

The Humility of Christ

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[0 : 00] You know, isn't the body of Christ wonderful? It's actually part of the message that we'll be talking about this morning. God's people, fellowshiping with God's people, enjoying one another.

! Yeah, by the way, I think we already asked for other announcements, but I don't think there were any. We are in Philippians chapter 2, so we're making some progress.

I was here through the book of Philippians. I keep forgetting. My intention is to have somebody come up and actually read the passage each week. And a lot of times I don't remember until the night before or the morning of.

I won't put anybody on the spot, so I'll just read the passage this morning. But I've got to try to remember to do that. Let me read through this passage, actually, and then we'll jump right in.

So it's Philippians chapter 2, starting with verse 1. Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

[1 : 23] Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

We've been going through the book of Philippians, just a little reminder on where we've come so far as we've studied through this book. This is a prison epistle, a letter written by Paul from prison to a church that he founded in the city of Philippi.

We've already seen that he's expressed his gratitude for the Philippians. He's actually really thrilled with their faithfulness to the Lord and has expressed his confidence that they will continue to be faithful, just based on what he's seen over the years already.

[2 : 48] He's shared his excitement for his opportunities to preach Christ in Rome and that lots of people among the Roman Empire, especially among the higher echelons of Caesar's palace, are hearing about Jesus Christ and what Jesus Christ accomplished through the cross.

And then he's encouraging the Philippians to continue to be faithful to the Lord. He wants to bear more fruit by being released from prison and go out to visit them.

But he says, you know, whether I'm able to do that or whether I'm not, I still want to see faithfulness from you all. And at the end of chapter 1, he expresses a faithfulness in the midst of persecution.

Persecution happens. People from outside of the faith, non-believers, persecute them as believers. And now as we get into chapter 2, he's going to focus more on some of the internal things.

What goes on inside of the church or among believers themselves? And so he's really looking for these Philippians to stand in unity, loving and caring for one another, and brings as an illustration what Jesus did, what Jesus accomplished, what his mind was, and to emulate Jesus Christ and all of that.

[4 : 27] We're going to look at kind of three things throughout this passage. One is because we're going to take to, you know, apply this to ourselves as Paul's applying this to the Philippian believers. We want to apply these things to ourselves.

We're going to look at three things. What is our motivation to live the Christian life, to live the kind of life that God wants us to live?

What is our mindset? How do we need to think when it comes to living the Christian life? And then thirdly, we're going to look at our ultimate model, which is Jesus Christ and what the way he thought and ultimately what he actually did and accomplished for us.

So let's go again back to verse 1 here in chapter 2 of Philippians. It says this, Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love and being of one accord and of one mind.

You know, he's here telling the Philippians what he is looking to see from them. This being like-minded, this having the same love for one another and being of one accord.

[5 : 49] But he starts it off with really getting at the motivation. Well, why should they live this way? Why is it important?

What is the reason? What is the motivation? Motivation. And we've talked about this before, but you know, our motivation for how we live really matters. You know, people have different motivations for the different things that they do.

And some motivations work better than others. You know, under the law, under the law of Moses, there were two primary motivating factors to keep the law, to do good, to follow God's covenant.

The two primary motivating factors was, one, receiving a reward, and then two, was avoiding a punishment. So, if you do these things, this is the reward that you will receive.

And if you avoid these bad things, then this is the punishment that you will avoid. And so, rewards and punishments were the motivating factor.

[7 : 06] And those work to a certain degree, right? Those have an effect in keeping people's behavior kind of aligned under some kind of regulation or control.

And we see this today in our governments, right? In our law, system of law. I think about when it comes to rewards. You know, there's a big problem with demographics in a lot of countries.

The populations are declining, or at least they're starting to slow. And that's a real problem with a lot of nations. In fact, the Bible speaks to that. The Bible talks about the glory of a king being in the people of his kingdom.

When you don't have a lot of people, you don't have much of a kingdom. But a lot of countries are really struggling with population growth. And so, there are some countries, I believe the one that I heard of most recently was the country of Hungary.

And they are trying to grow their population. And so, they have created tax incentives. And they'll tell a mom that if you have one kid, you'll get this kind of a tax break.

[8 : 11] And if you have two, you'll get an even bigger tax break. And I think if you have a certain number of kids, three or four, you'll never pay taxes for the rest of your life. That's a pretty good deal.

But that's a reward, right? It's an incentive to do something. Now, some women might have the kids because they really want them, right? But there are others who the reason they will have that second or third child is because of the reward, right?

And that's the reason. Is that the best reason to have a child? It's not really the best reason, is it?

