

# Gospel Partners Degrade Themselves Through Obedience

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, well as I'm bringing this up, let me take you back to my childhood a little bit. And this isn't actually an excursus, this is where I was going to go anyway, I promise.

But let me take you back. Any of you guys ever been, were any of you ever given chores by your parents to do as a kid? Oh yeah, pretty much everybody.

Okay, many of you were given chores by your parents, and how many of you had to do it for free? How many of you had to do it for free? Most of you, okay, well I guess I was very fortunate. I did not have to do them for free, we got compensated.

We got compensated for vacuuming the house, for cleaning the bathrooms, and I got richly rewarded for 25 cents for cleaning the bathrooms or for vacuuming the house, or whatever my job was for that week.

[ 1 : 01 ] And so my brothers and I, what we used to do is we would take those quarters that we saved, we would save them and we would combine them and go to the store and we would buy Lego together. And that's how mom and dad raised us to be good communists.

Well, I have a friend of mine who comes from Brazil, and he was raised in a bit of a different situation. His family actually had a maid.

The maid would do most of these household chores for them, and so that included things like washing the dishes every day because they didn't have a dishwasher, dishwasher machine. Now you might think that my friend must have grown up to become a spoiled brat, right?

He didn't have to do any household chores, and that's what happens to a lot of children who grow up not having to do those things. Well, that's not the case because his mother, who was a very wise woman in this way, what his mother did is she still required him to do the dishes from time to time, even though they had a maid who could do the job for them.

Now, my friend has told me since then that when he was a kid, he absolutely hated this chore. And he hated the chore not just because washing the dishes was boring and time-consuming.

[ 2 : 16 ] Maybe some of you hate the chore for that reason, right? What made it worse for him was that this was something that the maid was supposed to do. This was the maid's work.

So for him, the job was lowly, the job was degrading. His mother made him do it. Why? Because it was a lesson to him.

She didn't want her son to grow up thinking that he was too good for tasks that were lowly, tasks that were degrading. And so his mom purposely made her son do the maid's work because she wanted to cultivate in him an attitude of humility.

Now, the last couple of weeks, we've been exploring the idea of humility. We've been exploring the idea of how this humility relates to the fact that we are partners together in the gospel.

You see, back in the first century, the apostle Paul was writing to a small church, a church that he had just founded in the Macedonian city of Philippi.

[ 3 : 19 ] And this was a very warm, very affectionate letter that Paul is writing. Paul is a prisoner. Paul is probably in Rome, and he's writing out of gratitude to these Philippian Christians because they have continued to support him.

Because they have been supporting his church planting efforts, and now they've scraped together enough money to support his needs while he's under house arrest. Because in the Roman system, you had to pay for your own expenses when you were in prison.

And what they've done is they've chosen one of their own people, a man named Epaphroditus, to travel to Rome with this money to deliver it to Paul. So not only does Paul receive their financial gift,

Paul receives the encouragement of a personal visit from Epaphroditus.

And so Paul writes a letter to them, a letter to the Philippians. He gives it to Epaphroditus to take back to his home church in Philippi. And in this letter, Paul is thanking them.

Paul is encouraging the church. Paul is giving them instructions on how they can maintain this partnership in the gospel, both with him and with one another.

[ 4 : 30 ] And Paul wants them to continue to partner together in advancing the good news that God has given the whole world, his own son, to save people from their sin, their rebellion against God, that God wants to make them not just Jews, but Gentiles as well, part of this new kingdom that he is bringing to the earth.

The ruler of this kingdom is Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. And one of the key features of this new culture, something that definitely made it stand out from the Roman world around it, one of the key features of this new kingdom culture is humility.

It's humility. Gospel partnership requires humility. Now, humility isn't just, you know, sitting around, moping around, what a loser I am, right?

That's not the idea of what being humble is. Humility means I don't even think about what a loser I am because I'm obsessed with the glory of God. I'm enthralled by the holiness of God.

I'm amazed by the love of God. I'm fixated on God. Just like that verse in Hebrews chapter 12 that we were just reciting together, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.

[ 5 : 49 ] That's where your eyes are set, not on yourself, on him. And so we're eager to love other people the way God does. We're not even thinking about ourselves anymore.

