

Joy Through Humility

Believers find joy through humbly following Christ in all circumstances.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-15



...AD
...ation
...if any
...owels and

...e likened,
...g of one accord.

...e through strife or
...ness of mind let each
...than themselves,
...y man on his own things,
...so on the things of others.
...and be in you, which was also

...us:
...ing in the form of God,² thought
...berty to be equal with God:
...made himself of no reputation, and
...pon him the form ²⁰of a servant, and
...as made in the likeness of men:
...And being found in fashion as a man, he
...umbled himself, and ²⁶“became obedient
...unto death, even the death of the cross.
...⁹Wherefore God also ²⁸“hath highly exalt-
...all ed him, and ²⁹given him a name which is
...but ³⁰above every name:
...^{10e}That at the name of Jesus every knee
...which ye should bow, of things in heaven, and things
...in earth, and things under the earth;

2:14,17 ²¹⁸Vatt. 26:38,42; John 10:18; Heb. 5:8; 1:22 ²¹⁹Johr 17:1-2;5; Acis 2:33; Heb. 2:9
²²⁰2Ch. 1:20-21; Heb. 1:4 ²²¹2d10 Isa. 45:23; Matt. 29:18; Rom. 14:11; Rev. 5:13

...ath) over
...his priority
...nd glorified.
... Church of its
...kingdom of God),
...n, that they stand
...ected military pride.
...nd ready for combat re-
...emy's level of strength
...ss or the distracting entice-
...e church must manifest
...idness. "One spirit" expresses
...er's unified attitude. One mind
...e soul") means that believers share
...n rather than present divisions

love, same accord [lit "the same soul"), and
...the same goal (one mind).
...2:3-4 Strife or vainglory recalls the prob-
...lem Paul condemned (1:15, 17). Lowliness,
...the antidote for wrong attitudes, results
...in considering others as more important.
...Additionally, humility considers the inter-
...ests (things) of others. Proper relationships
...include the contrast "not only, but also."
...Personal responsibilities demand con-
...sideration, but the concerns of others are
...equally important.

2:5-11 This is one of the most difficult
...passages in the Bible, prompting various
...[GK] *kenosis* [lit "emptying"] theories at-

...on to at all costs). Jesus c-
...clung to equality with God,
...privileges to become humi-
...2:7-8 The phrase made him-
...tion's much debated. Th-
...der what Jesus gave up. If I
...did not divest: Himself of c-
...ributes. Two statements acc-
...verb. First, God the Son be-
...Form (cp. v. 6) indicates tri-
...Second, the likeness of me-
...emptying and servanthood
...*homoioōma*) differs from "I
...Two statements explain I
...humbled (cp. v. 3). First-



Can genuine humility exist alongside the other recognized qualities of a strong leader? How can assertiveness and humility co-exist in the same personality?

Sometimes we see genuine humility as the enemy of joy. To be humble, we think we must consider ourselves unworthy and therefore not able to enjoy life. But Jesus was humble and joyful. For Jesus, humility was not about feeling inferior. Rather, His humility was more a matter putting others and their needs above of His own.

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

While Paul thought he would eventually be freed from his Roman imprisonment, he didn't take it for granted. He knew he might die and was at peace with whatever God planned (Phil. 1:21-26).

Paul could live with this perspective because he knew this world was not his home. Like his Philippian readers, his citizenship rested in heaven (1:27). While they were living and breathing on earth, their final destination—their ultimate home—was spiritual, not physical. They needed to live like citizens of heaven (1:28-30), standing firm in their faith and living worthy of the gospel. Such a lifestyle should be the rule, rather than the exception, for anyone who claims Christ. But Paul made it clear this wasn't just a personal issue; it affected the entire church. As believers stood together in unity, the church would be stronger (2:1-4). Christians are called to also look out for the needs of others.

Unity doesn't simply happen. It's a by-product of humility. No one provided a greater example of humility than Jesus (2:5-11).

God's Son temporarily set aside the riches of heaven to become a man. While that choice eventually led to incredible glory, He had to pass through a humiliating death.

Believers who choose this path of humility bless one another and honor the Savior. They also make a difference in the world (2:12-18). They shine like the stars, drawing attention to Jesus and His glory.