Another kind of reward thing that I can think of is back during, you know, remember back five years ago when this pandemic was going across the globe?

And there was this experimental vaccine that everybody was trying to get everybody to take. And I remember, I think it was the governor of New York, eating a hamburger on television and telling people that you too can eat this delicious hamburger and fries if you will just get this injection of an experimental vaccine.

And I'm sure there were some people out there that that was reward enough to get that little jab. But rewards, right, have an impact in regulating people's behavior for good or for bad.

[9 : 43] Also, on the other side, fear of punishment. And that's more obvious, I think, right? You steal from the local drugstore, and what happens?

You go to jail. You get punished in some way. Maybe you have to pay a fine. And so, rewards and punishments can modify human behavior and get at least some temporary results.

It can prevent people from hurting one another. In fact, the Bible is very clear that human governments are put in place to have those rewards and punishments in order to provide safety and security among the people.

But, are those the best motivations for modifying our behavior? What is the best motivation?

Is the kind of motivation that will actually change our hearts from within to do things for the right reasons? For the best reasons?

[10:45] For reasons of the heart. That ultimately, our hearts' desires would be changed. And this is what Paul is getting at here.

He mentions four ifs. Four ifs. If there's any consolation in Christ. If there's any comfort of love. If any fellowship of the Spirit. If any affection and mercy.

You know, when you read an if, you think about, well, that's a conditional. You know, if you're a Christian, you might think, well, some people, they might get consolation in Christ. They might get comfort of love.

But it's not every Christian, right? I mean, it's only if this is your experience. That doesn't seem to ring true, though, does it? As we read through this list, this is something that every believer can and should enjoy.

And so, this is the kind of if, and you'll actually find this as you're studying the Bible, that actually means it has more of the thought of if this is the case.

[11:49] And by the way, it is. In fact, sometimes it might be translated since or because. And so, when he's saying this, hey, since we have consolation in Christ.

You could read it that way. Since we have this comfort of love. Since we have a fellowship of the Spirit. And we have affection and mercy that we receive from the Lord.

Then, we ought to do these things. You can fulfill my joy, he says, by living this kind of life. Just briefly looking at these four things.

If you have any consolation in Christ. Consolation is really back to that word comfort. Consolation in the things that we suffer. You know, the fear of death.

Because of what Jesus Christ accomplished for us, we can be consoled through anything that we might go through. We can come to him and he can be our comforter.

[12:54] Comfort of love. We are comforted by his great love for us. Fellowship of the Spirit.

Fellowship of the Spirit. This is really, the word fellowship there is not hanging out with your friends. Like we usually maybe think or use that word fellowship.

But it's more of a camaraderie. That we are part of the family of God. And so we all enjoy this camaraderie. This brotherhood or sisterhood or familyhood, if you will.

Of being part of God's family. And then lastly, affection and mercy. God's affection for us. His tenderness towards us. As the Old Testament psalmist would say.

His loving kindness and tender mercies. And mercy God's forgiveness that he made available to us through Christ. Christ. And so these things are our motivation for living this kind of lifestyle.

[14:01] In which we love one another. And comfort one another. And serve one another. You know this again, going back and I try to repeat the theme that we talked about about Philippians.

Philippians, the theme, at least the theme that we have defined in our study is rejoicing in the Lord. Rejoicing in the Lord. Rejoicing in the Lord. It's not about raising our hands and saying hallelujah. Rejoicing in the Lord is remembering what he accomplished for us. Remembering what he did for us. Rejoicing in that. And letting that. Letting those benefits.

Letting what he accomplished. Transform our lives from the inside out. So we will mature and grow as Christians because of those things.

And so going back to verse 2. He says, Fulfill my joy by being like-minded. Having the same love.

[15:03] Being of one accord and of one mind. The things that he's talking about here all relate to our relationships with one another. Again, he's doing this focus from how do we relate to one another in the body of Christ as Christians.

And he wants to see. He says, I want you to fulfill my joy. I would be just thrilled to see this kind of behavior from all of you towards one another.

It all has to do with relationships. Do you know that relationships is the most important thing in all of life? I mean, is that controversial?

That seems true. Everything that we do relates to relationships. Relationships, our relationship with God, our relationship with one another.

And the big problem that happened in the world. When we go back to the very beginning. This problem of sin entering in the world and becoming a part of so much of our lives.

[16:09] Is that sin broke our relationships. Sin broke our relationship with God, our Father, our Creator. And it has broken and continues to break relationships with one another.

Sin is really, it's hurting one another. And when we hurt one another, it causes our relationships to become strained. Or many times broken.

