

Sharing Jesus Through Humility

Philippians 2:1-11

KV 5: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”

There is a saying, “Attitude is everything,” that applies to just about every aspect of life. My volleyball coach used to say that in order to excel, you always need to keep a positive attitude. When I used to take dance lessons, that saying was especially true because people could see it when you perform. You were always told to smile, or make some face to look cool. This saying is just as true in our spiritual lives, and if we want to prosper, our attitude means everything. What is this attitude we should have? The apostle Paul tells us, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” That is, the attitude of humility. Humility is one of the greatest virtues we can have, and it is God who grants us a spirit of humility which becomes a source of power for our spiritual lives and spiritual work.

Paul himself is a perfect example of the attitude he is speaking about. He wrote this letter to the Philippians while he was in jail, persecuted because of his life of faith in Christ – but you don’t find this letter full of grumbles and complaints. Instead, when you read it you will find it brimming with joy and thanksgiving. While he was in prison, there were some people who were trying to compete with Paul in winning converts. Though Paul himself was not competing with them, they took this opportunity while he was in prison to slander him out of their own rivalry and envy of his influence. Yet Paul says this: “But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice (Phil 1:18).”

He considered it a privilege to suffer for Christ because it brought glory to God and enabled the gospel to continue to spread. The Philippians were going through the same kind of struggle – suffering for Christ, so he writes this letter to thank them for their gift to him and also to encourage them to have the right attitude. Look at v.1 “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,” I like this verse because it summarizes some of the lessons we have learned so far in our Sharing Jesus series, and gives me a good opportunity to tie in these points.

Being united with Christ means to be joined with Christ. Just as we are united with our spouses and become one, so we are united with Christ and become one with him. Your body is the dwelling place of God, in fact, you yourselves are God’s temple, and God’s spirit lives in you (1 Cor 3:16). Jesus said in John 14:23, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” When you are united with Christ, he encourages you and comforts you with his love. And when this love is in you, this is true love, because it comes from God, and it ought to overflow within you so that you are encouraged to love others through Christ, putting this love into action and making God’s love complete.

Being united with Christ also means having fellowship with the Spirit, because God is three in one – he is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Fellowship with the

Spirit is a relationship with the Spirit. The Spirit is our counselor and guide, he assists us when we cannot pray and testifies to our hearts about Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the power of God in us, for without the Spirit we are ineffective and can do nothing. He leads us in prayer, and gives us words to say, and helps us open the doors for the gospel.

Paul says if you have any of these fruits, if you have any of these gifts which come from God, then, in v.2, “then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.” If you have any unity with Christ, then have unity among yourselves. Because Christ is one Spirit, he is one Lord, one God, “He is One,” the Bible says – and the closer we are conformed with Christ, the closer we are actually conformed with one another, because we are more similar in spirit and purpose. That is why it was the object of Paul’s joy was to find the Philippians in unity - it indicates their collective unity with Christ.

But what exactly is this unity? It is being one in spirit and purpose. It is not about external things, but internal things. We don’t all need to wear white shirts with black ties, or all dress in robes. Not that there’s anything wrong with that – sports teams have their uniforms, choirs have their robes and it looks very nice. But the more important marks of unity are in spirit and purpose – it is being clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Col 3:12), it is setting an example for others in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Tim 4:12). Naturally the outward things will conform with the inward things once we are united with Christ.

The unity among believers is oneness of mind, of love, of spirit and purpose – Romans 12:15 says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn,” 1 Cor 12:26 says something similar: “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” We pray together and at home for those who are in need of jobs in this ministry. We pray together for past, present and future marriages, we pray together for those who are burdened, we pray together for a Bible House for God’s glory, we pray together for the Bible club. And this summer, we are praying that God will open the doors for us to share Jesus this fall at IIT. Ultimately, what every believer should strive for is the glory, worship and praise of God from now into eternity.

There are two things which will destroy any kind of unity, and we can find them in the first part of v.3: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.” Paul was experiencing this as he wrote this letter, as he records in ch.1 v.17, “The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.” These people were not sincere in their preaching of Christ, but were concerned about gaining power, influence and admirers. When I was in high school I had a friend who, not very long after becoming a Christian, had over 10 1:1 Bible studies a week – and this was in high school! I was quite amazed, and his reputation spread quick – but not long after, he must have become burned out. He became disillusioned with the church, left the ministry and discontinued all his Bible study appointments. Let us examine ourselves carefully whether even the good things we do are out of a hidden selfish ambition, and if they are, be humble and correct them.

