



~ Zoom Bible Study ~

TO LIVE IS CHRIST: A STUDY IN PHILIPPIANS

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Lesson Two – Philippians 2

Philippians 2:1 – 2(ESV):

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

Paul is urging unity but remember that unity doesn't mean uniformity.

- What are some things as Christians we can differ on and still have unity?
- What are some things we should never compromise?

Interestingly, Paul asks them to “make his joy complete by being of the same mind.” The phrase *same mind* means to adopt a mindset of some kind.

Verses 3-4:

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

We all choose perspectives every day—choosing how we see situations, people, circumstances. Paul specifically exhorts us to choose this godly perspective:

- Do nothing from selfish ambition
- Count others more significant than yourselves
- Be aware of others' interests, not just your own

This does not come naturally; if and when you truly have this perspective, you can be assured that the Holy Spirit has enabled you to do it.

Have you ever thought about how you love yourself—what are some of the evidences that you love yourself?

Having a humble mind doesn't mean that you think of yourself in negative ways, but you simply don't think of yourself so much!

Isaiah 58:6 – 8:

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? ⁸Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.



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The truly humble person knows herself and accepts who she is as Christ has created her.

Romans 12:3:

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Acknowledge the wonderful things about the way God has created you and be aware that you've got some traits that need polishing. You don't beat yourself up all the time, and on the other hand, do you think of yourself as better than others.

What category do you tend to find yourself in most often?

- I beat myself up far too much.
- I think I do most things better than others and if everyone was more like me, the world would be a better place!
- A little of both.

Paul now tells us how we can achieve this humility:

Verses 5 – 8:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The Apostle Paul challenges us with what seems like mission impossible: to have the same attitude and the same humility that Jesus had. What was this Jesus attitude? How do we move toward being like Jesus? We see three ways that Jesus humbled himself.

1. Surrender to the will of God: Verse 6: *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*

As followers Christ if we are to have the same attitude as Christ, we'll need to be willing to do the same as Christ—surrender our rights to God's plan.

We live in a world where people are constantly demanding their rights and that attitude can subtly find its way into our thoughts and attitudes.

Can we/will we start teaching ourselves and those who come after us that living a self-centered life brings hopelessness and despair?

I was thinking of how to illustrate the enormity of the condescension that Jesus endured for us. Although this illustration is totally inadequate—as any illustration would be—I thought of the slums in Nairobi, Kenya, called Kibera. Kibera is an extremely poor suburb composed of over one million inhabitants spread across an area of only 2.5 square kilometers. I've been there and truly it is impossible to describe the destitution you find there. Here are two pictures:



Suppose I told you I'm moving to Kibera, Kenya—that it now will be my home, my dwelling place, where I work and live. What kind of rights and privileges would I have to surrender in order to do that?

The second key to humility is found in verse 7—

2. Become a servant – verse 7: *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

Christ who was fully God became fully man. He didn't empty himself of his deity. He didn't stop being God but he did empty himself of his self-interests and his privileges to take the form of a servant and become a man. He was fully God and fully man.

Matthew 20:28:

“...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The third key to humility is found in verse 8:

3. Be willing to pay the price—to sacrifice - verse 8: *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Our salvation came at a great cost to our Savior, Jesus Christ. There was nothing cheap about it.

What are you willing to sacrifice in order to follow Jesus?

- Some relationships?
- Some acceptance?
- Some success?
- Some shame?
- Some time?
- Some money?
- Some comfort?

Verses 9 – 11:

⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus suffered the worse that man could do him, but God exalted him and honored him. Think of some of the names that people called Jesus:

- He is a demon
- He is insane
- He is illegitimate
- He is an idolater
- He is a heretic
- He is a blasphemer
- He is in league with the Devil
- He is a deceiver
- He is a friend of tax collectors and sinners
- He is Beelzebub

And today many if not most people who use the name of Jesus use it as a curse word. Why?

How should we respond when someone uses the name of Jesus as an expletive in our presence?

- With kindness but without fear
- Pray for them
- Ask them why?
- Explain why – with this passage.

Verses 12 – 13:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but 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 work for his good pleasure.

We are in the process of being conformed to the image of Christ:

Romans 8:29:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Fear and trembling are proper reactions when we are aware of our own spiritual weakness and how susceptible we are to temptation.

Isaiah 66:2b:

But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Verses 14 – 18:

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Take that first sentence and pray it into your life: *Do all things without grumbling or disputing.*

Verses 19 – 24:

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰ For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. ²¹ For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. ²³ I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, ²⁴ and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

Paul needed people just like you and I do. Also note that Paul had desires and longings—no doubt many prayers—that did not go the way he hoped they would.

Verses 25 – 30:

I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, ²⁶ for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. ²⁷ Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. ²⁹ So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, ³⁰ for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Epaphroditus was a member of the Philippian church who had risked his life to carry the missionary offering to Paul in Rome. (Philippians 4:18: I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.) Paul knew full well how indebted he was to Epaphroditus and he gives him the credit due to him.

Epaphroditus made it possible for Paul to continue his ministry. Oftentimes we focus too much on the person who is in the spotlight, but God focuses on those in the background just as much—those who make it possible for others to do what God has called them to do. If you are one of those “background people,” don’t ever underestimate your labor for the Lord. Don’t ever see it as second-class.