

WHEELERSBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Life Application Sunday School Class

Philippians - Session 9

June 24, 2001

READ Philippians 2:1-4

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, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Summarize the passage

Paul is calling the Philippians to unity of thinking, purpose, and spirit. He says that it is possible if they will act out of humility and putting others before themselves, and that they can do that based on the intimate relationship they have with Christ Jesus. Humility is the key of unity in the church, which is in contrast to selfish ambition and vain conceit.

Verse 3 says that we should IN HUMILITY, consider others better than ourselves.

1. What is humility?

Literally, the word means to have a small opinion of oneself. Low mindedness. Humility is a state of mind. It is how we view ourselves. How aware are we that we are what we are only by the grace of God? What are characteristics of humble people?

- Humble people realize what they are: sinners saved only by grace
- Humble people realize what they can do: nothing apart from Christ
- Humble people realize what they know: not much, so they are teachable
- Humble people recognize their lack of strength, so they depend on Christ and His resources.
- Humble people realize what they deserve; nothing, which makes them content and thankful with what they have.

The term "considering" others better than yourself, (KJV esteem others better) carries the idea of ruling over your mind with humility. We, by an act of our will, determine to think about others as better than us - more important than us. According to the Bible, our tendency as sinners is to think more highly of ourselves than we should. Modern psychology says that many problems that people have stem from the fact that they do not love themselves, and have a low self-esteem. In fact, there are many Christian psychologists that would teach that we cannot love others or God until we first love ourselves. Let's do a quick survey on what the Bible has to say about how we should view ourselves - our worth, our value.

In Luke 18, Jesus just gave the example of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee had great self esteem. He thanked God that he was as good as he was, and not like other lowlifes and sinners. But this other fellow, this tax collector, recognized who he was, and beat his breast in sorrow - you might say he had quite a low opinion of himself - not much self love or self esteem. Now what did Jesus say about these two

fellows?

Luke 18: ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The scripture teaches us that in our sinfulness, we tend to exalt ourselves. The command is never to think better of ourselves, or exalt ourselves, or learn to be proud about ourselves and our accomplishments, rather it is to humble ourselves and think more highly of others, and to lift up the Lord and each other.

Rom 12: ³ 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 measure of faith God has given you.

To think aright about ourselves is to see ourselves in light of God's righteousness and law. God's law, which serves as a mirror, will always show us our shortcomings and weaknesses and faults. To deny our sin and weakness is to deny our need of a Savior.

Prov 16: ¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. ¹⁹ Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.

This says that pride leads to our downfall and destruction. When we choose to think much of ourselves, we are led away by our own vain thinking, and away from God, whom we desperately need. God desires to be exalted in our lives. He comes close to those who humble themselves and exalt Him.

Prov 25: ²⁷ It is not good to eat too much honey, nor is it honorable to seek one's own honor. IT IS NOT GOOD TO SEEK PERSONAL HONOR.

Prov 26: ¹² Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

This is the person who thinks he is something; he thinks he is wise and has it together, and is better than others. An honest evaluation of ourselves will tell us that we are not wise within ourselves and desperately need the Lord.

I Cor 4: ⁷ For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Having a proper view of self recognizes that anything good in us comes from God as a gift. It is God that makes us different than another. We have nothing to glory in or be proud of except the grace and work of God in our lives.

Gal 6: ³ If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

If we think we are great, we are deceived. If we have a high view of who we are, then we are not facing reality. Only God is truly great, and He alone is to be worshipped and adored.

James 4: ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

II Tim 3: But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

Loving ones self is in the same category as materialism, unholiness, treachery, and hypocrisy.

Psalm 36: ¹ An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. ² For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin.

When we appreciate our self too much, we become blind to our weakness and our sin.

Luke 9: ²³ Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. ²⁵ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"

The call to Christ is the call to forsake ourselves, and to die to our desires and living a life to please our self.

Luke 14: ²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Love ourselves????? Here we are told that to come to Christ, we must hate ourselves. We must despise our self-centeredness, for selfishness is the essence of sin.

John 12: ²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

James 2: ⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.

The Bible assumes that we love ourselves. We do not need to be encouraged or taught to love ourselves - no, we need to be taught to love others. Loving ourselves comes very naturally. Loving God and loving others does not.

I hope this quick survey of scripture will cause you to question the popular, yet abominable philosophy that our basic problem is a lack of self love and self esteem. Let's continue with Philipians 2.

Verse 3 says to do this in humility, which is contrasted to selfish ambition and vain conceit.

2. What is selfish ambition and vain conceit?

Selfish ambition mean self promotion to gain a following - creating factions and strife. It carries the idea of being partisan and contentious, taking sides. Vain conceit means empty pride, self esteem, vain glory. People who want recognition and a feeling of importance do things to promote themselves and gain a following. They can many times be people pleasers and flatterers, but their motive is always to make

themselves look good. In the modern vernacular, they are politicians. This is never to be the motive for a follower of Christ.

A humble person will not be self-centered. A humble person realizes that the world doesn't revolve around him. How can we tell if we are humble? Listen to yourself when you converse with others. Does everything you say relate to you or your job or your family? Do you take a sincere interest in others and their lives and families and joys and problems? In our relationships, are we there to give as well as take? An outward demonstration of Christ-likeness is when we are sincerely interested in the well being of others, and not just ourselves. A humble person recognizes the privilege and blessing in giving as well as receiving. Are we transparent in our relationships? A humble person will make himself vulnerable, and take the risk of being hurt for the sake of edifying another. Paul is addressing the issue of unity and harmony in the body of Christ. True fellowship and unity will only thrive in an atmosphere of humility.

