

The Example of Christ

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Well, it is good to be back together again, since so many did not make it out last week due to the icy conditions. I want to take a little more time this morning by way of review of what we covered last week.

Because today's text stands firmly upon last week's text. Now, I know that's true of all the Scripture, but especially is that the case this morning?

That the two cannot be separated without great harm to both as to understanding the Holy Spirit's mind in the Scripture. So we're going to, first of all, review verses 1 through 4 and then take up the text for today, verses 5 through 11.

If you've got your Bibles, open again to Philippians chapter 2. The Lord Jesus Christ wants His people to be united. In this letter, the Apostle Paul reflects that burden of the Lord for the unity of the saints in Philippi.

Because this theme of unity is spoken of so often by Paul in this letter, we understand that that unity probably was already becoming unraveled a bit in Philippi.

[1:12] And so Paul is seeking to have that unity restored, strengthened, and established. And it's a unity that he first describes for us in verse 2.

What are you after here, Paul, when you're after our unity? Well, it's being of the same mind. It's being of the same love. Having the same love.

Having the same spirit and purpose. To have the same mind. And we saw what a challenge that is last week. As we thought out, we're all people who have our own mind on things.

We have our own ideas. How is it that you and I, with a mind of our own, can come to have the same mind and think the same thing? Well, it's as we bring our minds to God's mind.

As I do that, and I submit my mind to God's mind, and I come to think more and more like God thinks, and you submit your mind to God's thought, and come to think more and more like God thinks, that you and I will find that we are more and more of the same mind.

[2:17] God's Word is the key and basis to this unity. But then he says that you would have the same love. And it is only as we are set free from this love affair that we all have with ourselves, and come to love God and one another as ourselves, that we will find ourselves having more and more the same love.

And then the same spirit, the same purpose. It's as we forget our own many self-glorifying purposes, and come to live for this grand unifying purpose of the glory of God, that we'll have the same purpose.

That's the unity that Paul and Christ long for in his church. Now I wonder if we've stopped to consider how much God is glorified by his people living together in unity.

He takes proud, opinionated, self-seeking people, and he makes them people of one mind, one love, and one purpose.

What kind of a God is he? What power, what grace, what glory comes to God when he does that? And that's why the enemy has always made the unity of the church one of his prime targets.

[3:42] He's out to steal glory from our God and Savior. And where he can destroy the unity of the church, he casts a blemish upon the glory of Christ.

Not only does he do that, but he shuts down the evangelistic efforts. A church that is fighting with one another will not be striving together for the faith of the gospel. They're striving against each other, rather than with each other.

And because of the importance of this theme of unity, the apostle warns against two unity killers. Selfishness and pride.

That's verse 3. Selfishness and pride. Selfishness, that preoccupation with me and always considering what's in it for me that seeks its own advancement, its own praise.

There must be no loss of my rights, of my money, of my interests, my ease. And it's not hard to imagine how selfishness is destructive of unity.

[4:54] Forget you. It's all about me. That doesn't bode well for unity in a church, does it? As James chapter 3 and verse 16 says, For where you find selfish ambition, you find disorder.

Disorder. And every evil work. What causes fights and quarrels among you, James asks? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something and you don't get it, so you fight and quarrel.

You see, it's selfishness that is so destructive of unity. But there's a twin attitude that is also destructive of unity, and that's pride.

Pride that we saw last week is a disease of the mind. It's high-mindedness is how it could be translated. It's thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought.

Thinking that we actually deserve to be in first place. That we really deserve more honor and attention. that my ideas deserve a higher hearing than yours.

[5:59] And we notice that a high view of self always leaves us with a lower view of others. If I'm up here in my estimation, then I will think of you as down there.

And I'll be very easily offended if you do not share my high opinion of myself. You see how these things are destructive of unity.

And an autopsy of churches with unity problems will always reveal one or both of these attitudes running wild. Selfishness and pride.

And folks, the scary thing is is that both of those are found within us. Within us. That there are two dominant attitudes of our own sinful nature.

Of the flesh in a Christian that even still remains. We still have selfishness and pride to deal with. That tells us that there's plenty of gunpowder in this room this morning to destroy the unity of the Spirit that God has been so gracious to give us.