A few months during our study of King David's life, remember Ahithophel the Gilonite, who was once David's trusted advisor, betrayed him and conspired with David's son Absalom. Because of his selfish ambition to be in control and the advisor to the king's young son, he put the kingdom in turmoil and caused David to flee. He was so wise that his advice was regarded as coming from God, even though it did not. God put an end to his plans, using a humble counselor named Hushai to outsmart him. Ahithophel went home disgraced, and he hung himself (2 Sam 15-17). See how selfish ambition and vain conceit end in destruction! The root of selfish ambition and vain conceit is pride, and the father of pride is the devil, who is always seeking to destroy God's work. Pride is actually an attitude that you desire to be glorified above God, which is why God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. James 3:16 says, "For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice."

The key to unity with Christ and with one another is in v.3, let's all read this together: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." Humility is the key to unity, and is the answer to most of our problems of disunity. It is not easy to be like-minded, one in spirit and purpose. In some churches, there may be gaps in culture or age. Let's take age for example. The older generation might not trust the younger generation, because they seem young and inexperienced. The younger people might think the older people are out of touch and do not understand them. The key is for both groups to respect one another, and consider one another better than themselves. The older generation should see the younger generation as more in touch with the current generation, while the younger generation should respect the wisdom and experience of the older. This is probably easier said than done, because it requires you to deny yourself, to humble yourself, and look for the strength in others – but to consider others better than yourself works wonders not only in ministry, but in my experience in the workplace as well.

V.4 says, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." This is in line with the second greatest commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:39)." We do have our own interests to take care of – professionally, financially, academically, or at home – the problem is when it stops there and we don't look out for the interests of others. Paul is not telling us to neglect our real concerns, but he says to *also* look to the concerns of others. Sometimes even a word of thought or encouragement is all that is needed to build each other up. Last Friday David came to me and said, "Thanks for your text Mike," which said, "Best of luck on your Bar exam!" Unfortunately, I did not send that text, but after hearing that, I wish I did, although I did pray for him the night before ☺ Romans 14:19 says, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification." This means to make every effort to do what leads to peace and strive to build each other up.

As we learned a few weeks ago, just as true love comes first from God, true humility comes from God – because a man may learn to be humble towards his fellow man, but if he is not united with Christ he is arrogant toward God, which is probably the worst arrogance of all. Jesus is the supreme example in humility, and if we are united

with Christ, we will learn to walk in the way he walked. Let's all read v.5 together: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:" Attitude is everything – it is the set of inner beliefs which drive everything you do. When we were born, our attitudes were not the same as his – but only when we are born again in Christ, are our attitudes conformed to Him. And a change in attitude is a change in mind, the word for that is repentance. If we are to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus, we must have our minds changed, we must repent and believe that Jesus will change us.

Jesus said to a rich young man once, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me (Matt 19:21)." We don't necessarily have to sell our possessions, this was specifically for the rich young man because it revealed his possessions prevented him from following Christ. The lesson is, if you want to be perfect, then remove all that hinders you from coming to Christ, especially your sin, and follow Jesus. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Matt 16:24)." This sounds difficult because we were born to love this world – to give the world up sounds like a great burden, but in reality it is a great relief. Jesus says in Matt 11:28-29, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, *for I am gentle and humble in heart*, and you will find rest for our souls."

Jesus says he is gentle and humble in heart, and the next 3 verses (Phil 2:6-8) prove that this is true. Let's first look at v.6: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped," This verse shows that Jesus is God. There are people who deny that Jesus is God, from biblical times even to this day, but this verse tells us that Jesus was and is in fact, God. It says he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped – he didn't need to reach for it, he didn't need to do anything to attain to equality with God because he was already equal with God. Even as we learned last week, all the Scriptures testify to this fact. Jer 23:6 says, "In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness." John writes in Rev 21:6, "He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty, I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.'"

Jesus is God, and had all the authority in heaven and on earth from the beginning of time. He was the same yesterday, today and forever – all heaven and all creation served him, but he did this – look at v.7 "but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." He made himself nothing, the one who is to be served came as one who would serve. "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hid their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isa 53:2-3)." Jesus did not come to please himself (Rom 15:3), but looked to our interest. Remember Jesus is God, he did not have to earn that – but he came for the expressed purpose to save us. 2 Cor 8:9 says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."

Look at v.8, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!” Jesus was in very nature God, and humanity was added to that nature. He still had all the authority and power of God, but he gave up his rights in order to obey. Some people are very indignant about their rights, and will even abuse the system. A friend of mine was selected for jury duty on a court case, where a woman’s car was slightly bumped without damage. She claimed mental stress and trauma and tried to sue for \$37,000, which she believed was her right – but in the end she got \$800. Jesus had rights, but he gave them up to obey his Father. In heaven, as God, he had no opportunity to humble himself, but he came down to earth as a man, humbled himself and obeyed to the point of humiliation and death. Humility involves *giving up* some of your rights to yourself in order to serve others and serve God.