3. What is the relationship of humility and unity in the body of Christ?

Humility paves the way to fulfill the commandment in verse 2, to be like minded and one. To be:

- Like-minded - literally means to think the same way; think the same thing
- Same love - love for each one without respect of persons
- One in spirit and purpose - having the same desires, goals, and affections

We are called as members of the Lord's church, to have the same goals, affections, and desires. God has provided the means to accomplish this goal. Turn to Ephesians, chapter 4. Ephesians 4:11 states that God has provided apostles and prophets (their teaching through the New Testament) and evangelists, pastors, and teachers (ministry leadership) for the equipping and building up of His people - the goal being in verse 13 - unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God - the fullness of Christ. As our minds are renewed and our thinking brought in line with God's Word through the teaching and ministry of God's Word, then we begin to have the same goals and affections.

Back to our passage in Philippians. Verse 1 gives us the divine resources that enable us to fulfill this calling to unity. Based on our relationship with Christ, the fact that we are united with Him, we are encouraged, comforted, and consequently filled with tenderness and compassion for others. We love Him, and love others, because He first loved us. The idea expressed here is that this close relationship we have with Christ constrains and compels us to love one another as we are loved. We can humbly serve one another and experience unity based on the great love, fellowship, and assistance that we receive from God through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

READ Chapter 2:5-11

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In this call to humility, Paul now turns our attention to the perfect example of servant-hood and humility, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. This passage of scripture is the most complete teaching in scripture on Christ becoming man. As we meditate and think about what Christ did, it will strengthen and motivate us to be better servants and bring more glory to Him as we imitate His example.

These verses address the fact that Christ displayed the best example of humility. To appreciate that

example, let's first consider the question, "What did Christ leave to come to earth as a man?" This can best be answered by scripture. We read Hebrews 1, John 1, John 17, and Colossians 1 and discover the following:

Christ is the:

- Creator of the universe
- All created by Him and for Him
- Laid the earth's foundations, heavens are works of His hands
- All life comes from Him
- Far superior to angels
- Worshipped by angels
- Sustainer of all things
- Holds all things together
- Heir of all things
- Preeminent over all creation
- Rules from an eternal throne
- Authority over all people
- Eternal, not temporal like the creation
- God the Father's Son
- At the Father's side
- Perfect image of God
- At the right hand of God
- With God - Is God
- Radiance of God's glory
- Exact representation of His being

The Son of God in eternity past, was in perfect communion and fellowship with His Father through the Spirit. He is the full expression of the Father's radiance and glory - called the image of God, the exact substance of God - literally God Himself. All things were made by Him - all that exists came through the Son, and He also sustains, or holds all things together. He is truly the King of creation, and rightfully so, because He is the creator, and all creation was made for Him.

This awesome one, this Son of God, eternal deity, came to earth. He did not leave His deity behind, but He certainly veiled the glory He had with His Father. He, the essence of God, which is spirit, became a man,

which is flesh. He was no longer omnipresent, but limited to a body of flesh. He no longer fully expressed His authority over creation on a moment-by-moment basis, though there were many times that this glory was revealed, e.g. the stilling of the storm, the resurrection of Lazarus, the turning water to wine, the multiplication of the fish and loaves, the healing of the blind man. As He walked upon this earth, He was tired. He was tempted, with such things as hunger, and pride, and selfishness, yet without sin. He was grieved, and mourned. Not only did he experience being a man, he was humiliated by the very ones He had created. He was despised. He was mocked. He was hated. He was ridiculed. He was misunderstood. He was forsaken. He was betrayed. He was mistreated. He was spit upon. He was cursed. This One, the creator of the universe, the sustainer of all life, the One who is the exact replica of the eternal God, and perfect expression of deity, willingly suffered these things - no one forced Him to do anything. From a position of perfect authority and with the right to do anything with creation, owner and sustainer of all, chose to come and serve. What did He leave - the very glory and splendor of the right hand of God.

The question is then why. 5. Why did He do this. Why did He leave His glorious position, of His own choice and volition. It was first for the love for His Father. It was to redeem the ones that His Father had chosen and given to Him. It was to purchase a people for the expression of the glory of God. Why did Christ die? Certainly because He loved us - but that love is ultimately an expression of that eternal love among the Father, Son, and Spirit. Our redemption is an expression of the Son's love for the Father and the Father's love for the Son in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. And for His obedience and submission to the Father's will, He will forever be the exalted and glorified One - King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the absolute Sovereign over all. Through Christ's obedience and humility, He brings even more honor and glory to God as He is given the name above every name. All creation will look on the lamb that was slain and cry Worthy is the Lamb to receive honor, and glory, and power. And all will acknowledge Him one day. The redeemed acknowledge it now; the unsaved will confess it later. Those that have bowed the knee now will bring glory to God through their salvation, and those who have not bowed in submission will bring glory to God through their judgement.

6. How can this admonition motivate us to follow Christ in humility and service? This is the point of these verses - that we should have the same attitude that Jesus Christ had when He came to this earth. We need to set aside any privilege and rights and comforts that we may have, and become a servant - a bondsman, to one another. In so doing, we express the nature of our Savior. Jesus is truly displayed in our lives when we respond and are like Him. He laid aside His rights to become a servant to bring greater glory to His Father by redeeming a people for the praise of His glory. When we lay aside our selfishness for others, we pave the way for more glory to be given to our God. But to be able to walk in this type of service and humility, we need a motivation stronger than human sentimentality and compassion. Jesus gave Himself because He loved us, to be sure, but it was for the joy set before Him. He saved us to bring glory and honor to His Father, and His Father gave us to His Son as an expression of His love and glory. In the same way, we need to serve others because we love them, but ultimately to bring glory to the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Only this motive will be strong enough to carry us through the rough times when our service and sacrifice is ignored or even despised by others.