[7:09] And so Paul is concerned and says, do nothing out of selfishness and pride. Do nothing. Don't let either one of these attitudes determine anything that you do in how you live and say, when your pride suggests something to say or something to think, reject it out of hand.

When your selfishness comes and suggests that you ought to do this or to do that, don't listen. Do nothing out of pride and selfishness is his word to us.

Rather, he goes on to command two opposite attitudes. Attitudes that don't kill unity but rather promote it. Instead of pride, a humility. A humility that considers others better than yourself.

And the key we saw last week to humility is just to know yourself. Know yourself and you will be plenty humble. Know how dependent you are.

how utterly dependent you are upon God who made you to differ from another. What do you have that you've not received?

[8:19] Then why do you boast as though you had not received it? If I see how dependent I am upon God, I'll never boast and pride over what I have, over what others do not have.

Humility. a low view of self. It's hard to offend a man with a low view of self. Somebody else shares their estimation that they indeed are low, well, then he's alright with that.

That's his estimation of self. Hard to offend a humble man. Know yourself. Not only your utter dependence on God, but your remaining sinfulness before God.

and we saw last week how when we look at others, what do we see? We see only their outward sins. They're very visible sins. But when we look at ourselves, we see not only our visible sins, but I also see my hidden sins.

I see the sins that I commit in the privacy of my home that you don't see. And I see the sins that I commit in the privacy of my mind and my heart. And I don't see that in you, but I see it in me and it's not hard for me to esteem you as better than me when I see what's in me.

[9:37] A humble view of self will cause us to esteem others better than ourselves. And so humility is the attitude that we are to put on instead of pride and instead of selfishness and unselfishness that looks out for the interests of others.

And we saw last week how good we are at looking out for our own interests and we're always asking ourselves, what do you want? And we're always considering our own interests.

But if I consider you better than me then I will consider your interests and not just my own. What do you want? What do you need?

What would be best for you? You can see how these are the attitudes that then promote unity and build unity whether it be in a family or in a church family.

Well Paul's very eager to see the Philippians demonstrating that unity in the body of Christ. And yet he knows that unity is hard work.

[10 : 49] It's distasteful to the flesh. Your flesh will kick and scream against humility unity and selflessness. And so he sets before us three motivations.

If this is something that's so hard this unity business I need some strong motivations and the first motivation is found in verse 1 he appeals to their own experience of the Christian life and all that they have received from God.

If you have received all this from God then be united. And the second motivation is their love for the Apostle Paul. They want to give him joy in prison and he tells them if you want to make my joy complete be united.

And then thirdly he now that's all by way of review we come now to the greatest motivation of all Paul is pulling out all the stoppers he's going for the big guns and he says this is why you ought to be united and he sets before us in verses 5 through 11 the example of Christ.

The example of Christ. So we come then to our text verses 5 through 11. Now we sometimes say a picture is worth a thousand words. Maybe you're trying to assemble a new grill and it's come in this box and the instructions give you all the words telling you exactly what you need to do next but you're still confused.

[12 : 13] But there's a picture there oh and that makes everything clear. That's how it's supposed to look. Okay I see I had this thing backwards and I had this screw going in the wrong way the picture you see now we get it.

Well the Apostle Paul not only exhorts us with words in verses 1 through 4 but he gives us a picture of what he has been commanding. What will this humility look like that considers others better than ourselves?

What will that look like? What will this selflessness this unselfish attitude look like that looks out not only for our own interests but for the interests of others? Well he gives us a picture an example of it that we might get it and not just any example it's the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and so it is the ultimate example of humility and unselfishness.

Do you want to see truth in action? Whatever truth it is in the Bible you want to see truth in action? Study Jesus. Do you want to learn what holiness is? imitate Christ and that's what the Apostle Paul is doing here in Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 through 11.

