

Philippians 2:1-11 Unity Through Humility Brings Great Reward

The title of the sermon is “Unity Through Humility Brings Great Reward.” and we’ll be studying Philippians 2:1-11

Unity was of the utmost importance to Jesus when He prayed to the Father in the Gospel John. Jesus prayed for the believers and for all those who WOULD believe in Him. Future believers.

Jesus prayed, **“I am not asking on behalf of these alone, but also for those who believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”**

Unity of the people of faith is of the utmost importance to Christ. It seems to be one of the most desired things of Jesus - for the Church, but it’s also the most elusive to the Church throughout history.

How can we here today, ensure that we do not fall victim to the same age-old divisions that we have all seen in churches. How do we stay united for the important goal of what Jesus prayed: “May they be as one”

Spoiler Alert: The answer is in our passage today.

We are going to see the following:

- 1) The Bible commands us to be in unity
- 2) Jesus has perfectly equipped us for unity.
- 3) Jesus modeled unity for us.
- 4) There is a great reward (or payoff) for unity.

LET’S PRAY.

SOMEONE READ THE TEXT: Philippians 2:1-11

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

So a few history tidbits to help us place ourselves in the same settings as the Philippians, who were likely reading this intently the first time.

1. Written 4-5 years after Paul’s last visit
1. Penned while Paul was imprisoned for the second time in Rome in 61ish AD.
2. Located in Greece, but is a somewhat recent Roman colony.
3. Lydia and Philippian jailed were saved here.

Paul is making some rhetorical statements here to elicit action from the Philippian readers. The point is not to start a debate on if there is encouragement from Jesus Christ, but to artistically and emotionally draw the readers to the obvious conclusion.

Paul blasts through a list here:

Encouragement in Christ

Comfort from love

Participation in the Spirit = Who is interacting with the Holy Spirit? Christians!

Affection

Sympathy

Earlier in Chapter 1, Paul is speaking to his joy in Christ being proclaimed, and here in chapter 2, verse 2, he tells the Philippians to complete this joy, by being in full accord as a church body.

Now I don't use the word Accord much outside of Honda, the car company and so I hit Webster's 1882 dictionary and I love one of their synonyms: "**Concert**"; harmony of sounds, the union of different sounds, which is agreeable to the ear.

Paul's not telling us we need to all be the same, playing the same note. **Recorder instrument practice**. But the orchestra of the church body should be in harmony of sound, making a pleasing noise to the Lord.

Psalms 96:1-2 Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!

I can't help but see all the different spiritual gifts people use to serve, as different instruments in harmony of sound, in full accord.

Paul's key point in these first two verses would be Unity. How difficult is it? Being United? What comes to mind when you think United? Maybe..., United States of America? How united are we really? What about as a church? As a couple? As a family? What about as a person? Corrupted flesh fighting against Spirit.

- Business - Gallup Polls report in 2008: \$360 billion were from lack of unity.
- How many businesses fail due to a lack of unity?
- How many marriages fail because mom and dad cannot find unity?
 - Jesus said, a house divided against itself cannot stand.
 - The Church is supposed to model unity to the lost world!
- Unity is a must in every marriage, family, church and society.

ILLUSTRATION:

As a kid, we had a new neighbor move into the neighborhood and they didn't get along great with the folks living next to them. (Not my parents lol) And both neighbors ended up building a fence next two each other. So running the length of the two properties border there are these two fences, 12 inches apart. Blew my mind at the time.

3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

- **Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.**
 - What is conceit?
 - The Greek word has also been defined as: vain glory.
 - I like the word glory here as it contrasts so well with who we should be glorifying. Our heavenly father, just as Jesus Christ did in His earthly ministry.
 - Do we have ourselves in mind or do we have God in mind - in every action.
 - What else do we know about conceit? Well the Bible lists it with some rough company: 2 Tim 3:4: “treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”
 - What does conceit look like?
 - Living only for one’s advancement. I’d call the people that I’ve encountered like this pretty conceited and treacherous.
 - Living for recognition: Pride / *Pats on the back* They feel nice, but that’s not our goal and what we’re living and working for.
 - And then Pride from pay raises or a bigger house: Probably in love with pleasure and not God.