Humility begins with the right recognition of who God is and who you are. You know God's place.

You know your place. And humility is the glue that holds this gospel partnership together.

It prevents rivalries. It prevents factions. It prevents petty disputes from taking seed, from sprouting up like weeds in the garden of our gospel partnership.

And so here's the message from God the Holy Spirit. The message the Holy Spirit is speaking through his servant Paul. Not only to the Philippians, but he's speaking it to you.

He's speaking it to me. Here's what the Holy Spirit says about the humility that gospel partnership requires. Philippians 2, verses 1-11. If you're using one of the Blue Bibles, our usher's handed out.

[ 6 : 48 ] That's on page 980. Philippians 2, verses 1-11. I'll follow along as I read this. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any 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. 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, to the glory of God the Father.

This is the word of the Lord. Now we've been looking closely these last two weeks at verses 6 through 11. This seems to be some sort of hymn that Paul is either quoting or which he writes himself, and it focuses on the path of utter humiliation that Jesus Christ chose for himself.

[ 8 : 39 ] Paul is reminding the Philippian Christians of this true story because he wants them to adopt the mindset that God the Son had.

The mindset that God the Son had when he took on human form when he became a man, a human being like you and me. Paul wants them to share the humility that Jesus Christ chose, and he wants them to share the glory that Jesus Christ has received as a result of that humility.

So we learned the last couple of weeks, we've learned first of all, just like Jesus, gospel partners decline to claim their rights. gospel partners decline to claim their rights.

God the Son chose not to take advantage of his godness, the fact that he is God. He chose not to take advantage of that, to claim his right to, you know, appear in power and glory in order to be served and worshiped by his human subjects, something he has a right to and someday will take

place.

But instead of claiming his rights, Jesus deprived himself of glory by becoming a man, he became a human being like you and me. And so gospel partners also deprive themselves of glory.

[10:00] Gospel partners also deprive themselves of glory. Their mindset is that they don't have to appear great in the eyes of other people. They're okay with looking weak and foolish.

They're okay if they don't get all the good things. They're okay if they don't get all the good treatment that they think they deserve or that they do in fact deserve. They have chosen the path of humility that our Lord chose and they've done it so that they will receive the far greater glory that their Lord has received.

And so we know that Jesus Christ declined to claim his rights, deprived himself of glory, and as we read in John chapter 1 in the words of the Apostle John, the word, that's Jesus, the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory.

Glory is of the only son from the father full of grace and truth. That's where true glory is found in that humiliation. And this was completely unexpected.

Even Jesus' own disciples, these men who were around him 24-7, it took them a really long time to catch on to what was happening. This was totally foreign to their mindset.

[11:20] The idea that God would also become a man was a really shocking turn of events and if that doesn't shock you, it's perhaps because you've grown too accustomed to it.

Try going and telling your Muslim neighbor that God became a man. That will scandalize them because it is shocking. To religious people who haven't been brought up here in the Christmas story all of their lives, people who want to elevate God to a position of glory and grandeur, and that's a good impulse.

It is a ghastly idea that God would stoop and descend, lower himself to become a human being. It seems blasphemous.

Certainly, Jesus' contemporaries thought of it as blasphemous. But that's exactly Paul's point. It seems ghastly. It seems blasphemous because it's degrading.

And just when you thought that was bad enough, if that is not scandalous enough, here's what Paul says happened to Jesus in verse 8, Philippians chapter 2, verse 8.

[12:34] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

He humbled himself by becoming obedient. So Paul says, it wasn't enough for Jesus merely to decline to claim his rights and to deprive himself of glory. Jesus Christ degraded himself through obedience as well.

Jesus Christ degraded himself through obedience. That word degrade is a harsh word. We don't like it.

We don't like it when someone treats us in a degrading manner. It feels horrible. But it's an accurate word for what Jesus went through.

If you're like me, you don't like it when you get ordered around. I've been at jobs where I'm the employee at the bottom of the totem pole. And when you're at the bottom of the totem pole, there's a whole bunch of other animals sitting on your head.

