

Philippians 2

New King James Version

Unity Through Humility

² Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

The Humbled and Exalted Christ

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Light Bearers

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

Sermon:

Becoming a Humble Servant of God

Humility.

This is the ideal Paul lived by. It should be a byword for us all to live by.

As Christians, we are called to serve God, and to love, nurture and serve each other. We are reminded to accept God's will, and NOT our own. We need to be humble Christians.

Decades ago

in 1980, a songwriter named Mac Davis wrote a song titled: ***It's Hard to Be Humble***. Here is the first verse of that song:

***Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble
When you're perfect in every way
I can't wait to look in the mirror
'Cause I get better lookin' each day
To know me is to love me
I must be a hell of a man
Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble
But I'm doin' the best that I can!***

The lyrics are pretty overblown, and it is insightful to know that Mac Davis didn't really feel that way about himself. He was trying to describe the conflict of becoming a celebrity while remaining rooted in his real self.

Hidden in that overblown bravura, however, is a kernel of truth that we all should acknowledge; sometimes we might see ourselves as more significant than we are. We might have obscured our own blemishes, so well, we don't concede them anymore.

When we stand in front of God however those "blemish removers" no longer work.

God knows all those blemishes; he knows our every sin. Remarkably, he still loves us.

That is a point that we need to consider here as we strive to be humble; understanding what Christian humility is and isn't. Christian humility is NOT about HATING ourselves.

God loves us, and we need to remember that we can love ourselves **in the way that God loves us; blemishes** and all. Yet also striving for what is the **good and avoiding that which is ungodly.**

Christian humility embraces the reality that *I am not God*. Humility is a *human virtue*. It is a posture of soul and body and life that acknowledges and embraces the godliness of God and the humanness of self.

There is a bit of a mystery here in our reading today as well. Why would Christ be humble?

The answer is that he had become man and God here on earth. Having taken on the mantle of humanity; humility was feasible.

For God, humility is a null concept; God is omnipotent, everything is feasible for him. Nothing is impossible.

Paul states in our reading:

⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

He humbled Himself - It is impossible for us to grasp the depth of this statement, to understand the intensity of what we are reading here. He who made all men, who knew the hearts of all men, who had all authority over men, humbled Himself and allowed Himself to be executed by men.

Because Jesus was obedient, because He humbled Himself, because He was willing to pay the price, He will be exalted. The Father has given Him the

name at which every knee will bow and tongue confess that He is our Lord.

The contrast is pronounced between the value system of the world and the value system of Jesus. In our secular world He who has the most money or power, also has the most prestige.

The worldview in Christian life should be the opposite. We honor God by service for others. The greatest among us **WAS** a servant.

Sometimes it may feel like our present-day world dislikes humility. Our culture seems to celebrate the most extreme lack of this characteristic in people. Even those who claim to be our leaders.

Should we honor individuals who don't take up the least example of Christ's humility?

For me writing sermons has become a study in my needed humility. How could I possibly be a good enough person, much more critically a good enough Christian, to preach the Ideas and the words of God??

What temerity does it require to believe that I can understand God's will???

The man who walks humbly with God, realizes his complete dependence on Him. Christians will not unduly exalt themselves, and will highly esteem others, knowing that we are equally dependent on God for our strengths.

Instead of fixing our eyes where we excel, fix them on those in which your neighbor excels. It is good when we ensure that the strengths of neighbors are better known than their defects.

Introspection, examining ourselves thoughtfully, helps us to be aware of our own personal shortcomings, and keeps us humble.

Humility itself is an original product of Christianity.

The whole Roman language, with all the improvements of the Augustan age, does not afford so much as a name for humility; nor was one found in all the copious language of the Greeks, till it was taught as a precept by Paul.

Unity in Christ

The imagery of good Christians as lights to our world is a common theme in the New Testament.

We are reminded to not be disputers and disrupters, but instead to lead our lives in such a way that others will see us as examples of God's intentions as Christians.

I find myself circling back to the first verses of this chapter; reminding us of another key concept: unity as a body of Christians. This is not an act of personal or community selfishness, it is an act of submission to our faith in God, and continuity in our faithfulness to each other.

Unity also reflects how we treat other Christians, who might differ with our interpretations of Christian thinking. I might strongly disagree with a theological view another Christians might possess, but that isn't "my God-given duty" to resolve. I let the Holy Spirit resolve that; it's his bailiwick. He might very well be remonstrating me on my views rather than the reverse!

A more Christian-based understanding is that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, whose journeys may have been more unique than our own.

Again, this reflects an understanding of Christian humility, patience and a lack of conceit about our own views.

Let us rejoice together for God's love of us all and our love of God, and the blessings he has provided each of us.

Maybe Mac Davis was right. Maybe it is difficult to live life with humility. To be that humble person Christ wants us to be.

Maybe our Egos won't be nourished by pointless gratification.

The problem when you don't live with Christian humility is that whatever the egoistic gain of fame and notoriety supplies; **it only lasts for tiny milliseconds in the history of us all.**

Christian humility lives on with God forever.

Let us Pray:

Dear Father;

Father, grant me a teachable spirit that is open to wisdom and correction. Help me to lay aside arrogance and receive instruction with humility. May I grow in grace and understanding, acknowledging that all wisdom comes from You.

Help me to guard my tongue and speak with gentleness. May my words build others up and not tear them down.

Let my weakness be a testimony of Your strength. Keep me humble in recognizing that everything I have comes from You. Amen.

In your Holy Name we Pray:

Amen