

Humility (Philippians 2:1-11)

Quinton Cools

April 14, 2024

Sermon Series: 7 Shared Virtues

KingsWay Community Church

Consider someone you know, perhaps a member of this church that meets the following descriptions. It may be a different person for each virtue:

In every season, she has an abiding **joy**. Can you think of someone?

He has an overflowing heart of **gratitude**.

She is eager to bless others with **encouragement**.

He has become faithfully and sacrificially **generous**.

She is happy when she is **servicing** others.

He has become a truly **godly** person.

Our brother **Tony Bolling** is a servant!

Our sister **Yolanda Ellis** has an abiding joy.

Our brother **Andrew Campbell** is generous.

Our sister **Meredith Lewanowicz** walks with God.

It's right to honor these saints for the gospel virtues God has shaped in them. But let's not stop there, feeling good that *other people* are representing these virtues. With full awareness of the irony of preaching humility this morning, I want you to think about yourself.

God has a glorious vision for your life, Christian. He intends for you to grow, not just in one virtue, but in all virtue. He promises by the work of His Spirit to transform you into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another. Consider how the Lord shapes who you are becoming:

You have abiding joy.

You have an overflowing heart of gratitude.

You are eager to bless others with encouragement.

You have become faithfully and sacrificially generous.

You are happy when you are serving others.

You have become a truly godly person.

What ignites and fuels and sustains this kind of Christ-exalting, joy-filled, others-oriented life? **Humility**. Humility first revealed in Christ, then displayed in the body of Christ, and specifically, in you.

And instead of defining humility up front, like I am ever so tempted to do, let's let the Word of God shape our understanding of humility this morning. Let's think God's thoughts after Him as we open our Bibles to Philippians 2.

ROADMAP

Together, let's think about how humility is formed, what humility produces, and what humility looks like. If you are taking notes, here are three simple headings for our three points:

1. Humility in Christ (vv. 5-11)
2. Humility in the Body of Christ (vv. 1-2)
3. Humility in You (vv. 3-4)

The apostle Paul writes this section of his letter to the Church in Philippi with clear themes in verses 1-2, 3-4, and 5-11. And we're going to do something a little different this morning. I'm going to start at the end of the passage and work from there, so let's jump in to verses 5-11 by asking our first question:

How does the gospel form humility?

1. Humility in Christ (vv. 5-11)

To begin to build an understanding of humility, we must start with the gospel. We start with God himself. This is where Paul directs our gaze in the Christ Hymn of Philippians 2. Why start here? Because humility is profoundly vertical. How we relate to God is revealed in how we relate to other people and the things we experience in this life.

Consider verse 5:

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus who...

Who is Christ?

- Easy to remember – John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1
- John 1
 - 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **John 1:1-3**
- Colossians 1
 - 16b all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **Colossians 1:16b-17**
- Hebrews 1
 - 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. **Hebrews 1:3**
- The Son, the second person of the Trinity, Co-Equal, Co-Eternal, in perfect harmony and glory with the Father and the Spirit.

So consider Christ Jesus...

6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped

Consider the one who in his very essence has eternally existed with the Father and the Spirit. He did not count his status, his equality, his right, as something to be grasped.

What is something in your life that you would hate to lose? What happens when we grasp or cling to something and it's taken away? How do you respond?

- Someone tracks mud into the house.
- Your child disobeys instruction.
- Someone undermines your leadership.
- You are let go from your job.
- The stock market crashes.
- Your spouse gets a bad health diagnosis.
- Your uncle dies.
- Your son or daughter walks away from Christ.

One commentary puts it this way, speaking of Christ: "He did not regard it as something that must not slip from his grasp." (Exposition of Philippians, William Hendriksen, p. 105) Another theologian describes it this way: Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be exploited or taken advantage of. He had every right to remain in the glories of heaven, *but God*.

Look at verse 7:

7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

The eternal Son of God emptied himself by taking humanity to himself. Here Paul describes our very nature as humans as "the fashion of a servant." Tell me if this isn't something of humility – The Lord of glory was willing to become a servant. God himself was willing to become a baby.

He was conceived in his mother's womb.

He was born.

He grew up.

He learned a trade.

He was at times hungry and thirsty.

He was at times weary and sleeping.