[13:38] It's not fun feeling like you're merely an instrument of your boss's will. We feel like this obedience robs us of our dignity, robs us of our identity. It feels like we're being robbed of our identity as free agents, as people who can choose our own destiny and our own path.

And in our culture, there is nothing more glorious than choosing our own destiny for ourselves and going our own way and picking our own path. This week, I was trying to find an image to illustrate, maybe a photo illustrating the word obedience.

And so I did an image search on the word obedience. obedience, guess what images kept coming up? Images of dogs. Obedience school.

I did not expect that and I was kind of amused by that. Who wants that kind of life? Well, I mean, maybe some of you think, well, my dog seems pretty happy. Maybe you should learn from your dog. That's an important lesson. But we don't like the idea no one wants to be reduced to the level of a dog when someone comes up to you and says, you're a dog.

[14:46] That's not a compliment. It's humiliating. It's degrading. This degrading path of obedience is the path that God the Son chose.

Here's how Jesus explains it to a crowd full of people who want to kill him. Here's what Jesus says in John chapter 5. Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees his Father doing.

For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. So Jesus talks about himself like a child obeying his Father. God the Son has chosen.

He chose to submit to the will of God the Father. He chose to obey him rather than doing what Satan wanted him to do, which is choose his own path and his own destiny.

This will be a fatal decision for God the Son. This will be a fatal decision for Jesus because Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, will obey his Father so well and so completely that he will obey him to death.

[ 15 : 57 ] When Paul writes, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, Paul is drawing out what a ghastly, what a degrading fate this death was.

To be crucified. That was the worst possible thing that could happen to you. If you were a subject of the Roman Empire, as Jesus and his Jewish countrymen were, not only was his death literally excruciating, that's where we get the word excruciating from, the crucifix, but his death was completely humiliating.

There are ancient ways of killing people and of torturing people that were more physically painful than crucifixion, as awful as that was, but the very essence of crucifixion was that it was a public spectacle.

You were hoisted naked on a cross where you slowly died next to a public highway covered in your own blood and vomit and waste while passersby laughed at you, ridiculed you, spat on you.

It was so dehumanizing, so degrading that Rome would not crucify its own citizens for any reason whatsoever.

[ 17 : 34 ] If you were a citizen of the city of Rome, you were not crucified. It was reserved for the worst of crimes and in particular for rebellion against the might of Rome.

that's the horrible death that the humility of Jesus Christ, the obedience of Jesus Christ led to. So if you hear people say things like, yeah, humility doesn't work, it doesn't get you ahead.

You can't get ahead in this world by being humble. In the short term, they may be right because Jesus Christ degraded himself through obedience and that obedience and that humility didn't make Jesus successful.

It got Jesus killed and killed in the most degrading manner possible. Now, Jesus knew all along that this was going to happen.

this did not come as a surprise to him. Over and over in the gospel accounts, he reiterated to his disciples that this is what was going to happen.

[ 18 : 50 ] And he not only chose this path, he not only started walking towards Jerusalem on a death march, but he also demanded that his disciples choose it too.

he commanded them, come after me. He commanded them, follow me as he is walking towards Jerusalem. And the night immediately before his crucifixion, his disciple John tells us about a degrading household chore that Jesus insisted on doing.

And here's what he writes, John chapter 13. Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

[ 20 : 18 ] He came to Simon Peter who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, what I am doing now you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.

Peter said to him, you shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me.

Simon Peter said to him, Lord, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, the one who is bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean.

And you are clean, but not every one of you. For he knew who was to betray him. That was why he said, not all of you are clean. When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, do you understand what I have done to you?

You call me teacher and Lord. And you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

[ 21 : 40 ] for I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. So the son of the most high God, the commander of the armies of heaven, king of kings, and lord of lords, strips down to his underwear, wraps a towel around his waist, and chooses to do the filthy duty that only the lowliest servant would be forced to do.

He takes a basin of water and he uses that water to wash the nasty, grimy, smelly feet of his disciples. Now, in our culture, that would be strange and kind of gross.

You can tell by Peter's reaction, though, it was more than that. This was utterly shocking in the culture Jesus lived in. Even to this day in the Middle East, the feet are viewed as shameful.

