

Having the mind of Christ in his humility

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everybody. Nice to see you here. Lord bless you and give you grace today as you listen to His Word and seek to apply it.

We're reading from Philippians 2, verses 1-18. It'll come up on the screen, but you can follow along in your Bible too. Philippians 2, verses 1-18.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing.

[1 : 1 4] Taking the very nature of a servant, being found in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place, and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure children of God, without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe, as you hold out the word of life, in order that I may boast on the day of Christ, that I did not run or labor for nothing, but even if I am being poured out like a drink offering, on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you, so you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Amen, and the Lord will bless to us the reading of His word. A priest was driving home when suddenly his car broke down. Fortunately, there is a nearby farm, and so he knocked on the farmhouse door, explained his situation to the farmer.

[2 : 5 9] No problem, said the farmer. I have a horse you can borrow, but one thing to be aware of, this is a holy horse. And to make it go, you have to say, praise the Lord, and to make it stop, you have to say, amen.

The priest thanked the farmer, and when he was on his way home, about a mile down the road, suddenly a dog jumped out, started to bark and spooked the horse. The horse began galloping away.

The priest was shouting, stop, stop, but nothing would stop it. Little did the priest know that about a mile ahead, there was a cliff with a precipice, and if the horse did not stop, he would die.

Stop, stop! But it wouldn't stop, so he prayed, Lord, please help this horse to stop. At just the moment the horse was to go over the precipice, he remembered, amen, he shouted.

The horse stopped. The priest was really pleased with himself, so clever to remember, to shout amen. But then he thought, I better thank God for this, so he said, praise the Lord.

[4 : 15] Well, you obviously got it. Our subject today is humility. Having the mind of Christ, let the mind of Christ be in you.

Have the humility of Jesus. A point of that illustration, of course, is that it's possible even for priests to be proud, but actually we should have mercy on the priest.

We all know that humility is an incredibly difficult grace for any of us to get, because as soon as you think, I'm humble, you're probably proud, and that's the problem.

Humility, said T.S. Eliot, is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve. Nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of self. Sometimes it's at the expense of others.

Well, I'm not the best in the world, but I'm better than him, or her, at least. Which is a very proud statement indeed. But you remember the old country and western song by Mac Davis?

[5 : 20] Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way. Ken knows that. Are you perfect in every way, Ken? No, no. I can't wait to look in the mirror, because I get better looking each day.

To know me is to love me. I must be a heck of a man. He didn't say that, but I did. Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble, but I'm doing the best that I can. Humility is an incredibly difficult grace to attain.

Romans 12, verse 3. I think it might be on the screen, is it? Maybe not. For by the grace given me, I say to every one of you, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

To be humble, you have to stop thinking highly of yourself. You have to think more of the grace that God has given you in Christ Jesus.

Humility, says the Proverbs 22, verse 4, is the fear of the Lord. Its wages are riches and honor and life. In C.S. Lewis, I think we have the quote on the next slide, he said, Humility is not thinking less of yourself.

[6 : 40] It is thinking of yourself less. Yeah, so, we're not to do ourselves down. Oh, what a worm I am, the most miserable of creatures. Nobody would like me.

That would be dishonoring because God made you for his glory. But the problem with pride is that pride thinks too much of itself.

We think too much of ourselves. We can be absorbed by ourselves. And actually, it's not just those who are arrogant, is it? I mean, people who are always having a go at themselves, who feel miserable every day, who do themselves down every day, they're thinking too much of themselves too.

We are to think less of ourselves and think more of Jesus. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let the mind of Christ become your mind.

So, when we think of Jesus, and we think of Jesus who he is by nature, and what he came to do in terms of his sacrifice, surely we are amazed and glad and rejoice that Paul says he humbled himself.

[7 : 58] Jesus chose the path of humility. humility. And to become like Jesus is to choose the path of humility. It is to develop the attitude and mindset that puts others above ourselves and thinks of others more highly than we should think of ourselves.

If we are to follow Christ in his affection, we show love to the church. If we are to follow Christ in his determination, we serve the church. If we follow Christ in terms of his humility, we are willing to serve the interests of others in the church above our own.

And that's our sermon focus for today. When we think of Christ, who by nature is God, who became human and suffered the dreadful agonies of the cross, how can we be proud of ourselves?

Especially when we realize that he went to the cross to heal us and to cleanse us and to forgive us of all our sins. He suffered and died for us.