And the gospel message, what Jesus accomplished, right, is meant to ultimately restore that relationship that was broken between us and God.

Through the cross, what Jesus did, God provides forgiveness for all those who put their faith and trust in Jesus. And that relationship that was broken can be completely restored.

There's nothing any longer that stands in the way of us knowing God. But, God does not want it to end there.

[17 : 15] Right? He wants us also to have strong and healthy and thriving relationships with one another. And so that's the opportunity that he's looking at here.

That's the encouragement that he's providing. I want you all, as Christians there in Philippi, to have thriving relationships. And he puts it in these terms.

To be like-minded. I want you to all have the same mind regarding one another. I want you to share the same love with one another.

I want you all to live in one accord. That's my translation here in the New King James. One accord. If you look at the Greek there literally, it means one soul.

I want you to be as if you're all one soul. You're living together as if you're one person. And then he really kind of repeats almost the same phrase. And he talks about having one mind.

[18 : 17] So, the same mind, one mind. It's as if you're not multiple different people, but you all have the same mind towards one another. It's, he's getting at, I want you to be unified.

I want your relationships not to be broken, not to be strained, but to be healthy and strong. And then in verse 3, he starts to get into, well, a little bit more detail.

What kind of mind is it that he wants these Philippians and us also as believers? What kind of mind does he want us to share? So, verse 3, Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interest of others. This is the kind of mindset, the kind of mind he wants all of us to share.

You know, you look out into the world, and there is a huge focus on the self, right? On me. It's a me culture.

[19 : 30] And it's not like this is new. This has been the way that it's been for the history of mankind. But I think about a few things that, a few terms that we use in our modern culture.

One is a big focus on self-esteem. It's so important that we all think wonderful thoughts about ourselves, right? And that has some value, except sometimes we think wonderful thoughts about ourselves when we really ought not to.

We're not as great as we think we are. But still, there's this movement to make sure everybody feels wonderful about themselves.

Another word I hear a lot is self-care. You hear that word? Self-care. We need to make sure that we're taking care of ourselves. And by the way, none of these things are bad, are they?

Is self-esteem bad in and of itself? Is self-care bad in and of itself? No. But these are obsessions. These are focuses that we see in our culture. Another one is self-help.

[20 : 39] You go to the bookstore, right, or maybe the library, and there's a whole section, right? It's the self-help section. And so you can find books about how to become, I don't know, more successful in business or relationships or things like that.

You know, I have noticed that there's not a other help or helping others section in the bookstore. Has anybody ever seen that? I haven't seen that either.

And people tend not to write books on those topics. Why? Well, because they don't sell. Because what people are interested in is I want to help take care of myself.

That's what I'm interested in. Again, these things aren't necessarily bad in and of themselves.

Another phrase, though, that kind of jumps out to me in verse 4, it says, Let each of you look out. And that word, look out, give attention to. And that's a word that we use in our modern vernacular. And it makes me think of the number one phrase.

[21 : 46] If you hear a phrase that starts with, look out for, what does that end with? Number one. I heard that one. That's what I think of.

Look out for number one. And who is number one? Me. I'm number one. Right? And that's how the world thinks. And again, this self-interest, it's not in and of itself bad, right?

It's actually, it seems to me, a natural instinct. And when I think about instincts, instincts are part of God's design for us, the way that God created us to be, to have these instincts that are good. When God created us, what did he say? That it was good. That we have tended to pervert the things that are good into things that are bad.

And so we have these even physiological instincts, these reflexes to protect ourselves. When we have bugs flying around our head, we tend to swat them away or blink our eyes.

[22 : 56] We have these reflexes. When danger comes, right, we have reflexes to try to preserve ourselves, our life, our safety. Those things are good. Those things are good.

When we're hungry, we like to feed, you know, put something in our belly to make the stomach stop growling. Those things are good. Those are part of our interests and our needs.

You know, even Jesus himself seemed to assume our self-interest when he said this.

And he was just really quoting the Old Testament law. And he said this. This is Matthew 22, 39. He said, He wanted people to love their neighbor with the same love, with the same interest that they have for themselves.

He didn't condemn loving yourself. But he said, I want you to love your neighbor in a similar manner. So our interests and our needs are important.

[24 : 04] But what Paul is getting at here is having a mindset change. He uses a phrase, lowliness of mind. I want you to have a lowliness of mind.

And what he's talking about is, have your mindset to put yourself lower than other people. Lift up others and lower yourself.

He uses a phrase, considering others as better than you. And when he says, when he uses that term better than you, he's not talking about like morally better, like someone just does more good deeds.

In fact, some translations will translate it as more significant or more important. I think that's probably maybe a better phrase to use.