I don't know if many of you remember years ago President George W. Bush being at a news conference and someone throws their shoe, a guy throws his shoe at him.

[ 23 : 09 ] Why his shoe? Because that's the most shameful thing he could throw. So for us, this is like you've won the opportunity to welcome the queen herself to your house for dinner.

Wow, that's amazing. Who gets that opportunity? And you've been agonizing over dinner preparation for months and your whole family is wearing their absolute best clothes and you've got this horrible knot in your stomach because somebody of such importance, such preeminence is eating dinner with you in your home.

And the doorbell rings and you open the door and there's Queen Elizabeth II. And she's got a scepter in her hand and then you realize that's not a scepter, that's a toilet bowl brush.

And she tells you that while she's here she's decided she'd like to clean out your toilets for you.

That's what this is like for Jesus' disciples.

Multiply that by a hundred and that's what it's like for Jesus' disciples. And then Jesus tells them once this has all taken place, he looks them in the eye and he tells them, I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done to you.

[ 24 : 29 ] Jesus Christ degraded himself through obedience so gospel partners imitate his humility. Jesus Christ degraded himself through obedience so gospel partners imitate his humility.

That's why Paul is showing the Philippian Christians the mindset of Jesus Christ. Now a couple of weeks ago we read Philippians chapter 2 verse 5 and there's one translation of the Bible that really draws this truth out clearly.

In your relationships with one another in your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

How that looks in real life. There are just so many examples we could go through which demonstrate how degrading this obedience this humility can be. One of the best things I like to do when I'm trying to think of what are some practical ways to apply this is just to look at the surrounding context.

How does Paul apply this? Well we see in Philippians chapter 4 verse 2 and there Paul mentions a couple of women in the Philippian church by name. You see what's going to happen is Epaphroditus is going to arrive in Philippi with this letter.

[ 25 : 51 ] It's fun to think that this is actually historically what happened. So what I'm about to say actually happened. Epaphroditus arrived in Philippi with this letter. The church gets together in the courtyard of a house.

They're all going to sit down because that's what they did. One of the elders of the church is going to read the letter aloud to everybody sitting there. and imagine the awkward and embarrassed looks on people's faces when this sentence is read aloud.

I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. And everybody turns and looks at them because everybody knows exactly what Paul's talking about.

We don't I guess but they did. These two women are having some sort of conflict. And it's more than just a one time quarrel. It's think about it. It's taken a long time for news from Philippi to get to

Paul through Epaphroditus.

He's had to travel by boat and then over land. And it'll take a few more weeks for this letter to get back to Philippi. So Paul knows there's got to be some sort of long term simmering tension between these two women.

[ 27 : 07 ] There's something that's preventing them from partnering together to advance the gospel. And notice that in the next verse Paul refers to them as those who have labored side by side with me in the gospel.

He's thinking about their partnership in the gospel and there's something that's hindering their partnership. It's getting in the way. And neither of them is willing to degrade themselves through obedience through humility to work out their differences.

churches. And that's not at all unusual in our churches is it? Can you think of anyone in this church family that you have a sort of a long standing unresolved tension with?

Is there anyone here that you merely tolerate? Is there anyone who whenever that person walks into the room you just sort of involuntarily tense up just a little bit? Is there someone who whenever you think about them or talk about them you find yourself thinking or saying critical things?

And could it be that Jesus Christ is calling you to this humbling and degrading responsibility? That you would take the initiative just like we talked about last year that commandment do not murder talked about how we resolve our anger.

[ 28 : 28 ] You take the initiative and go to this brother or sister that you have attention with that you would be the first to open your mouth and confess in what ways you have sinned against this person.

That you would confess what you've been clinging to basically a low level grudge a low level bitterness that you would tell them you were wrong and you would ask them if they would forgive you.

And we have to be careful because it's easy to use that sort of confession as a form of manipulation where you're saying okay I sinned against you and now let me get that out of the way now let me tell you how you sinned against me.

Right? Well that's the worst. You confess your sin you ask for their forgiveness and you can come back to how they've sinned against you but not yet. For now leave it there.