How can we be proud and arrogant and boastful in the light of such a truth? As God's chosen people, Paul said in Colossians 3.12, as God's chosen people holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

[9 : 26] And in the context of Colossians 3, that's important because Paul is speaking about the need for Christians in the church to bear with each other and forgive one another. If any of you has a grievance against someone, forgive us, the Lord forgive you.

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since as members of one body, you were called to peace and be thankful.

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your heart and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

There can be no room in your assemblies, no room in your congregations for bitterness and for anger and for the venting of frustration at one another.

Let the peace of Christ rule in you. Be thankful. Be patient with each other. Bear with one another in love. All of those teachings require humility.

[10 : 38] This is to have the mind of Christ. Okay, so what can we say about this passage? To express the mind of Christ, next slide please, in humility is allowing Jesus to be the model which we replicate.

Paul opens chapter 2 by saying your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. You want to know how to live in the kingdom of God? Follow the example of Jesus.

Let His mind be in you. Let His attitude be yours. What we don't do is say, well I'm not Jesus so I can be excused.

I do hear people say that in the church. Well of course I'm not Jesus, you know, I'm not perfect. Well we all know that. We all know that we're not perfect and we all know that we are not Jesus but that does not give us a get out of jail free.

The point is Jesus expected and believed that by the Holy Spirit we could live as He lived. we could do as He does. We could be as He is. Because when Jesus came and revealed Himself in the appearance of a man though He never ceased to be God, He gave up the independent use of His divine attributes and relied entirely upon the Holy Spirit to do His work.

[12 : 02] And that same Holy Spirit lives in us. So yes, we're not perfectly loving, we're not perfectly humble, we're not perfectly gentle and kind but we should be becoming more humble and gentle and patient and kind the longer we walk with Jesus.

Let this attitude that Jesus had toward others be your attitude. Stop yourself when you start grumbling and complaining and mourning and all of that.

Stop yourself and ask yourself is this the attitude of Jesus now? So when I'm worried and when I'm stressed and when I'm anxious and when I'm angry and when I'm frustrated and when I'm discontent, is this the mind of Jesus?

Would Jesus be happy with my response now? It becomes a way of directing your life every day into the attitude of Jesus.

does replicate his attitude. And what was his attitude? Verse 7 says to become a servant. And when we think of Jesus as a servant, it's hard to get past his washing of the disciples' feet.

[13 : 13] Now, if you're my daughter, you don't like feet. Eve does not like feet. So no bare feet, please, in church. Eve does not like feet. Okay. Sometimes they say, Eve, if you love me, you would wash my feet or you would massage my feet.

and the look on her face is priceless. She's not going to do that. But washing her feet in a dusty country like Israel was the requirement of slaves.

Slaves did it. It was required of slaves to wash their feet and it was one of the lowliest jobs you could imagine. And Jesus, before the last supper, took a bowl of water and washed his disciples' feet.

And they were all astonished and offended. Peter was offended. You're never going to wash my feet, Lord. If I don't wash you, you have no part of me, he said. Wash everything about me, then he said.

But the point is that this was too low an action on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ. But he said, I've given you an example that you should follow. If you want to follow me, you have to be prepared to take the lowliest place of all.

[14 : 29] In fact, Paul is indicating here that you have to be prepared even to die for your brothers just as Christ did when he went to the cross. You replicate his example.

He did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. And Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians for a number of reasons.

He emphasized joy and he emphasized the attitude and the example of Christ. But his fundamental reason is found in chapter 4. He had learned that there was an argument in the church between two ladies and I'm sure he uses pseudonyms so that's not really their name, Syntyche and Yodia.

Yodia, as the name suggests, can be translated into English, odious. So this is somebody who is causing a bit of a stink.

Syntyche is sensitive, soon touchy, sensitive. Two model Christian disciples who had labored with Paul, who had fallen out with each other and were causing grief in the church.

[15 : 46] And some people in the church were saying, I'm on Syntyche's side and others were saying, I'm on Yodia's side and Paul was saying, no, no, that's not the way to be. The way to be is to say, stop grumbling, stop complaining, forgive one another just as God in Christ forgives you.

don't allow division to come among you and division would never come among you if you had the mind of Christ. You would take the humble prayer.

You'd wash feet. You wouldn't stand on your dignity. You'll see that's important in a moment. And say, well, I'm right and she's wrong. It's funny, isn't it, that it's always the other one that's wrong when we fall out with people.