What are we supposed to do? LOOK

- **BUT in humility count others more significant than yourselves.**
- Paul is saying that placing people above you naturally lends to correcting the problems of conceit.
- When’s the last time you were arrogant, conceited or selfish while doing the dishes or taking out the trash?
 - *Those actions take humility and they produce humility.* I originally picked Philippians 2 because I thought it taught Humility. Well a week or two in and I was like oops; Its about Unity. But it’s unity through Humility so I’m going to put all the throw some of the wonderful things the bible has to say about Humility here: (*don’t need to turn here*)

Let us listen to more of the Word of God:

- 1 Peter 5:5 - You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.
- Proverbs 22:4 - The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord Are riches, honor, and life.

- Matthew 18:4 - So whoever will humble himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- James 4:10 - Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

The flesh is 100% against humility.

- It desires to brag
- Be #1
- IT desires to have places of honor.
- It demands respect

ILLUSTRATION:

We have all seen the many relationships that are built on mutual selfish ambition: "What can I get from this person and what are they going to want/need from me?"

- Money? Maybe he can help me with a business or give me a better job.
- Status? Can I network with them?
- Are they funny?
- What can I get from this person?

APPLICATION: Paul teaches the opposite.

Putting others first drives out selfish pursuits. Service nurtures humility in a natural way and our attitudes and emotions follow our actions.

- 1 Peter 4:10: As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

Again, this speaks to using our spiritual gift to serve, in the symphony of the church. Our individual gifts are going to be different and our service will look different but we weren't given gifts for recognition or a pat on the back. Good quote on that is: *Spiritual gifts are not "merit badges" but "service towels." (Bob Utley)* Is your towel out there getting dirty and used or do you just keep it pressed and folded in the closet for Sunday morning?

Use those tools in service of others and your attitude is going to be aligned with Christ

4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

My brother works in Finance and is generally pretty all around annoying about saving and investing, but one interesting thing I've learned is the word fiduciary which is "the duty of acting in good faith with regard to the interests of another." Apparently some advisors or brokers don't have that fiduciary duty, they just have to meet a bare minimum standard of suitability. Most likely, they're mainly focused on themselves and making money.

As Christians, we don't get to be just any advisor or broker out there, focused on ourselves and making money. We are commanded to look beyond just ourselves; to our fiduciary responsibility to the interests of others.

APPLICATION:

It takes time to care about and serve others. And as we'll see it takes sacrifice. I heard someone say they would choose where they live based on what church they want to go to, and while I don't necessarily agree with the idea, I'm impressed with the spirit of obedience and possible sacrifice. And that's a small sacrifice. We say send me Lord, but not too far. Not on the weekends when I'm off work or my free evenings. Not during hunting season. You ever gotten a check from someone and they told you not to cash it yet?

TRANSITION:

We see Paul explaining how individuals in the church should have been placing each other above themselves and caring about others' their interests too.

Now let's look at how we are supposed to accomplish these things which the flesh never desires.

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

- "Mind" is just a way of speaking to the previously mentioned ideas that Paul is challenging the church with.
- This isn't our default fleshly mind. This is Jesus's Mind.
- Look at it in v 5b: Which IS YOURS in Christ Jesus.
 - Spoiler Alert: You and I already have it! We don't have to name it and claim it! We got it.
 - The mindset, WHICH YOU ALREADY POSSES, as we are in Christ. Jesus living inside us. BUT WE STILL HAVE TO USE IT. I possess a bathroom scrubber and pumice stone. Simply possessing them doesn't clean my bathroom. I have to have a mind AND THE WILL to use it.

6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Finally getting to talk about Jesus, the meat

I think we often forget Jesus's place in Eternity. I was talking to someone just last week and they brought up how easy it is to forget that Jesus is in the Old Testament. He was there at creation. He was there before and after, outside of time.

- So when you see: "Form of God"... remember:
 - Eternal
 - Person of the Trinity
 - Equal with and equal to God
 - BUT He did not place His position over the mission.

- How often are we guilty of this?? “I’m dad so I don’t need to load the dishwasher and clean the toilet” or “I’m 18 so I don’t need to be respectful to mom?”
- Choosing to be right and prove it instead of choosing peace and unity.
- Jesus did not hold on to His superiority as GOD!