Here's the command verse 5 your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus and what follows is an early Christian hymn about our Lord Jesus Christ and it sets forth some of the highest teaching on Christ person and work as is found anywhere in the Bible but sometimes men get so lost arguing about what these verses are saying about Christ and what these phrases mean that they miss the forest for the trees as grand and as glorious as these doctrines of Christ are don't miss the main point that Paul is making throughout this text throughout this song this passage is here verses 6 through 11 for a most practical purpose to make us more like Christ to build the unity of the body here at

[14 : 30] Grace Fellowship Church that's why it's in our Bible it's to promote unity and give us those attitudes that make for unity and we need as we begin to appreciate the methodology then of the Apostle Paul you see what he's doing people with unity problems need a fresh view of Christ a fresh view of Christ and who are people with unity problems if it's not all of us we all struggle with pride and selfishness we always need a fresh view of Christ as we heard in the Sunday school hour we always need to be brought back to him and fixing our eyes upon Jesus and so Paul sets Christ before us and he sets Christ before these Philippians who are seeing their unity unravel because he knows that as they see him they will become like him 2nd Corinthians 3 and verse 18 our greatest need then is to see Jesus Christ to know him and to become more like him the one who says take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls where do you learn humility from the one who is lowly in heart where do you learn unselfishness from him who came not to please himself so go to him first see these virtues in Christ never seek sanctification apart from

Christ that's the methodology of Paul he lifts up Jesus that we might feast upon him we might look and live and as we look our unity will live but as Christ becomes distant unity will shrivel and die now notice what he says in verse 5 your attitude should be the same as was in Christ Jesus your mind let this mind be in you that was also in Christ your mindset you see there is much in Jesus that we will not be able to duplicate what we're to emulate is the attitude of Christ we can't duplicate his incarnation God becoming man why not because we're not God we can't emulate his death on the cross in the place of other sinners we cannot die for others redemptively and save them like Jesus did no what we are to emulate is the attitude behind Christ incarnation the attitude that took him from heaven's glories to this earth to take on our nature and to go to the cross where he took on our sin it's that attitude that moved him to do what he did that is to be found in us so as we move our way through this ancient song about Jesus Christ notice that twofold attitude humility unselfishness that reigned in him that's the building blocks for unity in any church I just want to read the text the song from verses six through eight speaking of Christ who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross and we begin with the first lesson he who was

God became man it starts way before Bethlehem way before the womb of the virgin when Christ had not yet taken a human nature he is only divine the eternal son of God we're back in that time frame who being in very nature God the language simply means that he had all the characteristics of God therefore he is God he is God and this was before he took on our human nature he just had the divine nature and he enjoyed being treated as God sharing in his father's heavenly glory receiving the worship and adoration of all the angels the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect they're all adoring shouting the worth of the eternal son of

God glorious in his splendor and majesty held in the highest of esteem there he is enjoying this existence of being equal with God do you know he could have continued forever in that state that was his right as God to go on being treated as God to never become man and folks if he was just consulting his own interests that's exactly what he would have done he wouldn't have bothered with us he wouldn't have come and taken our nature he would have remained in heaven fully God period that's it and left us perishing in our sin going to a sinner's hell that was his right but something was more important to him than his own ease something weighed in even more heavily than his own glorious existence as being equal with

[20 : 38] God enjoying all that heaven had for him exercising all the prerogatives and rights of God in heaven and that which was more important to him was our interest he saw me plunged in deep despair he flew to my relief you see he saw us in need and our needs weighed!

in more importantly to him than his own ease and his own honor that he was receiving now we would be impressed to see any man doing this not looking on his own interest but on the interest of others in fact sacrificing his own interest for another we see that in a man and we say wow that's worthy of print give that a story folks this is God this is God God setting aside his own concerns for ours what is this this is unselfishness like none other this is the attitude behind the incarnation this is why Jesus became man and do I have trouble humbly considering others better than me let my foolish pride wither as

I see God esteeming me above his own interest let me never again think it's hard to esteem another brother as above myself now when we have something good we like to hang on to it don't we whatever it is honor money possession when we have something going good we like to just stay put right there and we get to clutching it and we get to grasping and holding tight now that's precisely what our text says that Jesus did not do the son of God enjoying all that he was enjoying as God equal with God in heaven did not consider that as something to be grasped clutched held on to for all he was worth even though it was his right he let it go he did not insist upon his rights but out of loving concern for our salvation laid them aside and the text goes on to say he made himself nothing by becoming one of us man a human being sometimes we're all we know is that we're man we're human beings and we're so proud of it folks it was a tremendous step down for God to become man and it wasn't subtraction that happened at the incarnation it was addition the son of God remained what he always was