But actually, we should look at ourselves first and we should forgive. Now to counteract this feeling, next slide please, this division that was going on in Philippi, Paul reminds them of two very important things about Jesus.

First, he references Christ's deity. He says, when Christ came, he was in the very nature of God, the very form of God, the morphe of God, you know, metamorphosis, the change of form.

[17 : 09] He was in the form of God and nature or form refers to the essential character of the person. Not necessarily that which you see on the outside, but nonetheless that which reveals the true person on the inside.

And the true person on the inside that people couldn't always see in Jesus was God. God was by nature, Jesus was by nature God.

And yet, he appeared as a man. And the word appearance is the Greek word schema, the schema or the scheme, you know the word scheme.

The scheme is the structure of something. So, the outward appearance of Jesus was he was a man, but inwardly he was God. God came to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

And Paul says he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. It's a clumsy way of saying he emptied himself. It means that he didn't decide, hey, I'm God by nature.

[18 : 24] They're messing in a big style on earth. So, why should I go and help them out? Why should I rescue and deliver them? They've got themselves in their mess. They deserve everything they've got.

He could have done that because he is by nature God. But he did not stand upon his dignity. He humbled himself. He took the form of a lowly person.

He allowed himself to be mistreated and misunderstood. He took the frailties of human flesh in order that he might suffer and die because God cannot suffer and die.

The immortal cannot die. He did all of that to save us. Not once did he refuse, though he could have. And Paul says, amazingly, your attitude to others in the church when you fall out with them should be just like Jesus.

Because who are you to refuse to forgive when you worship a Lord who was willing to come and die for you and forgive you? How could you withhold forgiveness when you're so dependent upon his forgiveness?

[19 : 36] Have you noticed that when Jesus taught us to pray, he said, forgive us our trespasses as what? As we forgive those who trespass against us. So I want you to stop and ask yourself now, is there someone you're not forgiving?

Is there someone you're being arrogantly, stubbornly difficult about? Because they're so annoying, you know. So difficult.

If only they were nicer to me, I'd be nicer to them. No, no, no, no, no. That is not the attitude of Christ Jesus and it should not be our attitude. Now again, I understand that some people hurt us deeply.

I understand that some people do unspeakably terrible things to us. But we need the grace of God to work in us to allow us to forgive. But we need to be willing to forgive.

For unless we're willing to forgive, we will not receive the grace to forgive. Am I right? There can be no excuse for a refusal to forgive. Jesus said, look, follow me in this.

[20 : 43] Humble yourself. Become nothing. Be willing to die. for the sake of others. That's developing the mind of Christ.

So this reference to his deity, this reference to his humanity is quite amazing when you think that this is wonderful Christology. I mean, if you go to Bible college as I have and you study these things, I mean, this is a year's work of New Testament theology.

But Paul didn't kind of do it to fill people's minds with theology. He gives them this truth to say, this is how you forgive one another when you fall out in church. Theology is to be applied if it's to be useful.

Paul says, well, you can know all mysteries and all knowledge, but if you do not have love, you're nothing. It's not the knowledgeable that Christ blesses. It is those who love like him and forgive like him and show mercy like he does.

Have this mind among you. replicate his example. Secondly, have the mind of Christ by expressing his mind in allowing him to influence the sacrifices that we make.

[21 : 55] Next slide. The sacrifices that we make. It is hard to be humble when we have been wronged. Because everything within us kind of protests.

I've been so badly treated. They shouldn't have done that to me. Don't they know how nice I am? I didn't deserve it. And perhaps you didn't. But this is when we're called to make a sacrifice.

You see, when we're wronged and when we're hurt and when we're called to forgive, at that point we make a choice. Am I going to continue to live with the pain of this?

Am I going to allow this to scar and sear my soul forever? Or am I going to let it go? Because the person who wrongs us very seldom worries about it.

And the person who's wounded is us, the wronged. And so part of the sacrifice we're called to make is that understandable desire to want to have our vindication.

[23 : 04] want to have people recognize that we have been wronged. Jesus says, come and follow me on this. There was nobody more wronged than Jesus.

The sinless Son of God judged by the one he will eventually judge. The sinless Son of God mistreated by those he came to forgive.

But he didn't ever say, I need some human vindication. I need people to recognize what I've been through. He said, even so, Father, for so it seems good in your sight.

He recognized the need to go through the agonies of the cross as well as all of the misunderstanding that that brought. His reputation being tarnished so that he could save us.