So what did Jesus do instead??

**7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself**

Two things here:

1. He Emptied Himself - Don’t think of this as Jesus becoming Not-God, but instead Jesus “laying aside his privileges, or limiting himself” (Constable’s) Obviously not completely and totally, as He was healing people and performing miracles. But to an insane degree. Remember:
 - This is the same God who humans cannot fully look upon and live.
 - This is un-imaginable glory and perfection.
 - **by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.**
 - He willingly paused His power. And his rights to serve Humanity.
 - Placed Himself in the hands and will of the Father and sinful man.
2. And He humbled himself
 - He left heaven
 - You can’t get more full to empty than going from the right hand of the Father with all the accompanying rights and privileges to being born, living, and growing up in Nazareth in the 1st Century.
 - If I was God, I would have at least waited a couple thousand years for humans to get plumbing, heating and air conditioning figured out before I took the form of one.
 - He came to earth
 - From Throne to Manger. I don’t love the word manger as we don’t get the right mental picture of a manger. But you say hay bale feeder or feed trough and we’re on the right track. Can’t recall seeing one of those in the hospital or birthing center.
 - Jesus is humble in His nature. LISTEN TO Matthew 11:29, Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
 - Learning from him means applying His ways. **REMEMBER WE HAVE THIS MIND OF CHRIST ALREADY.**
 - He died on the cross.
 - Constable wrote, Jesus “was willing to undergo ‘death on a cross,’ by crucifixion, a form of execution that was without equal in its pain and humiliation.”

- All to fulfill God's plan of Redemption and offer of salvation to mankind from death and the punishment of sin.
- To fulfill the mission of the cross - Jesus, placed himself into the hands of his own murderers. WOW
- The will of God and sinful man met at the cross of Jesus.
- TALK ABOUT THE GOSPEL SOME

Jesus needs no illustration.

Jesus is our leader, our hero, our example, our Lord, our sin bearer.

- He left the glory of heaven, emptied Himself, humbled Himself, washed feet, willingly took our sins, and died an embarrassing death on the cross.
- We are to follow His examples in our lives.
- We should be striving for the things He taught us to the fullest detail.

David Livingstone wrote, "If a commission by an earthly king is considered an honor, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?"

APPLICATION:

- Putting people above ourselves is not only difficult, but it is impossible for us.
- What? God tells us to do the impossible?
- To be like Christ we have to be in tune with Christ = HE IS HUMBLE. HE MAKES US HUMBLE.
- Having God's humbleness can only be accomplished by God.
- Ask for humbleness in your prayers.
- Look for it in your lives.
- Let us model it to each other.
 - Listen to what Paul wrote to believers:
Romans 8:13, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, ***but if by the Spirit*** you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (emphasis mine)
- Absolutely, we have the mind of Christ. AND the only way we put to death the deeds of the body is "by the Spirit" coupled with our wills to ACT!
 - Every victory won (the same call is on our life - we are mirroring Jesus's life, not a "great suggestion")!

TRANSITION:

We have seen, as Christians having the mind of Christ; we are commanded to be humble as Christ was and united. Now let's turn our attention to the result of obedience for Jesus.

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so 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.

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him

- "In view of the Son's submission to the depths of humiliation, God the Father raised Him to the height of exaltation. The greek is literally "super-exalted" Him (Gr. hyperypsoen). This process included Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and glorification in heaven." (Constable)
- As we saw in the variety of passages read earlier, all throughout the Bible: Honor follows humility. We don't talk about rewards and honor nearly enough as Christians. "As we imitate Christ's obedience, his sacrifice, his Unity with the Father, we will also share in His glory"(idea:maclaren)

and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

-No doubters in Noah's day when the raindrops started falling.

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

APPLICATION

So in summary, how do we have unity as a church? As a family? Like Christ is with the Father?

1. We strive for humility through serving.
 - a. We spend a little bit less time thinking about how to grow our 401k, buy a new car or house and we spend a little more time looking to the interests of others. Learning the mind of Christ and how to act according to it.
2. And when we're humble, acting in the Mind of Christ, we're going to be unified. And that Unity will bring great eternal reward.

Citations:

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