You let yourself be humbled you let yourself be degraded even if the other person won't admit wrong or even worse won't accept your request for forgiveness. You take that risk.

[ 29 : 32 ] Now why would you do that? Why would you do that degrading potentially humiliating thing? Well I can encourage you by saying first of all usually in my experience I find that approach actually disarms the other person.

Usually when you take this sort of humble initiative it opens up a dialogue and that actually begins the process and can end up resolving years of tensions and conflict.

You'd be amazed at how the Holy Spirit can use humility to soften even the hardest most bitter and resentful hearts. But there may be some people so entrenched and resistant to your humility that they will not repent of their own sin.

So what if this attempt to restore gospel partnership goes bad? Why run such a risk? The risk of being humbled and degraded? Why obey God by dealing with your own sin and doing it first?

It's because when gospel partners degrade themselves through obedience that is not the end of the story. You don't just degrade yourself and then stay degraded forever and ever.

[ 30 : 43 ] That's not what happens. That is not what will happen to you. Remember what Paul writes in Philippians chapter 2 verse 8 about Jesus Christ.

being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.

Jesus did not remain dead on the cross. Jesus did not remain buried in the grave. That intense moment of shame and humiliation is not the end of the story.

Paul continues 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 to the glory of God the Father.

So Jesus Christ did degrade himself through obedience but he didn't do it because he was mired in this suicidal pit of self-hatred and self-loathing.

[ 32 : 06 ] That's not why Jesus chose this path of humiliation. The reason Jesus chose this path is found in verses 9 through 11.

It's because Jesus Christ will be honored as Lord. Don't you remember what we recited together earlier this service? Hebrews chapter 12 verses 1 and 2.

Take out your bulletins again. Let's say that together once again. Say this with me. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

I don't even have a script in front of me so I'm going to depart from it. I've had a number of conversations in growth group and personal conversations this past week and I want to present to you that there are two stories of the Christian life and one of them is the truth, the other is a lie from Satan himself.

I'll start with the lie. The lie says that what the good life is is you start out and then you work hard and things get better and better for you and you climb the ladder to success and to the good life and you get there by working hard or by having lots of faith and you gain success.

[ 34 : 00 ] You gain health, wealth and prosperity. Life just gets better and better. The American dream. We call this the prosperity gospel. It is the lifeblood of the world.

Martin Luther called it the glory story. There's the idea there's a straight shot up the ladder to glory if you work hard and if you have enough faith. When Jesus first told his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem and he was going to be handed over to the teachers of the law, to the chief priests, they were going to beat him, mock him.

He was going to be put to death. You know what Peter, the apostle Peter, said to him? He pulled him aside and rebuked him and said, this will never happen to you, Jesus.

And you know what Jesus said right back to Peter? Get behind me, Satan. You do not have in mind the things of man, the things of God, but the things of man. Because Peter bought into the prosperity gospel.

Peter bought into the American dream. Peter bought into the glory story. That says, straight shot, life and then the good life. If you work hard and have enough faith.

[ 35 : 25 ] Philippians chapter 2, and in fact the entire New Testament, you can't go two pages in the New Testament without seeing another story laid out for us. The author Paul Miller talks about this story as a J-curve.

You start out with life. You descend. You start with life and glory. You descend into death and shame and suffering. And then you go back up to resurrection life. And he says, that's the shape of Jesus' life in Philippians chapter 2.

That's the shape of Paul's life in Philippians chapter 3 where he says, whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Because he wants to reach the resurrection from the dead. That's even the shape of Epaphroditus' life.

In Philippians chapter 2. Where he goes to help Paul and he gets sick and almost dies. And then Paul says, honor such men. The little bitty J-curve. And that is the shape of your life if you are a Christian.

Because you adopt the mindset of Jesus Christ. Christ. And that's what Hebrews 12 verses 1-2 tell us. Because we look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. We're staring at him.

[ 36 : 34 ] We're looking at him. And what does Jesus do? He endures the cross. He despises the shame. He descends down to the bottom of the J. And why? For the joy.

For the joy that is set before him. He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God in resurrection life. And Paul says in verse 3, consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor be weary when reproved by him.