And he says to us, don't worry about your reputation. Woe to you when all men speak well of you. Make yourself nothing. Be glad to be humble.

[24 : 18] Be willing to be humble. You think of Jesus, Colossians 1 says, by him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him.

He is before all things and in him all things hold together. Before all things and in him all things hold together. And that tree that he made became the tree upon which he was stretched.

And those people that he made became the people who drove in the nails and inflicted the wounds. And those people that came to forgive became the very people who set away with him, crucify, crucify.

That's humiliation. Amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, should die for me? He hung on a tree.

He suffered the curse of the tree. Cursed is any man who hangs on the tree, the law says. He became a curse for us. People looked at him and were disgusted.

[25 : 26] They hid their face from him. He was just a mess. He humbled himself to you. He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.

So how can we, in such circumstances, not be willing to offer the same sacrifice for the sake of others and take the humble prayer?

And then thirdly, sorry, before that, remember C.T. stood when he thought about the cross, what he said? I think I have it on the slide. If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.

You see him in his flannels. He was an English cricketer, paid for England. He had a great future ahead of him and he gave it all up to be a missionary, to serve the cause of Christ overseas, to lay down his life that others might hear the gospel.

And when people asked him, why? Why would you give up such an illustrious career from such a privileged background, all those riches, all those comforts, if Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.

[26 : 55] I've got a long way to go in this business of humility. And then thirdly, we are to express the mind of Christ not just by replicating him, not just by being willing to sacrifice, but Paul gives some specifics here of humble service.

He says verse 12 to 18, therefore my beloved as you've always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Next slide, please. What does humility look like in practice? Well, it involves a recognition that we have not arrived yet. I love Shrek, don't you?

Shrek far, far away, where donkeys in the carriage, and what does he keep saying? Are we there yet? No. Are we there yet? No. Are you sure we're not there yet?

No. And guess what? We're not there yet. When it comes to following Jesus in humility, we're not there yet. And when we think that we're there, we're probably not as near there as we thought we were, if that makes sense.

[28 : 09] the humble person doesn't really notice his humility. He notices the pride that still remains. He doesn't boast about his humility.

He regrets the fact that he isn't as humble as he ought to be. And he stops himself when he hears himself or she hears herself complaining and arguing. Do everything, Paul says, without complaining or arguing.

Have you had a good morning? Any complaints or arguments before you arrive? It's hard, isn't it? Hard not to complain.

Oh, this weather, it's too cold. Of course, too hot. That church is too cold. That's too hot. That food's not nice. Oh, it's lovely. I wish I'd got this instead of that.

It's very hard. We're so restless, aren't we? But Paul says, the problem is, you see, you're not working out your salvation as well as you ought. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for God is at work in you.

[29 : 18] Now you say, hang on a minute, salvation, isn't that about just trusting Jesus for forgiveness? Well, that's the kind of the caricature, yeah? There's lots that we don't realize about salvation.

In that word, in the Bible, it's used in a very big, comprehensive way. it doesn't just refer to forgiveness. That's how we tend to reduce it down. To work out your salvation is not to earn your way to heaven.

Salvation is about trusting in Jesus. It is what the Bible calls justification. It does have a law court element to it. God forgives you, treats you just as if you'd never sinned on the basis of Jesus dying for you.

But salvation also includes the words like adoption, reconciliation. It includes the idea of, quite literally, healing.

By his wounds, we are healed. So salvation is about healing of the soul. It is about forgiveness. It is about making a person right with God. It is about adopting people into God's family.

[30 : 23] And it is a process by which people are made holy through faith in Jesus Christ. When we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, Paul says, why do we do this? Because God is at work in you, both to will and to act according to his good pleasure.

So every day when you are living for God and you are doing the things that God wants you to do, you are working out your salvation. You are becoming more and more and more like Jesus.

So instead of getting up in the morning and saying, oh, it's such a terrible day. Man, it's so miserable outside and I've got to go and do that work again. you can do that or you can say, Jesus, this is the day that you have made.

I will rejoice and be glad in it. I will do your will. I really love to do your will. Your will is in my heart. I want to work out my salvation on a daily basis.

God. So I'm not going to complain and argue. I'm not going to tell God everything he's got wrong with my life. Like, come on God, you're messing my life up big style.

[31 : 34] No, no, he is making you more and more like Jesus. And like Paul, you are learning from the things that you are suffering. Humility accepts the will of God.

Today is the will of God for me. This experience is the will of God for me. This is what God is taking me through in order that I might become humble and dependent just as Jesus did.

