

Joy in Humility
Philippians 2:1-11

July 17, 2001

A. Introduction

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^A Romans 7:18, Philippians 4:13, 2 Timothy 1:12

^B 1 Corinthians 13:5

^C Isaiah 53:11, Hebrews 12:2

^D Philippians 3:15

A. Introduction

1. Our theme in our worship time this morning has been praise
 - a. praise is the recognition, the confession, the exultation
 - b. in the fact of the greatness of God in His own being
 - c. in His self-revelation to mankind as the Trinity,
 - (A) as God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit
 - (B) three Persons in one God
 - d. in His manifestation to mankind by His works
 - (A) His works as Creator and Sustainer of the universe
 - (B) His works as Providence, meeting needs of His creation
 - (C) His works as Redeemer and Saviour upon the Cross

2. and praise is the proper basis upon which to place humility
 - a. for humility is not the use of a certain tone of voice, nor of carrying oneself in a certain way when one walks, nor of any of an hundred and one ways that can be used to represent humility which are but play-acting
 - b. but humility is a God-given grace
 - (A) an attitude of being; a facet of trust and faith
 - (B) the inward recognition that all we are, and all that we have we have received
 - (1) from others: parents, family and friends
 - (2) and ultimately from the gracious hand of God
 - c. so that we can say on the one hand, with Paul, '[For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.](#) (Romans 7:18)
 - d. and yet, can also claim with an equal humility, '[I can do all things through Him \(Christ\) who strengthens me.](#)' (Philippians 4:13) and '[For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.](#)' (2 Timothy 1:12)

e. humility combines with praise in recognizing the fact that the new creature that we have been made in Jesus Christ is not of any merit, act or work of our own, but it is purely and simply the result of God's gracious gift

3. having such a humility, then, as this

a. will bring joy to others

b. and joy to our own hearts

c. and ultimately pleasurable praise to the Lord God

4. our text this morning, Joy in Humility, divides naturally into

a. verses 1-4, Humility in Christian Fellowship

b. verses 5-11, the Example of Christ's Humility

B. Humility in Christian Fellowship 2:1-4

1. Stimuli towards Humility (2:1-2a); here are two:

a. Divine (2:1)

(A) this verse starts out with an 'if' but not an 'if maybe' but an 'if' that has been satisfied: 'if, as is the case'^{2}.

(B) because it is talking about what God has done in order to stimulate every believer to humility

(C) and in this verse, we find the Triune God involved

(D) first, there is the 'encouragement, or entreaty, that is in Christ' – the direction, leading and guidance that we receive from Christ as to how we are to live because we are in union with Christ through His work of salvation

(E) secondly there is 'comforting and caring counsel, the consolation of love', of God the Father, Himself, for 1 John 4:8 tells us that 'God is love'; so when God as our heavenly Father counsels us to humility, He does so out of His love working all things for our good

(F) and thirdly, there is the 'fellowship of the (Holy) Spirit' – the fact that all believers have a share in common, that of being partakers of the indwelling Spirit of God.

(G) these, then are things that God has done that we can have 'affection and compassion' – the

deepest emotions of affection and longing for other Christians, that will bring us to a joy in humility before each other.

- b. Human (2:2a) – Paul entreats us, ‘**make my joy complete**’ or, ‘**fill up to the full my inward satisfaction**’
 - (A) joy should not be interpreted as happiness, nor as being merry, or as having a good time – all those are transient in their character, coming and going with the mood of the day and the occurrences of the moment
 - (B) rather, as I have indicated, it speaks of a settled and pleasurable state of well-being
 - (C) every one of you here this morning has some one near and dear who finds the greatest joy in your spiritual progress – a spouse, a parent, a child, a friend – what satisfaction you bring to them as you grow in this grace of humility – that is a human stimulus to do so
- c. so what is the nature of humility? what are its marks?

2. Marks of Humility (2:2b-4) – it is ...

a. Attitudinal (2:2b) – in our inner being:

- (A) this is expressed in three parallel ideas
 - (1) **your unity of thought, (i.e. like minded)**
 - (2) **your union of affection, (i.e. of the same love)**
 - (3) **your harmony of feeling (i.e. one in spirit); (JH)**
 - (4) which can be summed up by this translation of the final phrase of the verse, ‘**yes, let there be an identity of thought and purpose.**’ (JH)
- (B) now, do you not find it interesting that the marks of humility are not expressed in terms of outward acts; nor in humbleness of possessions or circumstances
- (C) humility is defined in terms of true unity with believers, the oneness that is ours in union with Christ
- (D) there is a small group of senior pastors meeting in this area to share and pray for one another; one of the principal requests is also one of the principal requests of missionaries in the field – it is for relationship – that there be harmony and unity with one’s spouse, with the leaders of the church of Jesus Christ, with the people of God – that the gospel be not hindered
- (E) now: having the same mind, the same love, the same spirit – being all of one purpose – are all

great, high-sounding ideals; but how are they realized in practice?

b. Practical (2:3-4) – as translated into our outer actions

(A) first, let's deal with the question of motives – and there are two that are to be discarded

(1) the first thing to discard is difficult to translate: 'strife, selfishness or a party spirit' – either way it is to act in a fashion disregarding the common good

(2) the second thing to discard in one's actions is that seeking after recognition – empty glory, ill-founded conceit – as has been said, 'self-praise is no praise'

(3) we need first to get our motives straight with God

(B) second, there is the matter of personal evaluation: how do we value ourselves? how do we value others?