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. In other words, Paul is saying that whether it is whether it is suffering, either suffering that you've chosen for the sake of Christ or suffering that has come upon you without your choice, whether it is whether it is you losing, giving up possessions and wealth, either voluntarily or having them stripped away

from you, whether it is you losing privilege and honor and glory, whether it is you losing your reason for feeling righteous as Paul did, his pedigree and his performance as a Pharisee.

When you lose it all and the world says you've suffered a setback, you've fallen back down the ladder and glory is unattainable and life is unattainable and honor is unattainable, Paul says you're on the road to glory because the Lord is treating you as his son.

[ 38 : 25 ] That's the good life. That's the way to resurrection life. In John chapter 20, there's a beautiful account that follows Jesus' resurrection and his disciples have all seen Jesus risen from the dead in the flesh.

John says severe understatement, the understatement of the understatements of the Bible. He says they were glad. They're glad.

There's one disciple though who doesn't share that gladness because he missed out on this appearance. In John chapter 20, John explains this situation. Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, we have seen the Lord. But he said to them, unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, peace be with you.

[ 39 : 39 ] Then he said to Thomas, put your finger here and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.

Thomas answered him, my Lord and my God. Thomas had bought into the glory story.

He had bought into the prosperity gospel. He had bought into the American dream that said Jesus was going to send the ladder to glory and when Jesus died, he was crushed. And so will we be if we do not understand our lives take on the shape of Jesus' life.

He was crushed. But then Jesus stands before him and he believes and he says, my Lord and my God.

And he finds the joy of knowing the risen Christ and being found in him. this is what made the incarnation and the crucifixion of God the Son worth it all.

[ 41 : 01 ] This is what made the degrading shame and the ghastly disgrace of the cross worth it all. Because Thomas' confession is just a hint of what's to come.

It is just that drop of water on your tongue right before you get smacked in the face by an ocean. An ocean of joy and praise when every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess the same thing that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

There is a day coming when Jesus Christ will be honored as Lord. And brothers and sisters, that day is coming soon. Jesus Christ will be honored as Lord.

So, gospel partners will share His glory. And that's why you can be willing to choose and to embrace the path of humility and degrading obedience to God.

Even when every fiber of your sinful nature is screaming, you don't deserve this shameful treatment, you have your rights. you can overcome the craving of your sinful flesh.

[ 42 : 16 ] You can overcome the craving to look like a good person. You can overcome the craving to be seen as fashionable or strong or wise. You can allow yourself to appear bad in the eyes of others, to appear as a loser, as a weakling, as a fool.

You can choose this path that Jesus chose because you belong to Him. You are united with Him by faith. You will share His glory.

I have a friend of mine who once provided home care for older men who had severe autism, men who were hard to understand, emotionally unstable, who, some of them had suffered sexual abuse, and they couldn't take care of any of their own needs.

And this friend had to help them get dressed. He had to help them use the toilet. He had to bathe them. All the classroom experience in the world could not prepare him for the shocking reality of this work.

It was degrading and it was humiliating. And it was glorious. There is a glory to be found in this work, the glory that comes from living the life of service that we have been chosen for.

[ 43 : 38 ] The life of service that God has rescued us for. The life of service that He has prepared for us to do. Your glory, it may not be a glory that the world around you recognizes, but it's a glory that is going to far surpass the honor, the reputation offered by this world.

It is going to far surpass the honor and reputation that are already becoming obsolete. Because Paul writes later in Philippians chapter 3, and this is his own story, his own J-shaped life. Whatever gain I had, I count everything as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For His sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him.

And then he says, one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

[ 44 : 56 ] And so we are straining and we are pressing on like runners toward a goal because the prize we will win is to be with Christ Himself and to share His glory as children of God.

And when Christ who is your life appears, you also will appear with Him in glory. Beloved, that is who you were called to be.

That is what you were made for. Jesus Christ degraded Himself through obedience so gospel partners imitate His humility and Jesus Christ will be honored as Lord.

So we as gospel partners, I promise you, humble yourself, remain steadfast to the end and you will share His glory.

Our God, our Father, and hear His glory. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 46 : 05 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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