To help the Philippians, Paul promised to send two of his partners. Timothy would give the Philippians an update on his status and then report back to him about them. He would also send Epaphroditus, who originally served as a messenger from Philippi. In Rome, Epaphroditus had gotten sick and almost died. But Paul would present him back to the Philippians as an example of God's mercy and grace. He challenged them to embrace him like true believers—with unity and humility.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-15

1 If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, **2** make my **joy complete**^A by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. **3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility **consider others**^B as more important than yourselves. **4** Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others. **5** Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, **6** who, existing in the **form of God**^C, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. **7** Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, **8** he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death — even to death on a cross. **9** For this reason **God highly exalted him**^D and gave him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth— **11** and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **12** Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. **13** For it is **God who is working in you**^E both to will and to work according to **his good purpose**^F. **14** Do everything without grumbling and arguing, **15** so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in **a crooked and perverted generation**^G, among whom you shine like stars in the world.

Passage Outline

In Relationships (Phil. 2:1-4)

By Example (Phil. 2:5-11)

In Lifestyle (Phil. 2:12-15)

Key Words

- A. Our joy is complete and we are made full when we embrace the actions outlined in this passage.
- B. We are to consider others continually.
- C. These verses show that Christ was fully God and fully human.
- D. When we live in humility, God is also faithful to exalt us, and Christ gets the glory (Jas. 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6).
- E. God walks with us throughout our journey of sanctification (Rom 6:19-22).
- F. Our circumstances might not always be good, but God's purposes are always good.
- G. A description of those who are without Christ

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Paul challenged his friends to get rid of any *selfish ambition or conceit*. The apostle had identified such attitudes in the false preachers in 1:17, but he urged the Philippians to practice *humility* instead. When we see ourselves from this perspective, we see the needs of others as *more important* than our own.

How does selfish ambition get in the way of serving others?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son.

Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. (See Col. 1:15-20.)

Before the Philippians could understand how to humbly serve, they needed to know what humility looked like. Paul pointed them to Jesus. Believers are connected to Christ in a powerful way, so it makes sense that He serves as our role model in everything, including humility. Having described how Jesus humbled Himself, Paul explained how Christ revealed this humility on earth.

What is the importance of understanding Jesus as both fully human and fully God at the same time?

BIBLE SKILL: Pray a set of related passages. Use a Bible concordance to look for uses of the words “humble” and “humility” in verses about Jesus. What do the verses you identified reveal about Jesus and true humility? Select five of these verses and make each verse a prayer over a five-day period. How did living with these verses in mind impact your relationships with family, friends, and coworkers?

The cross was not the end of Jesus’ story. The grave remains empty because God raised Christ from the dead. Paul emphasized that the humiliated Savior now reigns as the victorious King.

Why should believers be reminded that God is at work in their lives as they seek to live out their salvation?

Some people wrongly contend that Paul’s command to work out your own salvation was teaching that people earn God’s favor. But this contradicts what Paul was teaching in verses 5-11 and all his other writings. (See Eph. 2:8-10.) Paul wanted the Philippians to live out their salvation in practical ways. As believers, our works do not provide our salvation, but they prove our salvation to the world. We are called to act like we’ve been saved. Emphasizing this call to action, Paul told the Philippians to get to work. They had things to do in their journey of faith. Along with focusing on what we do for God, he also challenged believers to evaluate how we do those things.

APPLY THE TEXT

- Humble service should characterize all believers.
- Jesus humbled Himself by dying for our sins on the cross, setting the standard of humble obedience.
- God is honored by humble believers who display godly character.

How well do you and the members of your Bible study group respond to the needs of others? How can the group hold one another accountable for responding to the needs of others?

**How does your life reflect the attitude demonstrated by Jesus?
What keeps you from following Him with complete obedience?**

Evaluate your life in terms of exhibiting godly character. What needs to change for you to demonstrate God's character in a greater way?

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: A relationship with God reaps benefits.

Read Philippians 2:1-2, underlining the benefits believers receive.

Paul highlighted certain things that are real and true. First, he pointed out *encouragement in Christ*. The man under house arrest knew the power of finding strength and support in his relationship with Jesus. Paul also mentioned *consolation of love* and *fellowship with the Spirit*. Christianity is primarily about love—the love we receive from God and the love we share with others. To describe our fellowship with God’s Spirit, Paul used the Greek word *koinonia*—the same word translated “partnership” in 1:5. Christians are partners with one another through a shared relationship with the Spirit. Finally, Paul mentioned *affection and mercy*, underscoring the spiritual connection we share. Believers demonstrate tenderness and sympathy toward one another. Nothing excited Paul more than seeing people he cared about drawing closer to Christ and to one another. They could make his *joy complete* by living out those qualities in Christian unity. If verse 1 outlines the results of Christian unity, then verse 2 reveals what that harmony should look like. It starts with believers *thinking the same way*. Like-mindedness doesn’t mean everyone has to agree on everything. Instead, Christians work together toward a common goal—the glory of Christ. Unity also demonstrates the *same love* for one another. Everyone must pull in the same direction, rejecting anything that distracts us from the mission of sharing the gospel.