Consider other people as more important than you. Looking out, he says, for others. Considering their needs, not just your own.

[25 : 12] Considering other people's interests, not just your own. And being focused, not only on me, not even mostly on me, but putting your focus outside towards those around you.

And then in verse 5, he starts to turn back to look at the example of Christ and what Jesus Christ did on our behalf.

He says this in verse 5, let this mind be in you. This is the kind of mind, again, that I want you to have, that I want all of you to share.

This mind that was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but he made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in the appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

[26 : 28] So he's saying, hey, listen, we need to have our minds changed, our thinking changed. I want you to all have the same mind, but not the wrong mind.

In fact, here's the kind of mind I want you to have. In fact, I'm going to point to a person, to Jesus Christ. I want you to have the mind that he had and the kind of mind that he had when he accomplished something.

You know, our thinking matters, right? How we think because our thought patterns, the way that we think, ends up coming out in what? Our actions.

The way that you think affects our thoughts or leads to our actions. But he says this, who being in the form of God, so Jesus Christ was in the beginning, the Bible says he was with God and he was God.

This is John 1. He was with the Father in heaven. And he humbled himself. Even though he was in the form of God, so he was actually God himself, he did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.

[27 : 48] Now, that is a very strange phrase. When you read that, at first, it doesn't seem to make sense. And so, what does that mean? He didn't consider it robbery to be equal with God.

Well, I think about this, you know, we think about robbery usually taking some thing, some physical object, right? You steal somebody's lawnmower or steal a candy bar from the store, something like

that.

But you know that you can actually steal other things? Today, we have this concept called identity theft, right? I don't know if any of you have ever experienced or been on the other end of identity theft.

But identity theft is when you pretend to be somebody else, usually to take out a credit card or a loan or in some kind of way steal somebody's credit or their reputation so that you can benefit from it in some way.

And that's not something physical, right, tangible that you can touch. You're stealing their identity. Another example of stealing somebody's identity is, I think about the phrase impersonating an officer, right?

[28 : 58] That's something where somebody might try to take advantage of some situation by pretending to be someone in authority like the police. And that's a crime. You're not allowed to do that.

But you are taking on someone else's identity. You're stealing someone's identity. I think that's what this phrase is getting at. That Jesus, his claim to be God, was not stealing someone's identity. It was his identity. That's who he was, who he is today. And so, it wasn't considered robbery, identity theft, stealing, for him to be equal with God.

That was reality. That was his identity. But regardless of that, even though his identity is God, the creator of the universe, it says this in verse 7, but he made himself of no reputation.

The reputation, the status that he had in heaven, took it away. Actually, I think the Greek there is he emptied himself.

[30 : 12] He had all this status, this prestige, this glory, and he put it to the side so that he could do this, taking the form of a bondservant. A bondservant is really a slave.

And coming in the likeness of man, he took on flesh, the Bible says. And being found in the appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

And this is just the gospel message itself, right? Jesus humbled himself, he became a man, started out as a baby in a humble manger, in a stable, in a stable.

And not only that, finally at the end of his life, he wasn't crowned a king, he will be in the future, but not at the end of his kind of first coming. He became actually obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

And when it says even the death of the cross, what he's getting at is not just any kind of death, he didn't die just from natural causes or something, you know, the way that many men die or even in war or battle.

[31 : 24] He died the kind of death that was looked down upon basically universally. Nobody wanted to die that kind of death. That was for criminals, that was for evil people to die on a cross.

It was by no means a noble type of death. But it's the kind of death that he died. And it was him humbling himself.

I've got a question. Is it possibly true that you, sitting in your seats, are more important than God? Is that a possibility? I'm seeing a lot of shaking of heads. That's good. That's the right answer, by the way. Is it possible that you are more important than the God of the universe?

It's not even conceivable, right? How could that, that's not even a conceivable thought. Yet, what I think, what I'd like to really press in on this morning and have us consider is that what this whole passage is saying is that that is God's attitude towards us.

[32 : 52] That through the cross and what God did for us, he considered us as more important than him.

That was his thinking. that was his mindset. And it wasn't just his thinking.

Those thoughts turned into actions. And he demonstrated that mindset. He demonstrated that love. He demonstrated that kind of humility by ultimately laying down his life.

In Romans 5, 8, it says this, but God demonstrates his own love towards us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

You see, God is the kind of God that is not focused on himself. Though it seems that would probably be fine, it would probably be natural, right?

[33 : 54] For the God of the universe, the one God who created all things, to be focused exclusively on himself. That seems to, I think, many people how maybe it ought to be.