Jesus was God, and he cannot die – yet he came here to die. This was humiliating in itself. The Titanic, that infamous ship, was once praised to be indestructible ship, but on it’s first trip to sea it hit an iceberg and sank. This was utter humiliation. Now imagine Jesus – he is God, he cannot die, he is truly indestructible and the glory of heaven. But he voluntarily comes to die, to lay down his own life, and to die in the most shameful way possible – on the cross, like a cursed man. This was extreme humiliation. He did it, because it was His Father’s will, and he obeyed. Like the psalmist, his heart’s desire was to do God’s will (in Psalm 40:8: “I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”). He obeyed until the point of death, because he loved the Father who loved us, and he loved us. He came to die so that he would take on the full wrath of God against our sin and die in our place so that we could live. He came from heaven to save us from hell. I Pet 2:24 says, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

In order to obey God, we need humility. Humility is not necessarily required to obey man, because we can obey and our hearts may still be proud. God however, cannot be seen, but he will reveal himself in the hearts of those who believe he exists and earnestly seek him (Heb 11:6). This is foolishness to the world because people have a tendency to only believe what they can see, but we must be like children who can believe with all their hearts in what they do not see. Children also believe in authority without doubting. When my little brother Joseph was around 5 years old, we were at Walgreens and he wanted to buy a toy. I told him that he should wait because it was good to wait. I really wanted to teach him patience, to see if he would still want the toy after a few days. Almost immediately he stopped asking for the toy, and when I got into the car I asked, “How come you didn’t ask for the toy anymore?” He said, “You said it’s good to wait, so I’m going to wait.” Without questioning why I asked, he trusted it was for his good, and obeyed. Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom in heaven. (Matt 18:3-4)” In order to obey God, we must be humble and put our trust in Him, just as Jesus put his trust in the Father, and just as children put their trust in their parents.

There was a final, even more glorious result to Jesus' humble obedience, and this is the great hope and promise for our humility and obedience as well. Let's read v.9-11 together: "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." Jesus came to earth as a man, he lived, suffered, and died on the cross. This man Jesus Christ came back from the dead and was then lifted up to the highest place – as a sign and as a hope for all people on earth who put their hope in Him.

Jesus is the great high priest and judge, we have someone who truly understands us and can sympathize with us, because while he was here he was tempted in every way – yet was without sin (Heb 4:15). Though there are people who deny him now, they will have no excuse when he comes again. Rev 20:13 says, "The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done." The final outcome of history is that every knee will bow at the name of Jesus, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord – whether saved or unsaved, everyone will know who he is. And this is our hope, for those who have put their faith in Christ, Phil 3:20-4:1, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love an long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!"

I personally wanted to study this message in Phil 2:1-11, because pride has always been my weakness. In 2010, I chose my new-years key verse from Col 3:12, "clothe yourself with humility," but after that year, I felt I still needed to learn about humility, so this year I chose Isaiah 57:15, "For this is what the high and lofty One says – he who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." I wanted the holy God to live in me, and I learned from this key verse that I needed to have a contrite and lowly spirit. I confess, at the beginning of this 6 weeks I was skeptical about the activities – it was not really in my interest to do them. But I submitted to Sh. Bob out of reverent fear (of the Lord), because I pray for him daily, and he is the director of this ministry. I never voiced objection outright but made every effort to maintain peace and mutual edification. That first day I went out to put love into action, I went to buy some food at CVS and came across a homeless couple. I spoke to them for a little bit, and asked if I could pray with them – and to my surprise I did not know how to pray for them. I prayed the same way I pray with us here, but we all have the comforts of home and warm meals 3 times a day – I did not know how to pray for the poor. This event really opened my eyes, and I searched for sermons and other ways I can learn to help the poor. Finally I learned how to pray for them and I am no longer afraid to share with them, even if it's a little bit. Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. (Matt 25:36)" I thanked God for opening my eyes to my pride, and my weakness, but it started first with the practice of humility defined in this passage.

If you have any gifts which come from a unity with Christ, be united with one another, having the same mind, same love, in one spirit and purpose. In humility, consider others better than yourselves, and look out also for the best interest in others. Humility breaks down the barriers between people and it is the key and secret to unity, it is the way Jesus walked, and whoever claims to live in him must walk as He did (1 John 2:6). Though you deny yourself in humility, you will be exalted by God when Jesus comes back. Humility is the way in which God works through us, and we need to have humility in order to be effective. Before we can be bold to share Jesus, we need to be humble, for humility unites us with God and with one another and gives us strength. Finally, remember the saying, "attitude is everything," and your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.