God but he became something that he had never been before man so in the incarnation he who is and ever was fully God has now also become fully man two natures in one person forever and ever

that's our savior and it was precisely by becoming man that Jesus made himself nothing it was by becoming one of us that he made himself of no reputation he goes from being everything to becoming a nobody and how by becoming a man he gave up the glorious existence as God such as he enjoyed for eternity to become one of us and to come where he would be despised and rejected by men a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief he trades the praises and honors of heaven for the curses and hatred of men on earth and all that for me all that for me out of concern for my interests above his own for me kind

Jesus was thine incarnation for me you did that for me and do I refuse to surrender my desires and my rights do I refuse to ever take the short end of the stick in my dealings with my brethren when's the last time you let go of the exercise of one of your rights to serve the interest of your brother or sister your mom or dad your son your daughter your brother your sister anyone you know the rights exercise of our rights are so sacred to us our right to have it our way our right to die the way that we want to die our right to spend our money on ourselves our right to spend an evening at home with my family in front of the television my right to justice my right to ease my right to the pursuit of happiness but when I see God not hanging on to his right to remain

[26:09] God alone in heaven suddenly my piddly rights look awful small and it looks awful small of me to be demanding my way and my rights when I see the son of God become man willingly sacrificing his right the exercise of it in order to come and become one of us the humility the selflessness of our savior but it's seen not only in that he became man secondly he who is God became a servant a servant in the second place not just a man but a servant taking the very nature of a servant or a doulos a slave that means he had all the characteristics of a slave therefore he was a slave he was a servant as he was among us by definition why a servant a slave does not exist for his own pleasures his own interests his own concerns his whole waking concern is to please others someone else and that was the way it was with our savior the perfect servant of the lord he came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many

I'm among you as one who serves he says to his disciples and I think sometimes we're so familiar with the servanthood motif that's in Jesus Christ that we sometimes forget who he is who is this servant he's God he's the one whom angels have been serving ever since they were created by him and this God now becomes a servant himself to serve his father for he was the servant of the lord but in being the servant of the lord he served us he served us in our salvation and so he does not live with a concern for his own interests but as every other servant he serves and lives with an interest in serving our interests and concerns think about your own servanthood what is it that often shuts down your servanthood serving each other in the home in the church is it not your selfishness and your pride don't those obstacles get in the way and short circuit service a pride that thinks that others exist to serve us rather than we existing to serve them

I mean what does he think I am after all his slave yes Jesus says precisely if anyone had reason to be proud it was the son of God think of it he's God after all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him all things were made by him and for him and without him was not anything made that was made he's the king of kings the judge of all men but you will not find one ounce of pride in the Lord Jesus he who had reason if any man to have exalted views of himself we find no pride in him whatsoever rather such a lowliness of mind that esteems others as better than himself others concerns is more important than his own this was the attitude in Jesus

Christ there's no standoffishness because after all I'm God you don't see that in the gospels anywhere do you no waiting around to be served since after all I'm God no he stoops to humbly serve us he's the one who girds himself with the towel and washes our feet he's the one going around doing good to others when he's bone tired still exerting himself on behalf of the interests of others this is the attitude that was in Christ Jesus you see to it that is in you that's the point of the passage do others in this body of Christ sometimes treat me like a servant what of it what of it almighty God for me became low God almighty stooped to serve me so that if you would be like Jesus find someone and serve their interest above your own yes he who is

God became man he who is God became a servant and thirdly he who is God became obedient to death even death on a cross you see here's the question how far will the servant go in his unselfish service in the interest of others how low will this servant stoop and Paul says even unto death even the death of the cross now his whole life was a life of obedience and it led to this last act of obedience the cross he was obedient to the father servants obey don't they that's the that's goes with the territory if you're a servant you obey this servant obeyed and he obeyed the hardest

command that's ever been given as his father commanded him to go to the cross and to suffer the damnation that his people deserve never a command harder than that you're struggling with keeping one of

[32:20] God's commands think of this command you go to the cross and you suffer the wrath of eternal God upon sinners and Jesus Christ obeyed he obeyed even unto death the death of the cross what an obedience now to in order to obey he had to humble himself that's what our text says he humbled!

