. With whom is humility humble? With whom is humility humble?

And number two. How do you become humble? What makes for humility, you might say. Again, number one. With whom is humility humble?

Or you might say, to whom is humility shown? And how do you get it in the first place? Okay? So number one.

[ 5 : 29 ] With whom are we to be humble? The simple answer is, of course, with everyone. But I love how this passage touches on at least four very specific categories of people.

And then exhorts us to be humble to people in each category. For instance, it does suggest that we should be humble with, number one, our leaders.

Let's start from the top. When Paul says in verse one, If there is any encouragement in Christ, comfort from love, participation in the Spirit, affection and sympathy.

Even though he's using the word if, if there is any encouragement, if there's this, if there's that. He's actually not using the word if in the typical sort of uncertain sense of that word.

So he's not saying, oh, if only. If only. If only there could be any amount of encouragement in Christ. Oh, what if there was affection and so on. He's not speaking wishfully.

[ 6 : 29 ] He's actually doing the exact opposite. This is actually a sort of subtle poetic way of saying that these things are actually true. That they're actually happening.

And the proof, of course, is in the context. In fact, what we learn from the context is that this encouragement, this comfort, love, participation, affection, all these good things he's talking about, these are all kindnesses that the Philippians humbly showed him, their leader.

We can actually find all these good things talked about in different parts of this letter. Right from chapter 1, it says that it was by the Spirit that the Philippians participated with Paul in ministry.

The letter begins with him thanking them for that. Praising them for what he calls their partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. That's chapter 1, verse 5.

And of course, you know, back then, Christian ministry could get you thrown into jail. And guess what? He wrote and sent this letter to them in jail.

[ 7 : 36 ] Literally from his jail cell. Because he got thrown into jail by people who didn't want him preaching the gospel in their country. So when the Philippians heard about that, they encouraged him in Christ.

And they comforted him in love. Right there in chapter 1, verse 19, they're praying for him. Chapter 2, verse 25 and 30, they're sending him funds for his food and clothing.

Same thing in chapter 4, verse 17 to 18. Then again, chapter 4, verse 14, he says, How kind of you to share my trouble. And it's clear that they're doing all this out of affection and out of sympathy.

In chapter 4, verse 20, they're concerned about him. Then of course, all throughout this letter, Paul is pretty open about his own love and affection toward him. He talks about how their love toward him stirred his love toward them.

Verse 8 of chapter 1, God is my witness, he says, How I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. Chapter 1, verse 7, it is right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in my heart.

[ 8 : 44 ] Chapter 4, verse 1, he calls them my brothers, whom I love, whom I long for, my joy, my crown. Church, I think it is apparent that all these things he's listing at the beginning of our passage are not doubts.

They're not wishes or question marks. Rather, he's sort of poetically using the word if, more like we would use the word since. He's saying, so since there is all this encouragement in Christ between you and me.

Since there's all this comfort of love between you and me. Do X, Y, and Z. And the reason why I think all this encouragement in Christ and comfort and participation, that all of them are arising out of humility, is because Paul defines humility as something that enables you to focus on others.

To serve others. To look to their interests, not only your own. And that's what we see them doing for Paul. In fact, it would seem that because humility enables you to submit and subordinate your interests to the interests of others, humility enables you to obey the leading and instruction of your leaders.

And of course, that's exactly what we see Christ doing in this text. Just look at verse 8. Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[ 10 : 28 ] And to whom was he obedient? He was obedient to the Father, to his Father, who he all over describes as his leader, his teacher, his head. And Romans Paul actually called the Father the God of Christ.

It was his Father's will that he become a man. It was the Father who sent him. It was his Father who gave him the words to say. And it was the Father's will that he die for us.

And it is this will that Jesus humbly obeyed. In fact, Jesus accepted and obeyed it so humbly that his Father's will became his own will.

What I mean is, as much as the Father was willing to sacrifice Christ for us, so willing was Christ to sacrifice his own life for us.

They were on the same page. Or in other words, they became one mind. And it is that unity of mind that we also see here between Paul, who you might, I guess, liken to the Father, and the

Philippians, who you might liken to Christ in a way.