(1) the second part of verse 3 tells us the right way is with humility or lowliness of mind

(2) to value other believers as surpassing or superior to ourselves: more important, more excellent.

(3) now, the moment we hear this verse, the slick way our old nature works is that the first thought we may have is, 'Boy! I wish so-and-so were here to hear this; they really need this message!'

(4) so let us leave that and go on to verse 4:

(C) 'each and all not only eyeing their own interests, but each and all paying attention to the interests of others' (JH, RGH) – how does humility express itself in its most practical form?

(1) it looks out and seeks out the things that matter, the things that are important, the things that are needful for one's fellow believer

(2) here's a surprise which should be no surprise: that humility finds its expression in Christian love, love that 'does not seek its own' (1 Corinthians 13:5)

(D) because that is the love that Jesus Christ had as we look at His example for us.

C. Example of Christ's Humility 2:5-11

1. His Steps in Humility (2:5-8)

a. verse 5, takes the definition of humility as found in the verses 2 to 4 we have just discussed and prepares us for the illustration in verses 6 to 8 that follow

b. Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of humility for us: 'Think this way that I have been describing in yourselves, which is the way also Christ Jesus thought in Himself, as I am about to describe' (RGH) -- we

come now to a passage whose depths we shall never plummet, and whose truth we can express only imperfectly in human language

(A) it deals with the whole matter of the incarnation

(B) of the humiliation of Christ in God's plan of salvation

c. first consider who Christ Jesus is in His Eternal Being as Son of God – the words 'existed or being' and 'form' in our English translations are both inadequate to convey the proper sense of the first part of verse 6:

(A) the English tends to suggest that this was something that had been true, but then at some point changed; but the Greek word speaks of it as something which already existed, continued to exist and continues to exist – Christ Jesus is the I AM God

(B) the word 'form' conveys to us the idea of shape: but what is said here is the Christ Jesus in His innermost essence has the quality of God; He is Deity

d. verse 6 goes on to begin to tell us what happened in the incarnation when God the Son entered the world, namely, that He did not consider that His being identically God – and here we surpass human capacity for thought – as something to be held onto at all costs grasped

e. so that in verse 7 – the AV explains it as 'made himself of no reputation' but most modern translations have given up trying to explain the inexplicable and simply rendered the Greek literally, 'He emptied Himself'

(A) let me give an illustration – it is necessarily imperfect, but in a shall way it may help – if I take a pint pitcher of orange juice and I pour it into a sixteen ounce glass, then the orange juice does not cease being orange juice, and the glass does not cease being a glass – but things have certainly changed as a result

(B) in the Incarnation, as God the Son entered humanity – things certainly changed – and in some fashion which we cannot comprehend, the Eternal Son of God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, was constrained in time and space by the Father's will

f. but the humility of Christ did not end there

(A) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:7)

(B) did not end by His becoming really man, but he came not as a ruler – His rightful prerogative – but

- as a servant; literally a bond slave
- (C) a working man – a carpenter – of a subject nation
 - (D) but the passage continues
- g. this Son of God **'discovered as man in outward appearance'** He humbled Himself yet further and became subject to the testings and difficulties of mankind, even to the ultimate trial, that of death.
- (A) think on that for a moment
 - (B) Christ we are told was without sin
 - (C) He was without original sin that is man's common inheritance from Adam because He was born of the Holy Spirit of a virgin mother, Mary
 - (D) He was without sin in His every act upon earth
 - (E) He is therefore called a second Adam; and since He obeyed God in every detail, He was not, as is the rest of mankind, subject to death by sin
 - (F) yet He humbled Himself to be subject to death
- h. and not just any death – but **'such a death as that upon a cross'** – the death of one accursed by God; the death which was the real death that Adam suffered in the day that he sinned – the death of separation from God, so that on the cross He cried, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?'
- i. that is Christ Jesus, our example of humility – what is there in any of us that can do anything but bring us humbly to the foot of the cross for forgiveness of our vain pride; that we should not willingly give ourselves for others?
- j. and the Father has respect for the humility of the Son by granting to Him ...

2. His Ultimate Joy (2:9-11)

- a. let me give to you the extended translation by my Greek professor, **'Wherefore God has supremely exalted Him to a position of divine dignity, and has graciously given Him the Name which supercedes every other name, So that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow: of things celestial, terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue openly declare that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.'** (JH)
- b. it is prophesied of Christ, the Messiah, in Isaiah 53:11 that **'As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it (that is the resulting salvation of believers) and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One,**

My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.' (Isaiah 53:11)

- c. and Hebrews 12:2 explains further, 'fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'
- d. the humility of Christ ultimately brought joy to Him as well as to all who believe in Him; those who would seek to perfect their faith, will follow His example and ultimately will know real joy and bring joy to others.

D. Conclusion – let me then close with this exhortation from Paul which he gives later in this book on a related subject: 'Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you' (Philippians 3:15)

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AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
JH	Professor John Honeyman of Toronto Bible College, ca 1960

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870

EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan

Volume 11, including Philippians, by Homer A. Kent, Jr

EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, Philippians by H. A. A. Kennedy, Hodder & Stoughton, 1903

Kerux – The sermon and illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick to be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

Moule – The Epistle to the Philippians, by H. C. G. Moule, 1873 (and his commentaries on other epistles)

Motyer – Philippians Studies, The Richness of Christ, by J. A. Motyer; Inter-Varsity Press, 1966

Wuest – Philippians in the Greek New Testament by Kenneth S. Wuest, © 1942 Wm B Eerdmans

2. Most of the paraphrases in this message are from my own exegesis (RGH).