What benefits can you experience through a relationship with God?

Day 2: Jesus limited His abilities for the sake of humanity.

Read Philippians 2:5-8, considering Jesus’s willingness to become fully human.

To understand Jesus’ humility, we must remember that Jesus eternally existed with the Father and the Spirit before Bethlehem. Using what was likely an early Christian hymn, Paul pointed out that Christ existed in the *form of God*. In other words, Jesus was (and is) completely divine—possessing all the power and authority of the Godhead. He was fully God. Despite that *equality with God*, Jesus voluntarily limited some of His attributes for the sake of humanity. His divinity was not something to be *exploited*. The Greek wording here means something to hold or to grasp. While Jesus never lost a hint of His divinity on earth, He did temporarily set aside some privileges and glory of His heavenly citizenship. John wrote that Jesus (the Word) “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Jesus came to earth as a *man* to save humanity from our sin (Mark 10:45). From a human perspective, He was ordinary, looking similar to every other first-century Jew in Palestine.

What is the importance of understanding Jesus as both fully human and fully God at the same time?

Day 3: All people will honor Jesus.

Read Philippians 2:9-11, highlighting verse 11.

At this point, the hymn shifts gears, as the Father becomes the prime actor. He *highly exalted* Jesus, a term that could be translated “super-exalted.” Jesus returned to His pre-incarnate place in heaven as Savior and Lord. The Father also gave His Son the *name that is above every name*. In ancient thought, names reflected one’s character and authority. The name of Jesus saves the lost and makes demons tremble. No one stands above Christ. As Savior and Lord, Jesus deserves—and will receive—honor and worship from humanity. Paul noted that *every knee will bow*. All humanity, living and dead, will bend their knees to acknowledge Jesus and worship Him. In addition, *every tongue will confess* the lordship of Christ. The physical act of bowing will be accompanied by the verbal act of confession. Again, everyone is included. All people will honor the Son, which will bring glory to *the Father*. The confession identified here does not mean that everyone will be saved. Salvation depends on the timing of our submission. Those who acknowledge Christ and confess Him as Savior and Lord on earth will spend eternity with Him. Those who bow and confess after death will do so in judgment—and spend eternity separated from Him.

How does Jesus’ humble service motivate you to move toward greater humility?

Day 4: God is working in our lives to accomplish His purposes.

Read Philippians 2:12-13, contemplating the works God has done in the past and is currently doing in your life today.

Some people wrongly contend that Paul’s command to *work out your own salvation* smacks of “works theology”—that he was teaching that people earn God’s favor. But this contradicts what Paul was teaching in verses 5-11 and all his other writings. (See Eph. 2:8-10.) Paul wanted the Philippians to live out their salvation in practical ways. As believers, our works do not provide our salvation, but they prove our salvation to the world. We are called to act like we’ve been saved. The Philippians’ works would reveal a *God who is working*. God didn’t simply save them from their sin and leave them to fend for themselves. Instead, He was actively working in their lives to accomplish His *good purpose*.

Why should believers be reminded that God is at work in their lives as they seek to live out their salvation?

Day 5: Believers must reflect God.

Read Philippians 2:14-15, noting the instructions to believers.

Along with strengthening the church's unity, living with proper humility provides a witness to the world. Paul used three similar words to describe believers focused on living out their faith each day: blameless, pure, and faultless. Each term relates to the others and reflects the idea of completion or maturity. This description of integrity and innocence reflects the character of God and stands in stark contrast to the crooked and perverted world. While Christ's followers work hard at staying on a godly path, others work hard to twist and manipulate things for their own benefit. God expects His children to look like Him, not be conformed to the shape of the prevailing culture (Rom. 12:2). Sadly, the unsaved wander in darkness, unaware of God's expectations and standards. They cannot find their way, which is why God's people must shine like stars in the world. Living out our faith each day provides a light and reveals a better way.

How can you implement verses 14 and 15 in your life and in your church?

TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Philippians 2, sharing with the other members of your Bible study group.

How does church unity motivate humble service?

How can humble service increase church unity?

How do we “work out [our] own salvation” when “it is God who is working in [us]” (vv. 12-13)?

How can believers “shine like stars in the world” (v. 15)?