[11:42] Look at verse 12. Here we have Paul lovingly giving them some instructions. He says, Indeed, it would seem that this obedience toward Paul was made easier because of their humility.

Because their humility toward Paul quite literally made Paul's will their will. And of course, what that means is, even if Paul's will didn't come in the form of an instruction, they still would have been of one mind with him.

That's the beautiful thing about humility. It doesn't just want to be of one mind with leaders when leaders issue all these firm instructions for it to obey.

Rather, humility just wants to. Rather, it by itself desires to be of one mind with its leaders.

Because you know that Paul actually says in 1 Corinthians 9 that though he could instruct churches to support his ministerial interests financially, he doesn't.

[12:56] It's really a theme in his writing. As you keep reading his letters, you repeatedly hear him say that sometimes he just won't issue instructions. He just won't issue instructions because he wants to see humility itself do the leading.

He wants to see humility by itself direct people to be of one mind in good things. And so I don't think he issued any commandments that these churches, that this church help him.

I think he just told churches his ministerial interests. And as he says in chapter 4, verse 15, at first no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you, Philippians, only.

So kingdom life. Do you humbly look to your leaders' interests? Do you humbly want to obey them? Are you humbly concerned for and humbly desiring to provide for their needs? I'm not asking if you give.

[14:08] Clearly you give. Otherwise this church wouldn't exist. I'm asking if you humbly give. Do you give out of a genuine concern for their needs?

Or is it just the 10% that Christians have to cough up once a month? Because you know, we can do humble looking things like giving, but really be inwardly begrudging and bitter and cynical about it.

You know? Or we can wait until we have to do humble looking things. You know, we might say something like, well, yeah, I mean, I want to do all that, but it's not like if, you know, Pastor Moss or anyone else was in jail or anything.

Ah, yes, about that. It's good to know, actually, that this humble service they were showing him wasn't a sort of one-time thing only for emergency cases.

They had apparently been serving Paul in this way before he got thrown into prison. Just read chapter 4, verse 10 to 20. And chapter 1, verse 5, twice in the same letter, he says explicitly, They had been doing all this from day one.

[15:18] So don't let's settle. Don't let's settle for that sort of sporadic one-time, on-and-off type humility. Church, let's pray that we be a church genuinely humble toward our leaders like these Philippians.

Then there's a second category of people. These are people we might describe as our equals in terms of authority or any sense, really, because it's that category that's really receiving the stronger emphasis in this passage.

Here's what's going on. What he's saying in the context is, Philippians, y'all are the best. You're humble toward me.

Chapter 1, verse 7, You are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the global defense and confirmation of the gospel. We are in this together.

We're praying the same prayers, funding the same things. We're even feeling the same feelings. Y'all are mourning with me when I mourn. Y'all are weeping with me when I weep. You're doing exactly what the writers and the Hebrews said to do.

[16:33] You're remembering me in prison as if you also were in prison with me. Y'all are just amazing toward me like that. And I'll praise God for that. But you know what would make me really happy?

But you know what would complete my joy? If you guys, apart from me, amongst yourselves have that. What would make my day in this prison is if just as you're humble with me, you could be humble with one another.

Verse 2, Being of the same mind with one another. Having the same mutual love. The same strength of feeling for one another.

According your interests to the interests of those in your midst. Even submitting and subordinating your interests to the interests of others at your church.

Even counting your equals as more significant than yourselves. And what that means, it's a very interesting idea, equals more significant than yourself. What that means is you count others as more considerable.

[17:41] More worthy of consideration. More worthy of sitting in the front seat. More worthy of having the first pick at things. More worthy of having the last slice of things.

More worthy of having the door open for them. Counting them more worthy of being the one receiving questions. Because you find talking about them so much more interesting than talking about yourself.

It's quite literally counting yourself a less interesting topic of conversation. And let's be honest, let's just be real. That's not as easy as humility toward leaders.

It's easy to count the CEO, right? Boss. President. Some wealthy, famous celebrity or someone else like, you know, someone famous, got a lot of popularity.

Something like that is more significant than yourself. You know, it's easy to sort of change your plans in order to accept the last minute invitation to attend the royal wedding and banquet of some monarch in whose august presence.