He took on a fully human nature with all its attributes and frailties, yet without sin.

This is something of humility – not grasping, not exploiting, but serving, even those who are less than you. And the humility of Christ didn't stop there. It runs deeper. It led to a penultimate humiliation.

Look at verse 8:

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Think about that phrase, “he humbled himself by becoming obedient...” How did he humble himself? By becoming obedient. How do we become humble? By becoming obedient. He learned obedience. He walked out obedience. Would you say this is true of you? Have you become obedient to the Lord?

If you have, know that grace has visited you. (Paul Tripp) Humility is something of learned obedience. It's something that is formed in you.

And so what we see is that Jesus submitted himself to the rulers who were under his rulership. And yet, this obedience was not ultimately unto them—remember, humility is first vertical before it is horizontal—this was obedience to God. When facing the shame of Calvary, the torture of the cross, and the agony of drinking a cup of holy wrath against sin through his vicarious death, Jesus prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” **Luke 22:42**

And because Jesus learned obedience, because Jesus was humble, we have this good news: “For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.” **Romans 5:19**

Thus we believe: Our Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son incarnate, is fully God and fully man, able to be our all-sufficient savior and the only mediator between God and man.

Statement of Faith, Sovereign Grace Churches

In a word, humility changed the world. What does that mean? The humility of Jesus's obedient life, substitutionary death, and vindicating resurrection means that by trusting in Christ alone, we can be saved and given new life “by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” Titus 3:5

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name

Jesus' goes from humiliation (life, suffering, death, burial) to resurrection, ascension, glorification. In this glorification, there's a coronation of the king. And he sits down because his priestly duty is finished. And he reigns, and we await his return.

In the original language, he is literally “super exalted,” and bestowed with not *a name* but *the name* that is above every name

10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Have you sought to run your life like you’re the king?
Friend, every knee will bow to the rightful King.

Have you ever proudly raised yourself above someone else?
Friend, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (YHWH).

And so Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled in Christ:

22 “Turn to me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.
23 By myself I have sworn;
from my mouth has gone out in righteousness
a word that shall not return:
‘To me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear allegiance.’ **Isaiah 45:22-23**

Will you bow in humility before your God?
Humility sees us clearly for who we are in light of who God is.
Humility turns to Jesus Christ as your king and savior!
Humility confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God.
Humility is radically Christ-centered and God-glorifying.

Now, there’s a hinge to this text this morning found in verse 5. We have begun on the back end of the text. How do we get back?

Look at verse 5.

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

Who is he talking to?

You yourselves, Philippians
You, Christian
You, KingsWay



Have this mind – The posture of Christ, the willingness of Christ, the humility of Christ. This mind is *yours* in Christ Jesus. Humility is the way. If you are in Christ, this mind is yours.

A D.A. Carson commentary helps us here:

“The apostle knew well that thought and attitudes are the basis of speech and action and so direct the whole course of a person’s life. This perhaps needs underlining in an age when there is great emphasis on feelings and experience.” (New Bible Commentary, p. 1252)

Do you find yourself nodding *or* do you feel a twinge of correction?

The Word of God compels us:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. **Romans 12:2**

We must be careful how we *think*, not out of a natural mind, but out of the mind of Christ. We must be careful not to emphasize how we feel or elevate what we experience. Scripture calls us to be accountable if we claim to follow Christ:

Have. This. Mind. which is yours in Christ Jesus.

So, we see in verses 5-11 that Jesus is the ultimate example of humility as the sovereign Lord whose humble willingness led to our salvation and that Christ is the ultimate model for how we are to live humble lives. So, we ask, what does the humility in Christ produce?

2. Humility in the Body of Christ (vv. 1-2)

Did you hear the big *if*? Paul sets up a wonderful *if* / *then* proposition regarding what we have in Christ. It goes like this: *If* you abide in Christ, *then* you will bear fruit. *If* you experience the grace of God in Christ, *then* that grace accomplishes something in you revealing the gospel to be true and powerful to save.

Theologian William Hendriksen comments: “One might translate, ‘If then there is any encouragement in Christ, *as there surely is*, and if any persuasive appeal springing from love, *as there surely is*, make full the measure of my joy.’” (William Hendriksen, p.99)

Consider the unity that is cultivated in the soil of gospel humility. Paul says:

- Have you received encouragement in Christ? So encourage your brothers and sisters in this church.