In fact, if you look at the gods, for example, of the Greeks and the Romans, what was their focus on? It was on themselves and make their status and their power and their needs and their desires and their pleasures.

That was the focus of the gods of the Greeks and Romans. After all, they're great and mighty and they're far more important than mortal men are.

And I think that's why this God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stands out so distinctly from the gods, the other gods, the false gods of the world.

I think sometimes we forget, we forget this distinction religion. And you know, some people might think it's heresy to think that God would consider us more important than himself.

[35 : 14] But that's what this passage is saying. Take on the mind of Christ. This is what God's thoughts were toward you, that he thought of you as more important than him.

there's a passage in the psalm, in the psalms, psalm chapter 8 verse 4, that says this, this is David, I think, speaking, what is man or who is man that you are mindful of him?

That's a question I think we all should ask. Why does God think so much of us? Why? It's a question I don't know that we can really fully answer.

And so, I'll finish up with this. And asking the same question, as you look at the person next to you, most of you have somebody seated next to you, is it possible, is it within the realm of possibility, that the person sitting next to you right now is more important than you?

Is that possible? I know it's not likely, right? It's more likely that you're the most important person, but it's at least within the realm of possibility, right?

[36 : 33] That that person sitting next to you is maybe more important than you. So, if that's the case, if God, the creator of all the universe, the one who spoke the universe into existence, the one who stretched out the heavens, the ones who numbered and named the stars, the one who created and formed us from the dust of the earth, if his mindset was to think of us, his creation, not just any creation, but his sinful creation, was more important than him, than how much easier or simpler should it be that we might think the same thoughts towards that person sitting right next to us.

And I said, you know, it should be easy, but is it easy? It's not. It's challenging. It's difficult. Why is that the case?

Well, it's because of our own, I think, our own sinfulness, our own selfishness. But here, I think, is the answer to that, that Paul brings out here.

We can try to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps, right? Love our neighbor better than we have in the past. Christ. Here's what he keeps pointing at.

Looking to Christ. Look at what Jesus did for you. Looking at his sacrifice for us. Looking at the mindset that he had towards us.

[38 : 19] His love, his affection, the consolation that he provides for us. We can rejoice in Christ, his love for us, and what he accomplished for us.

And we can be motivated, inspired, and ultimately transformed. Maybe little by little, each day, as we grow to understand just the depth, the breadth of what he did for us, and of his love for us.

In fact, you know, one of Paul's prayers for the Ephesians that I think about so often, is he wanted the Ephesians that their mindset, their understanding, would be expanded.

Here's what he prayed for them, that you would know, that you would understand the height and the depth and the width and the breadth of God's love for you.

Why is that so important to know? Because the more you know about God's love for you, the more you will be transformed and changed from the inside out.

[39 : 26] So that each day, from glory to glory glory to glory, we can be transformed into the image of Christ to be more like our Savior.

Amen? I'd like to close with a hymn that I thought about as I was kind of putting this message together. If you got a hymnal, open up to number 325 and we'll sing this together and then close in a word of prayer.

Actually, I should find a hymnal. 325? Ah! Yeah, let's do, I think it's a short song. Let's go ahead and do the three verses.

Everybody, would you stand with me as we sing this? The title of this is Why Should He Love Me So?

Why Should He Love Me So? Love sent my Savior to die in my stead.

[40 : 43] Why should He love me so? Meekly to Calvary's cross He was led.

Why should He love me so? Why should He love me so? Why should He love me so?
He suffered so He suffered sore my salvation and His feet for my sin.

Why should He love me so? He suffered sore my salvation to win.

Why should He love me so? Why should He love me so?

[41 : 54] Why should He love me so? why should my Savior to Calvary go?

Why should He love me so? Oh, how He agonized. Oh, how He agonized there in my place.

Why should He love me so? Nothing withholding my sin to His face.

Why should He love me so? Why should He love me so? Why should He love me so?

Why should my Savior to Calvary go? Why should He love me so?

[43 : 05] Let's pray. Father, it's a question that we really have trouble asking. Why would You go through so much on our behalf?

not even people who loved You. You said that You died for those who were sinners, who weren't even interested in You. Why would You do that? It's something that we have a difficult time comprehending.

But we believe it because, well, You did it. I pray that You would continue to work in our hearts each and every day to understand just the depth and the breadth and the height and the width of that love for us, that we might be transformed by it, that we might emulate that love to those around us, that we, in the same manner, would lay down our lives for those who are sitting right next to us, to our neighbors, our friends, those in the body of Christ, even for those out in the world who desperately need You.

Continue to use us and work on us to be more like You each and every day. We pray all these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.