[18:49] you know you'll be very kind and respectful and considerate. But if someone is just like you, there's not as much, you see what I'm saying, there's not as much as obligation.

Because assuming, you know, I'm not great, in the presence of someone like me, I'm not in the presence of greatness. It really is a little bit sort of, sort of harder to be humbled toward people who aren't ostensibly greater than you.

And oftentimes, sadly, we just aren't. Butter. You know, we just aren't humble with each other, even though we always, we always are with really popular, powerful people.

Indeed, I mean, the very fact that he has to say this to them implies that it is not always the case that if a congregation is humble with its leaders, it's humble with itself.

Paul actually knew that from experience. There was indeed a tendency in the churches at this time to be united with leaders more than they were united with themselves. Remember what he found out was going on in the church at Corinth?

[20:00] 1 Corinthians 1.11 It has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. And this is what she tells me. Each one of you says, I humbly follow Paul.

Or I humbly follow Apollos. Or I humbly follow Cephas. Or I follow Christ. Those are four discrete divisions in one church, each corresponding to four different leaders, or at least who they perceive to be differing leaders.

But Paul has to ask them to think, is Christ divided though? Verse 10, he says, I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

See, this was a reality for him. Same thing took place in the book of James. Something going on there. He was, he has to warn them in James chapter 2 that they're sinning when they humbly pamper a rich person in the church, but they pridefully mistreat a poor person in the church.

That they're in sin when they do that. I'm not saying that Paul thought that this was a reality for the Philippians. Whether or not it was a reality for them really doesn't matter.

[21:35] It's not, it's not like if the apostles would only encourage churches to do good when and only when they weren't doing good. good. Oftentimes they just encourage them to do good because doing good is good.

And because repeatedly encouraging people to do good is good. That's what Paul says in the same letter, chapter 3, verse 1. To write the same things to you is no problem for me and it's safe for you. Safe for you. So I'm not saying that it was a real besetting problem for them. What I'm saying is that this is a problem that God wants them and wants us to watch out for.

Because as we've already said, there is a kind of pride that acts humble. Church, pride acts humble.

Pride loves people. You know, this is how. Love that should be shown toward everybody, it shows toward a select few people.

[22:42] And those select few people tend to be great people. The popular, the powerful, the wealthy with connections, the good looking, the best dressed, the best educated, the cool kids, the

movers, the proverbial shakers, the world leaders, the business leaders, and perhaps most of all, actually, the church leaders.

Just watch how pagan people act when they meet the Pope or something. Oh, you'd be amazed. You'd be amazed at what amazing powers of humility and deference some of the most godless people on earth can in the presence of the Roman pontiff call forth with remarkable efficacy. Oh, it's a miracle. Church, to resist that false humility, he's calling for humility outside his presence. Chapter 1, verse 27.

Let it be, he says, that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. Chapter 2, verse 12. My beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your salvation, which will necessarily mean being humble with one another.

[ 24 : 11 ] Chapter 3, verse 2. I entreat you, I entreat Iodia, and I entreat Syntyche! to agree in the Lord. Yes, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel.

What he means is, help these women do for each other what they did for me. Help them be united with one another as they were united with me.

Church, to resist that false humility, he's even calling us to attempt the staggering humility of Jesus Christ. And notice that we see another category of people with regard to the humility of Christ. Now he's calling us to be humble, not only with leaders, not only with our equals, moreover, we are called to be humble even with our subordinates.

Chapter 2, verse 21, that's what Timothy is doing. Chapter 1, same letter, verse 24, that's what Paul is doing. And look at what this humble mind led Christ to do.

[ 25 : 28 ] For the time being, let's just focus on verse 5 and 7. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, verse 7, made himself nothing by taking the form of a servant, a subordinate, being born in the likeness of subordinates, the likeness of men, who he created to be his subordinates.

It's staggering. It really is. For one, here we have the king of the universe in humility wanting to put on an apron and serve his slaves.

Jesus said explicitly, the son of man did not come to be served. but to serve his slaves, his flock, his children.