- Have you received loving comfort in Christ? So comfort your brothers and sisters in this church.
- Have you received sympathetic affection in Christ? So express your love to your brothers and sisters in this church.

Or consider the four lines from the stanza in verse 2:

- By being of the same mind
- By having the same love
- By being in full accord
- And of one mind.

Same / same / full / one

What's Paul getting at? When we are united to Christ by faith, we are united to one another in the body of Christ, members one of another. From the early church in Jerusalem to Philippi to Midlothian, the Lord Jesus has called and equipped followers of Christ to live united to one another in local churches. It's here we express our unity with Christ and so mature as the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4 – “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith.” **Ephesians 4:11-13a**

Why does God equip his church with these things? Indeed, there is a now and a not yet to our unity. We are at once united to the body by the spirit when we come to faith in Christ, and yet we have not attained the fullness of this unity. Therefore, humility requires that we express it by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind. Or in a phrase = **have this mind which is yours in Christ Jesus**.

Our participation in the spirit (verse 1) in the local body is expressed by Paul in Philippians 2:1-2 in these two words: unity and joy. Where do we see joy show up in this passage?

In his book titled *Humility*, Gavin Ortlund presses us to understand that true humility always leads to joy. He writes, “If we lack joy, we know we’ve got a counterfeit.” And so Paul writes (verse 2), “complete my joy.”

In answering the question, what does the humility in Christ produce, we learn something more about humility: true humility produces unity in the body of Christ leading to joy.

D.A. Carson highlights Paul's concern to which we now turn: “Such unity will only come when Christians are humble and bold enough to lay hold on the unity already given in Christ and to take it more seriously than their own self-importance.” (New Bible Commentary, p. 1253)

So, here's our final question: What does gospel humility actually look like?

3. Humility in You (vv. 3-4)

The point couldn't be clearer. Humility rejects one way of thinking, living, and relating and embraces another. In fact, these two verses are packed with three put offs and two put ons.

Humility rejects these three things:

- Doing anything from selfish ambition
- Doing anything from conceit
- Looking only to your own interests

Humility embraces these two things:

- Considering others more significant than yourself
- Looking to the interests of others

Let's examine humility in multicolor. Let's consider five areas of application.

1. Orientation
2. Achievement
3. Conflict
4. Vulnerabilities
5. Authority

1. Orientation

- We live in a therapeutic age where individualism and self-expression win the day. We shape our own sense of reality. We write our own story. We pursue our dreams. We agree that we should #BeKind. We promote our lives to our friends. We feel wronged when people don't understand us. What **I** want is king. What **I** feel is king. What serves **me** is king.
- That is until we are confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ, the true king, the humble king, the redeemer king, the reigning king who sets us free from self-rule. He who declares the end from the beginning warns us: "desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." **James 1:15**
- Life is not found by looking inside of ourselves, my friends.
- And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. **Luke 9:23**
- **Humility frees us** to reject looking only to our own interests because that's what Christ did. **Humility frees us** to embrace an orientation that is directed toward serving others, because that's what Christ did. Following Christ means we should aim to be actively thinking about others, listening to others, observing others, praying for others.
- Do you come in on a Sunday morning anticipating where the Lord might use you in the lives of other members in this church? Have you been thinking of others, listening to

others, praying for others? We must guard against the selfish indulgence that considers only what's in it for me.

- How can we look to the interests of others and do some spiritual good to one another?

2. Achievement

- Our culture places a high emphasis on achievement. We elevate our status and cling to that status. We see people as the haves and the have nots. When we have achieved something, we become conceited and pursue vain glory. When someone else has achieved something, we become envious.
- What happens when we achieve it? (Humility→Gratitude)
 - What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? **1 Corinthians 4:7**
- What happens when we do not achieve it? (Humility→Hope in God)
 - You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. **Isaiah 26:3**
- What happens when others achieve it? (Humility→Joy, Peace)
 - Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. **Romans 12:15**
 - I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **Galatians 2:20**
- What is grace? From start to finish, grace is unmerited favor from God.
- **Humility frees us** to reject vain ambition and embrace our identity in Christ as the one who achieved all that we could ever need. We live in the joy of the cross.