Remember when he went to the cross or when he was in the garden of Gethsemane and he was praying in agony and there were sweat drops of blood and he was in such a torment of soul, what did he say? Nevertheless, not what I will, but your will be done in me.

He took the humble place. We're not arrived yet. It's a bit of a battle. Every day is the opportunity, however, to serve God humbly and to accept God's will for our lives.

Next slide, please. Humility also involves gratitude and commitment to serve God together for all that God has done for us. Again, Paul says, do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may be blameless and innocent children of God, without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

[33 : 03] You know the problem with grumbling and complaining, don't you? Is you lose perspective. you start forgetting what's good about your life. Like, you know, I know like married people, they don't, you know, sometimes it's difficult, isn't it?

Like, it isn't a honeymoon every day, is it? No, no. You know, we're going to be in love forever, it's going to be wonderful, we're never going to fall out. Yeah? Well, that isn't true.

Yeah? Sometimes you do. And you can hear yourself sometimes, can't you? It's a good marriage, but you grumble and complain, like, left the cup on the side again, socks on in the wash basket.

Yeah? Oh, look at that, she hasn't hoovered today. The tea wasn't very nice. You know, we can get into that. But what does that do if that becomes the everyday kind of attitude?

It makes marriage a bit of a misery, doesn't it? And who wants that? And that's the problem about grumbling and complaining in the Church of Christ. It's like, if you're grumbling and complaining about each other and always mourning about what's not right, you stop seeing what's great, what's good, what's important among the people of God.

[34 : 18] And here's the most serious thing of all. When the church at Philippi were arguing and taking sides, guess what was not being done? The gospel was not being preached. It was not, they were not shining as stars in the universe.

Instead of people saying, look at what Jesus has done for them, they're always arguing, falling out. And that's the tragedy of the church, isn't it, over the years. People look at churches and say, well, they're full of hypocrites.

It's full of ritual. You know, they all kind of dress up and look nice, but we know what they're really like on the outside. that reputation destroys the gospel.

And Paul says, get rid of it altogether. All of this kind of hypocrisy and this falling out with each other so that Christ might be preached and people might hear the gospel, Jesus might be honored, and then people will be saved and added to the church.

That's why we have to get rid of the wrong attitudes and adopt the attitude of humility that says, I am willing to put my brother or sister above me, their interests above mine, and when I am offended by them, or when they're a bit sharp and a bit brusque, I'm going to be forgiven.

[35 : 36] I'm not going to hold on to bitterness when Jesus did not hold on to his dignity and came to this earth to save us. And then lastly, humility involves a willingness to sacrifice yourself in the service of Christ and his people.

At the end, Paul says, look, I'm being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith. In other words, I'm in prison here, and I'm struggling here, and I'm suffering here for you.

But I'm happy, I'm glad, and you should be glad too. Because what's happening is for the advance of the gospel. I'm getting it tough, but I'm doing it for you. And I want you to learn from my sacrifice as well.

The imagery is very vivid. It's the imagery of the animal being sacrificed, the blood being shed, and then a water sacrifice or a wine sacrifice being poured over it so that it gives off steam.

Paul says, I'm suffering for you, but it's worth it. And I want you to learn from my example. If you're going to serve Jesus in this world, it's not going to be easy.

[36 : 57] You may have to suffer. That's okay. But if you suffer, you suffer for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of the church. church, and that's so very important.

Next slide, please. It's a bit hard for you to see that, but F.B. Maya said, it is certain that before any service that we do for God or man is likely to be of lasting or permanent benefit, it must be saturated with our heart's blood.

That which costs us nothing will not benefit others. If there is no expenditure of tears and prayer, if that love of which the apostles speaks in another place, which cost is lacking, we may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, may know all mysteries and all knowledge, may bestow all our goods to feed the poor, but it will profit us nothing.

Let us rather seek to be poured forth as an offering, then, to do much without feeling the least travail of soul, no heart pangs, no spiritual seed.

You cannot be a Christian without sacrifice. You cannot be a Christian without service. You are not honoring Christ if you are refusing to forgive a brother or a sister.

[38 : 24] God will give us grace to let the mind of Christ be in us, service and a refusal to forgive are missing in our lives today.

Then the call of the Apostle Paul is to learn Christ's humility and to repent. God will give us grace to let the mind of Christ be in us, give us grace to repent if we are refusing to follow him in humble self.

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