

CREATED FOR GREATNESS – Humility: The Mark of Greatness

7/2/17- Pastor Randy

Philippians 2: 1-11 (ESV)

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

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

Philippians 2:5-11 has become one of the most written about and discussed passages in the NT because of its explicit affirmation of Jesus' divine and human nature. It is one of the most frequently cited passages marshalled in defense of the deity of Christ. It is considered one of the most profound theological statements of the Christian faith. Unfortunately, it is often discussed in isolation from verses 1-4 which are critical to a full understanding of what follows. In verses 1-4 Paul challenges the Philippian Christians to love one another. He calls them to a genuine, deep love that manifests itself in a life of self denial for the sake of others. The basis for his appeal is that they are called to have the same attitude as Christ, whose radical self-sacrifice for us was demonstrated by his incarnation and crucifixion. Jesus loving self-sacrifice was initiated at the incarnation and culminated at the cross. The theology of Philippians 2:5-11 provides the "why" behind "what" Paul was instructing them to do. All good practical teaching is grounded in solid

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theological truth. All the practical instruction provided to us in the NT is about HOW to live IN LIGHT OF (in response to) who God is and what he has done for us.

Paul is writing from prison. He is uncertain as to whether he will be released or put to death. He affirms that what is of the utmost importance to him, and what he is committed to above all else, is that God be glorified through the outcome. He proceeded to encourage the Christians at Philippi to not lose heart, to not become fearful in the face of persecution. He said suffering should be expected by those who choose to identify with Christ. In light of the reality of these outside pressures and attacks, God's people need to pull together, encourage and love one another.

Here is a bullet point summary of Paul's flow of thought:

- Love one another
- Show your love by your willingness to humble yourselves.
- Follow Jesus Example. Jesus displayed the greatest love through His supreme humility.

What does it mean to be humble?

Paul contrasts humility with selfish ambition, self-absorption, and self-promotion. Paul's words here echo his words in 1 Cor. 13: "Love is not boastful or proud. It does not demand its own way." Humility is expressed here as a by-product of love. The existence of love is proven by the evidence of humility. Love and humility are practically synonymous. They are both characterized by selflessness which places them in opposition to selfishness. Some people stumble over Paul's statement, "*but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*" (ESV) The language here is not intended to communicate that we should consider others to be inherently of more value than we are. Paul is not encouraging us to make value comparisons between us and others. That would only lead to a spirit of rivalry and competition

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which he is trying to discourage. His words convey the need to take our focus off of ourselves and focus on helping others. He is essentially telling his readers to be givers rather than takers. He is telling them to love like Jesus; to be willing to sacrifice for the good of others.

John Maxwell, the leadership guru said, "A leader is great, not because of his or her power, but because of his or her ability to empower others."

The context also helps us avoid stumbling over this phrase. The very next statement Paul makes is, "Don't look out **only** for your own interests." Relational health in a family or community of people exists when each member focuses more on how to bless than how to get others to bless them. When each one focuses on being a giver rather than a taker. I have found this struggle to be at the heart of all marital conflicts. Each spouse is more concerned with what they are getting than what they are giving. Each spouse wants to assert their rights before assuming their responsibilities. If I can get them to reverse that approach and adopt Jesus' attitude, restoration is almost certain. Unfortunately, it requires both to operate with a give first mentality. When only one is willing to do this the marriage remains unhealthy.

Eugene Peterson in "The Message" does a great job capturing Paul's message in contemporary language. *"Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand."*

True humility is not thinking less about oneself, but thinking about oneself less. It is not about lessening your value in comparison to others. It is certainly not expressed in belittling yourself.

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A humble person is not motivated to “get ahead” but to get better. The drive to “get ahead” is fueled by comparison and competition, but the drive to get better is fueled by a desire to make a greater contribution. If “getting ahead” is our goal, then we will either become satisfied way too early or discouraged way too easily. If the people around you are not doing well, you might very well find yourself “ahead” of them. But being “ahead” of someone else doesn’t mean you are where you ought to be. You might still be far from where you need to be. If the people around you appear to be “ahead” of you, that doesn’t mean you aren’t where you should be. Your job isn’t to be who they are and do what they are doing! Your job is to be who God has called you to be and do what He has called you to do!

Jesus: The Ultimate Picture of Humility

After Paul defined what it means to humble ourselves and love others, he provided an even clearer picture as he went on to explain why we should humble ourselves so we can love others. Paul paints a picture of the supreme love of Christ, displayed by His supreme demonstration of humility. For the rest of this message we are going to focus our attention on Jesus!! We already have our instruction: Humble ourselves so that we can love others. When we meditate on, fix our attention on, Jesus supreme love, expressed through his supreme humility, the Holy Spirit begins to reveal just how great Jesus love for us is, filling our minds and hearts with an appreciation love for Him. As the Holy Spirit causes us to become enthralled with wonder in the face of the majesty of Jesus, the magnitude of His love, and the immeasurable depth of His humility, we cannot help but be inspired to follow in His steps.