Secondly, here we have the king of kings not just serving slaves for, you know, one work shift and then he's going home to his royal palace. No, his service among these slaves lasts some 33 odd years on the earth.

thirdly, though his home is not the place where he serves, he lives where he serves.

[ 27 : 22 ] He leaves his home and lives with slaves he serves. That is to say, he's not just a servant. He is a house servant living like a slave.

Here we have God as a house servant living in a house of slaves. Here we have God living in a world in which slaves are his masters.

Fourthly, it is not the case that he can be visibly distinguished from them. And this is because here for the first time in history, a man is God.

A slave is God. A hired hand is God. The guy who's going around knocking on doors looking for work, asking residents if they need any quick carpentering jobs done.

He does floors, tables, door frames. He got fired yesterday. He's praying to God.

[ 28 : 51 ] He's praying he gets hired today. He knocks on your door. You think he charges a little bit much.

He's trying to negotiate with you, but you're not budging. You know that other people charge less, but he doesn't know that.

He's never come looking for work this way. You're not budging. Besides, you need someone who can fix your chairs, others, but he confesses.

He can't help with that. He doesn't yet know how to do that. So you tell him you're not interested.

He tells you, thank you for your time. and then he says, my Lord, thank you for your time, sir.

[ 30 : 03 ] Ma'am, I thank you for allowing me this time. And then he walks away and he's praying.

what this text is saying, is that guy walking away? That guy is God.

He is unimpressively God. I want to emphasize that word, unimpressively, because of a mental habit that we sometimes have when we think about the humanity of Christ.

Sometimes we'll verbalize the fact that he's a man, but in our heads we're thinking of him as Superman. We're saying, yeah, yeah, yeah, of course, at Christmas time, yeah, he became a human.

But as you talk to people about him being human, it becomes clear that you really are thinking of him as being superhuman, a sort of perfect human, because you never think of him as tripping on something and falling flat on his face.

[ 31 : 26 ] You never think of him as needing to study for an exam, needing to take a shower, because after a whole day of walking around looking for work, he smells. He smells nasty.

So let me emphasize what we mean when we say God as a man. What we have here is not just God as a man, but God as a mirror, mirror man, a creature as creator, the creator in the form of a creature.

And he's here to be humble toward a fourth category of persons. This is a category of people implied, I think, by the last words of verse 8.

Death on a cross. See, this passage is about humility shown not just to your leaders, your equals, your subordinates.

This is humility toward your insubordinates, your insurrectionists, your conspirators, the people nailing you to a crucifix.

[ 32 : 42 ] This is his gospel that at the hands of his enemies, Jesus died for his enemies. Jesus died for his enemies' sake, for his enemies' interests.

This is Mount Everest. This is the Mount Everest, is it not, of humility. And so the second question is, how is humility this high possible?

We're helped, I think, by at least one aspect of how humility works. See, humility is, I think, a natural effect of a right estimation of things.

of course, we're sinners, and so we don't tend to do that very well, and what happens is, we think of earthly self-interest as if they were these heavenly, supremely valuable self-interests.

It could be anything, a quiet day off, with nobody asking us anything, no favors. That becomes supremely valuable. There's one more slice of pizza left.

[ 33 : 59 ] You want it. that pizza becomes supremely valuable. Or, it could be something more respectable like this. There's an award. You actually do deserve that award.

And so now, because you deserve that award, receiving that award is something you can't live without. It's supremely valuable. See, sometimes it's your rights, your rights that become the supremely valuable thing that you can't live without.

In which case, it makes complete sense why you insist on them, and you can't let them go for somebody else. They are a thing to be grasped, such that even though he says in chapter 2, verse 14, do all things without grumbling or questioning, no, you have to grumble.

You have to question, because your supremely valued self-interests are not being met. It's interesting, in chapter 3, verse 19, he says, for some people, their belly is their God.

And if that's me, that means, at the very least, you can't expect me to not eat this juicy piece of meat around some weaker brother, just because he's concerned about eating meat.

[ 35 : 20 ] God, you can't seriously expect me to pass up drinking this alcohol just because drinking it might be unhelpful for somebody. No, you can't expect me to do that, Lord.