3. Conflict

- Our culture is full of conflict. How well do you think it's resolved? If conflict outside the church is poorly handled, how well do we resolve our conflicts within the household of faith?
- Our natural mind leads us toward one of two lanes: avoidance and aggression.
 - Illustration: Husband and wife late night conversation or next morning
 - Illustration: A fellow member never seems to smile at you, or they say something that offends you. Are we easily offended? Do we allow bitterness to take root?
- Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. **Ephesians 4:31-32**
- What's at the heart of avoidance? Fear
- What's at the heart of aggression? Pride
- What's the antidote for fear and pride? Humility
- **Humility frees us** from comparing ourselves to others when we compare ourselves to Christ. We are undone by his mercy toward us. As his enemy, he brought you peace. Humility enables you to pursue peace.

- Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. **Matthew 7:4-5**
- "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. **Matthew 18:15**
- "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. **Matthew 5:9**
- Humility rejects peace faking and peace breaking and enables us to be peacemaking!

4. Vulnerabilities

- Our culture places a high value on high self-esteem. We boast the availability of thousands of bestselling self-help books. We avoid looking weak, and we hate being weak. Perhaps we avoid sharing the personal details of our lives.
- Illustration: When asking for prayer, do we appropriately share about being impatient with my spouse last night or do we ask for prayer for our cousin's surgery?
- Illustration: Do we seek accountability from an older saint when we struggle with a besetting sin?
- Some of us hold back for fear of bringing too much attention to ourselves. Maybe we say it's because of our personality or think, that wouldn't be humble. Or I can handle this on my own. Or I don't want to put this burden on someone else.
- We tend to either be puffed up or deflated. We are either conceited or self-loathing. But the gospel frees us and fills us.
 - 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. **Ephesians 4:25**
 - But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **2 Corinthians 12:9**
- **Humility frees us** to rest our identity in Christ, not in the opinions of man. It also frees us from hiding our limitations, weaknesses, and sin. You mean, we can talk in appropriate ways about struggling with intimacy, worries about making rent, and my underlying depression? Yes! **Humility enables us** to speak the truth and ask for help. Humility seeks counsel, reads excellent books by wise and godly Christians. Humility does not lean on our own understanding.
- Here's what else humility frees us from: oversharing. Consider if this might be you: You are quick to speak and slow to listen. You tend to talk a good deal about your ideas, your opinions, your problems. You talk about the details. You are eager to share about your interests, but what does humility free you from – *looking not only to your interests*– and what does humility free you to do– *but also to the interests of others*. Look to Jesus who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but humbled himself. So, we too, can be humble to share in discerning ways that lead to unity with the body of Christ.

5. Authority

- Our culture rejects authorities, institutions, even definitions of objective reality. We are not beholden to anyone. We speak truth to power.
- Illustration: Governments we don't agree with – tax day is tomorrow, the election in 2024
 - Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.
Romans 13:1
 - Are we willing to submit to authority here? We need humility!
- Illustration: Your boss makes a decision that is in direct opposition to your professional recommendation. It's not unethical, but you're seriously concerned that it was not the best decision.
 - Are we willing to submit to authority here? We need humility!
- Illustration: let's say you're confronted about sin in your life.
 - Are you willing to submit to God's Word when it comes to walking in sexual purity? (Flee sexual immorality!)
 - When it comes to gathering with the church? (Do not neglect the gathering!)
 - When it comes to giving toward the work of the gospel? (Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce!) **Proverbs 3:9**
- **Humility enables you** to submit to the authorities in your life because that's what Jesus did. Jesus humbled himself by *becoming obedient* to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- "When grace changes the heart, submission out of fear changes to submission out of love, and true humility is born." (William Hendriksen p.100)

Humility cultivates in us the mind of Christ leading us to reject pride and embrace love of others.

CONCLUSION

What does Philippians 2 teach us about humility? What have we learned?

- Humility is profoundly vertical before it is horizontal.
- Humility is becoming obedient to God and not exploiting our position.
- Humility sees us clearly for who we are in light of who God is.
- Humility is radically Christ-centered and God-glorifying.
- Humility produces unity in the body of Christ leading to joy.
- Humility cultivates in us the mind of Christ leading us to reject pride & love others.

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. **1 Peter 5:5**