Philippians 2:5-11 reveals that Jesus is the greatest – exalted to the highest place as Lord of all - because he demonstrated the ultimate and absolute supreme love towards the Father and towards mankind.

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When we think of what Jesus did to demonstrate his love for us we most often think of Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us." However, in our passage Paul begins with the incarnation in order to fully describe the depths of Christ's love for us. Jesus loving self-sacrifice was initiated at the incarnation and culminated at the cross.

Paul begins with the incarnation when he writes, "***Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.***"

The first thing we ought to notice is that Jesus became a man willingly. The phrase, "***did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped***", means he did not consider His status as a member of the Trinity to be something to pursue or seek after; he already possessed it. Jesus stands in direct contrast to the proud, selfishly ambitious person who, to use Eugene Peterson's words, tries to *push his way to the front and tries to sweet-talk his way to the top*. Jesus had no need to be selfishly ambitious because He was already God! Instead of seizing a position of glory that did not belong to Him – like Adam and all of us have done – Jesus did the opposite; He emptied Himself by becoming one of us! Rather than trying to climb up the social ladder - since he was already at the top there was no need for that - Jesus climbed down, down, down, way down...down to our level. But He went even further, emptying Himself to take the place of a servant. And then he emptied himself even further; humbling himself ***by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross***. He subjected himself not only to the torture of the cross, but to the humiliating indignity and shame of being crucified as a criminal.

Paul didn't explain in this passage how Jesus death was an expression of love for us, so for those who don't know I will summarize. Jesus became like us to undo the effects of Adam's sin, and our sin because all of us have inherited Adam's sin nature. As a result of living a sinless life of perfect benevolence to

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man and perfect obedience to the Father, Jesus was uniquely qualified to bear the punishment for our sins upon Himself and to break the power of sin.

1. He bore our punishment for sin: He fulfilled what the OT sacrifices foreshadowed: An innocent party bearing the punishment for the sins of the guilty, satisfied the demands of justice and provided forgiveness to the guilty.

2. He broke the power of sin:

His perfect love for us was expressed through His supreme act of humble benevolence displayed in His incarnation and crucifixion.

His perfect love for the Father was expressed through His supreme act of humble obedience to the Father's will displayed in His incarnation and crucifixion.

By faith in Jesus we are delivered from the curse of Adam's and incorporated into the righteousness of Christ.

In light of Jesus love, expressed by His willingness to demonstrate supreme humility through the ultimate life of sacrifice and self-denial...

Jesus has been vindicated and exalted before men as Lord of all. When Paul wrote that every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord he was quoting from Isaiah, words which were applied to Yahweh. In other words, when Paul writes that Jesus Christ is Lord he was saying Jesus is God.

Jesus did not earn this glorified position by humbling himself. He already was God and never stopped being God. What God the Father did was reveal to all creation that Jesus was Lord, is Lord, and will always be Lord.

Jesus love displayed through his willingness to humbly come to earth and die for us was not His pathway to greatness. It is God's way of declaring, THIS IS WHAT GREATNESS DOES! HUMILITY IS THE MARK OF GREATNESS!

The great ones in our world are often marked by the distance between them and others. Famous and wealthy athletes, celebrities, high level politicians, business leaders achieve a social status that isolates them from the average

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person. Both the number and class of people who have access to them is often strictly limited. Greatness is achieved when one no longer is required to deal with menial tasks and engage with “trivial” people. For those people who are considered “great” certain tasks and certain people are considered “beneath” them. Greatness means you get to be spared from that stuff.

In our world the "great" ones are typically unapproachable. But not Jesus. The Great One is the approachable One. You never have to question if He is approachable, He has made that abundantly clear by the manner in which he has approached us. He left the splendor and glory of His throne and stooped down into our world. No Caesar in Rome would have ever done that! Jesus humbled himself and approached us in the most intimate way – he became like us! He became one of us. And Jesus remarkable display of humility was just getting started at his incarnation. During his life he was available for the children, the lepers, the lame, and the immoral; the marginalized, the traumatized, and the stigmatized. They could approach Him ***because He had come for them!*** In Christ, God has come down among us; He has come near for us; He has drawn close to us.

He has come to rescue you? Your role is to believe to the point of wanting to receive Him and follow him. If you haven't done that, now is the time. If you want to learn how to follow now that you have accepted Christ, let us know. We would love to help you with your next steps!

**Message # 3 Washing our Neighbors feet
The Great Servant - Oxymoron**

Mark Bidwell

Fred Factor –
Cleaning Team
Nursery & PreSchool – They wipe snotty noses
Food Pantry
Chosen 300

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1. Shows greater concern for assuming his/her responsibilities than claiming his/her rights
2. Initiates service rather than serving only when asked.
3. Serves willingly and not for a reward
4. Is willing to help others advance at his/her own expense. – Valued.
5. Desires to bring God glory rather than to seek it for him/herself.
6. Is not too proud to serve the “lowly” or perform the “menial” task.
7. LOVES GOD and PEOPLE