Why? Because food is God. That's the thinking. And then what happens is because we think these things like food and awards and money, when we think of these things as supremely valuable, we get a lot of these things.

When we get a lot of these things, we begin to think of ourselves as supremely valuable, as supremely significant. And now there's no way, there's just no way we're going to consider anybody, no subordinate,!

let alone an insubordinate as more significant than ourselves. And everything Paul is saying here, none of it we're tracking with, and that makes complete sense, unless you value Jesus Christ. see, if you did that, everything changes. Listen to what happens to people who get to know Jesus Christ.

[ 36 : 34 ] Philippians 3, verse 8. This is Paul after listing a number of his earthly honors. Philippians 3, verse 8.

He says, I count everything, that is, I count every single thing as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

And it's interesting, is it not, how he's put in this. He's saying, Christ is to him so valuable that it is strictly speaking the experience of having him, the experience of knowing about him and learning about him, that is what is of surpassing worth.

And just to be clear, what's being surpassed in worth is the worth of all your interests. And when that happens, everything we've been talking about becomes ten times easier.

you literally start counting these things as rubbish compared to Christ. As happened to Paul in chapter 3, verse 8. In fact, as you get to know Jesus Christ, you realize Christ himself esteems earthly things as rubbish.

[ 38 : 03 ] And I'll tell you why that's such good news, because it's not as though Christ sort of, you know, he falls his arms and he thinks to himself, how politically significant is 15-year-old Simeon Williams.

Like, I need to know because if I lavish my grace upon him and save him and he's not, that might be a problem. Because if he's not politically and socially and financially amazing, I may have to just pass him by.

The Bible says Jesus does the exact opposite. It says he chose the lowly things, the things that are despised, the things that are rejected.

It says he made himself nothing for people who were nothing much. He made himself an insignificant, unimpressive, mere man and for his father's interest he did that.

For our interest he did that. For us who were his enemies, he laid down the biggest personal interest you can possibly lay down, the man laid down the life, his life.

[ 39 : 21 ] He laid down his sinless life to atone for our sinful life so that on the basis of that atonement we can be forgiven of our sins.

We can be made right with God. We can be filled with the Holy Spirit and we can go to heaven. We, we, we, we, we. Look at how much we have benefited from someone not thinking of their own interests as something to be insisted upon, as something to be grasped.

Look at how we have benefited from the humility, the stupendous humility, the staggering humility of Jesus Christ. And yes, of course, look at how Christ benefited from the humility of Christ.

Verse 9, he is now by virtue of humility highly exalted with the name that is above every name such that he is worthy of the adoration and the worship of everything.

Do you see how that sort of constellation of ideas, do you see how meditating on things like this, how constantly internalizing things like this, will literally change the mentality of your mind?

[ 40 : 42 ] It will change your perspective about your interests, causing you to hold on to them more loosely, causing you to let go of them more freely, especially when you realize that letting them go may make for more peace and unity.

Do you see that, how that works, how it sort of rubs off on you? If you see that, then study Jesus Christ. Mind, mind, the mind of Christ.

Let us be in hard pursuit of him. Read about Jesus in the gospels. Have devotions regularly.

Come to church regularly. Listen to sermons regularly. Sing. sing about Jesus.

Devour the Bible and humility will set in. It will when the hymn writer's words become true.

[ 41 : 48 ] Humility will set in as the cares of this world go strangely dim in the light of his glory and his grace.

Let's pray. Lord God, I praise you for being so powerful that you can use weak vessels like me.

I thank you that you're so gracious that you could save weak, sinful people like me. I thank you for this opportunity to serve this church.

I pray that there would be mutual encouragement. I pray that through the words, the weak words that were preached, the feeble preaching, I pray that you would do amazing things in this church.

You would transform our minds. that you would download, you would instill in us this mind of Christ and that it would be glorious in our eyes and it would be sweetness to us, that there would be a sweet unity in our midst unto your glory and to your praise.

[ 43 : 12 ] I pray that it would be enough for us such that we hold loosely to things, we don't fight, we don't bicker, we don't enter into one-upmanship, we don't have rivalry, we don't have war in our midst.

I pray that we would be of one mind by the humility of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.