

# Philippians 2:1-11 - Victory & Joy Through Humility

**2:1-4 Unity in the Church Through Humility**

**2:5-8 Example of Ultimate Humility in Jesus**

**2:9-11 God Exalts Jesus Because of His Humility**

## Introduction

- if you asked people to name a well-known person in recent history
- who was an example of living a life of humility & self-sacrifice
- many people probably think of someone like Mother Theresa
- nun who devoted her life to helping the poor in Calcutta, India
- there are many examples of people throughout history living humble, selfless lives
- many because of their humility often go unknown except by those they have helped
- even in our lives, many daily examples of small humble acts that often go unnoticed
- but really that's not the point, humility isn't about drawing attention, but just serving
- for the believer it's not just about things we do but the attitude that governs our actions
- humility is defined as having a modest view of our importance, lack of pride or arrogance
- funny thing, especially Christians, we will often talk about humility, not how we become
- to gain humility we must undergo humiliation, the action of being humbled, lowered
- true test of humility how do we respond when something humiliating happens to us
- do we get ashamed and angry, try to cover up in blustering or putting others down
- or do we respond in grace and peace, laugh at ourselves & seek to learn & grow
- this doesn't mean we're to be doormats and let people walk over us
- but it's kind of a gauge to see where our general attitude is at
- this is by no means easy, we all struggle with this
- doesn't come naturally, our sinful nature is all about pride and selfishness
- hopefully we can find out why & how to cultivate this attitude in our lives

## 2:1-4 Unity in the Church Through Humility

*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. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

- starts with so, linking word, tying this passage to what Paul said in previous chapter
- Paul is in Rome, in prison, house arrest, writing to encourage Philippian church
- he loves this church, supported him in ministry, even now in prison,
- they bring him joy, rejoices in Christ's work in & through them, always prays for them
- prays with full assurance that Christ will complete his good work in them
- spiritually maturing them, transforming into Christlike character by Holy Spirit
- in that process they would abound in love, discernment & good works
- Paul wants to reassure them about his imprisonment
- he isn't worried by his circumstances, in fact he's able to rejoice
- encouraged God is still working, gospel being preached through good intentions or bad
- about personal condition says, "for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21)
- either way Paul is at peace & content with his circumstances
- if God allows Paul to live, he'll use his life for the cause of the gospel of Christ
- if he dies, he's rewarded with being in the presence of his Lord & Saviour Jesus
- exhorts Philippians to live as citizens of Heaven, with character worthy of the gospel
- to stand firm, united in one Spirit and mind, working together for the cause of Christ
- their integrity, unity & ministry is a sign to the world of God working in & through them
- Paul also warns this means they will come into conflict with the world & face opposition
- that just as he is suffering for Christ, they will suffer & struggle also, (and we too)
- this is the context, keep this in mind, yet also remembering theme of Philippians - Joy
- raises question, with all these things what is the attitude we should have as Christians
- how can we like Paul find joy even despite difficult circumstances & sufferings
- part of that is to have an attitude of humility, specifically humbling ourselves under God

- 1 - back to text, starts with 'so if', (therefore, consequently), expectation of something
  - anyone familiar with computer programming, if/then statements common
  - conditional statement, if (a=true) then (b=result), Paul makes if statement
  - if we have a relationship with Christ & have experienced his blessings
  - and we are surrendered to his Holy Spirit working in us & transforming us
  - he will produce his good fruit in our lives as a result
  - have we been encouraged by Christ, resoundingly yes, many different ways
  - reading, hearing his word, singing, listening to a song, prayer, kind words spoken
  - do we have comfort from the love of Jesus, amen, yes what a great comfort
  - to ponder how much he truly loves us, to know nothing can separate us from his love
  - the Holy Spirit of Christ speaks this to our hearts, he is our encourager & comforter
  - and if we have the Holy Spirit, do we participate or share in fellowship through him, yes
  - 1 John 1:3-4 says, *"that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete."*
  - bringing in joy again, what joy & blessing to have fellowship with God & each other
  - do we have any love (affection) from Christ, overwhelmingly, more than we can know
  - died on the cross for us sinners, took God's wrath, poured out his love by his shed blood
  - reading & thinking about how much he loves me, gives such hope, peace & assurance
  - have we received sympathy (compassion) from Christ, cross demonstrates compassion
  - Hebrews 4:15, *'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.'*
  - Paul asks rhetorical questions, lists some of the blessings of knowing Christ
  - not an exhaustive list, but important for the point he's making
  - if we've received & participated in these blessings from Christ, what do we do now
- 2 - Paul says since the Philippians (and us) have received all these blessings from Christ
  - what would truly bring him (& God) joy is to share these things with each other
  - in the same manner as Christ has acted towards us & blessed us
  - so are we to treat and act towards and treat one another
  - encouraging & comforting each other, participating in fellowship with one another

- most importantly loving one another with the same love Christ has for us
  - commandment of Jesus, John 15:12, *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”*
  - also that we should be in full accord, he’s not saying that we all have to drive a Honda
  - what he means, we should all be united in our purpose and focus, namely the gospel
  - and there shouldn’t be infighting or divisions or cliquishness going on in the church
  - we have common union through the Holy Spirit, strive for unity in the bond of peace
  - not uniformity, all being identical clones, we can have our own opinions
  - we can disagree in minor issues, do it in a loving way, not make them the main thing
  - also to be obedient & submit to the leaders that God has placed over us in the church
  - again to not major in the minor things, keep the main thing the main thing, Jesus
- 3-4 - Paul now uses imperative tone, telling us to do nothing out of selfishness or conceit
- this is not to be our attitude or motivation as believers, once was in the flesh, no more
  - look around & see this is how the world operates, all about self
  - look out for number one, get all you can, whatever it takes, cult of self
  - not for Christians, it’s the opposite, we’re to count others more important than ourselves
  - instead of ourselves on the throne, God is on the throne, then others, then ourselves
  - tough because in our sinful nature wants to jump on the throne again
  - not that we can’t care about our own needs, just not exclusively, care about others also
  - no one is better than anyone else, all sinners, ground is level at the cross
  - for this idea of humility, Paul uses Greek word *tapeinophrosynē* (*tă-pa-no-fro-sü'-na*)
  - having humble opinion of oneself, or deep sense of one’s moral littleness
  - the more aware of our sin & the amazing love & mercy of God, the more humble we’ll be
  - really rooted in the grace of Jesus, the list of blessings we saw earlier, all he’s done
  - when we stand on the assurance of Christ’s love, encouragement, comfort & fellowship
  - we have the strength to make ourselves low, because we know our position in Christ
  - wonderful liberty and freedom in that, doesn’t matter what others may think, only God
  - able to like Paul endure trials & difficult circumstances with joy, resting in God’s grace
  - really all points back to Jesus and his work on the cross, where Paul’s going next

## 2:5-8 Example of Ultimate Humility in Jesus

*5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 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 by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

- 5 - Paul points to Jesus, says it's his attitude of humility is really what need to emulate
  - greatest example of humility that has ever been or will be, 'Great Condescension'
  - as followers of Christ this is the mindset of humility we are to all have in common
- 6 - says he was in the form of God, speaking of the pre-incarnate Christ in heaven
  - more than mere outer form, in his complete nature and existence he was fully God
  - equality with God wasn't something to be grasped by him, because he already had it
  - God is three persons in one, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Jesus is one person in the Trinity
  - picture of the pre-incarnate Jesus, in form and nature, one with & equal with God
  - dwelling in glory, surrounded by the angels singing, Holy, Holy, Holy
- 7 - it says he emptied himself, not of divinity, still fully God
  - external change from the "form of God" to the "form of a servant."
  - born in the likeness of man, called incarnation, taking on flesh
  - the act where Christ took our human nature into union with his Divine Person
  - Jesus is both fully man and fully God, two natures, one person, called 'hypostatic union'
  - born not just as a man, but as a servant, went even lower, taking the lowest position
  - to reach everyone, so even the lowest born person could relate to Jesus
  - Jesus tells his disciples this after they were arguing about who was the greatest
  - And Jesus called them to him and said to them, Mark 10:42, *"You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*
  - this is the economy of the Kingdom of Heaven, opposite of the world
  - if you want to be great in God's kingdom, become a servant, following Christ's example

- 8
- Jesus stepped down from the glory of heaven, became a man, even more a servant
  - so obedient to God the Father's will that he came to earth to die for us
  - not just any death, but the most painful and humiliating form of death invented, the cross
  - he did that for us because he loved us so much, wanted to have a relationship with us
  - knew it was the only way we could have our sin forgiven, know what, he went joyfully
  - Hebrews 12:2, *'looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.'*
  - there are two of the themes of Philippians, he who began a good work... & joy
  - leads into passage of the risen & exalted Christ seated at the right hand of God

## **2:9-11 God Exalts Jesus Because of His Humility**

*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.*

- three days after his death Jesus rose in victory over sin and death
- later ascended to heaven, sat down at the right hand of God the Father, place of honour
- because of his humility & obedience in coming to earth & going to the cross
- God has honoured & highly exalted Jesus, made Lord of all, except Himself
- 1 Cor. 15:27, *'For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him.*
- God has also exalted the name of Jesus given him the name above every other name
- some say this refers to his title of Lord, either way it is Jesus who is being exalted
- one day everyone who has ever lived will assemble before the throne of Jesus
- every single knee will bow down before him & every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord
- the exaltation of Jesus will ultimately be for the glory of God the Father
- couple notes, notice it is God who is exalting Jesus, not him exalting himself
- Jesus just simply obeyed & humbled himself to God's will, God did the exalting
- God's word promises if we humble ourselves, God will also exalt us at the right time

- 1 Peter 5:5-7, *'Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* 6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.'*

- we don't humble ourselves in the hope to be exalted, but to just obediently follow him

- it's by his grace that we are exalted, we can trust in his good & perfect plan for our lives

- we can trust him with our lives & cast all our anxieties on him because he cares for us

- his promises & love & grace give us the strength to be humble, he's got our backs

- other point, one day we will all bow our knees before him & declare Jesus as Lord

- maybe you have never done that, I encourage you to take that step, why wait until then

- Romans 10:9-10 says, *'if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.'* go ahead

- in conclusion, the Christian life is one of humility & struggle, also great joy & blessing

- the Holy Spirit through Paul is calling us toward following Jesus' example of humility

- this is part of Christian maturity, of God completing his good work in us

- all for the building up of his body, the church, for our joy & ultimately for the glory of God