did he ever he humbled this one who was God he could never be higher no one could have been started out higher than him as high as God is above man but he humbled himself and went to the cross no one could ever stoop lower than that to put himself under the curse of God couldn't have ever stooped lower not only taking our nature but also our sin and bearing our sin to the tree and so having humbled himself he showed that humility by being obedient to the point of death and it was no ordinary death it was the death of the cross it was that horrific execution of the Romans crucifixion but it was not just an ordinary crucifixion either was it there was hell in his cross and he bore!

it willingly there was condemnation there was wrath in his cross no other cross had that wrath of God upon his people it was that cross and it was to that cross that he humbled himself! and went to in obedience to his father's command he humbled himself to the death of the cross lower than this he could not go and all of this in order to enrich us he who was rich became poor that we through his poverty might become rich he was willing to be impoverished that we might be made rich is that not the spirit that Paul's after in the church willing to go without myself that others might be enriched so far as this one from being self centered like us that self is actually sacrificed! the cross for our interest you talk about unselfish concern for others there's nothing left of self self is on the cross self is given up for us B.B.

[35:10] Warfield comments before this example of self sacrificing unselfishness! It's hard for us to set limits on how far we should go in our service to each other oh we're good at setting limits aren't we we're so calculating with the cost of serving others what it might cost us I'll go this far but no further I'll go the second mile but not the third I'll give my money but not my time or my time but not my money and we begin to set limits on our service to one another then we come to Calvary and we see the whole package given all that he is hanging on the cross for us and Warfield says it gets awful hard then to start setting limits on how far we'll go for each other Jesus was so absorbed in meeting our need that he was forgetful of himself oh to be released from self to be forgetful of self out of concern for others as the old

Swiss reformer Zwingli said he reached out loving arms and gathered into his own bosom that forest of spears that otherwise had pierced ours those spears of God's wrath that were being hurled and would have found us out to hell forever he stepped in and opened up his own bosom and took them all himself that we might be spared self forgetfulness out of concern for us so that he's willing to be punished that we might have peace with God he's willing to be wounded that we might be healed will it mean my damnation on Calvary in order to save this lot then so be it go to be set free from concern for myself because

I'm so concerned about you and I'm sympathizing with and I've got myself in your shoes and I'm thinking what you are going through and my heart is starting to beat in sympathy with yours and I want to serve you and I want to pray for you and I want to help you I want to come alongside you and I want to encourage you and I and I forget what it costs me because I'm thinking of you God thinking of us and coming and laying down his life for us Warfield concludes his sermon on imitating the incarnation this way let us not fail to grasp!

this chief message though he was God yet cared less for his equality with God cared less for himself and his own things than he did for us and therefore gave himself for us!

that's the attitude that reigned in Christ now let this same attitude reign in you bring your deep seated deep rooted pride and selfishness to this cross and look and look see who hangs there he's God God bleeding for you that's a pride withering sight God bleeding for you look and look again until you blush for your own pride and your own self seeking it's in the shadow of the cross that humility thrives then live near the cross Jesus keep me near the cross and the congregation living near the cross and looking unto Jesus will find every unifying grace to flourish and will of unity but as I said before there's enough selfishness and pride in every one of us to destroy that unity in another 24 hours what do we need we need

[40:14] Jesus we need to see him as he is we need to see him stooping his humility his self sacrificing on our behalf behold this great humbling and see if your high views of self can survive the sight well Paul doesn't end at the cross does he he rather speaks lastly in this hymn of the father's response to the son's obedience wonder how God looks on his son's humility his son's self sacrifice on behalf of others wonder what heaven thinks of that well he tells us verse nine therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name so pleased is the father with the obedience of his meek and lowly son that he raises him from the dead and he lifts him all the way up to heaven and he says here son take your place once again enjoying the life of equality with

God he was always equal with God but his glory was veiled for a season he was being despised and rejected of man now he's welcomed back to all that he had enjoyed and even more as he's bringing many sons to glory the father is so pleased with him that he exalts him notice to the highest place from the lowest where he receives the glory that is doing his exaltation by the father ensures that he will receive the praise he deserves that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow it's because the father has exalted him that one day this will happen every knee will bow at the name of Jesus all things in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord that was the earliest Christian creed to profess

Jesus Christ is Lord is Yahweh is God giving him the honor he was due dear brothers and sisters were martyred because of that creed they said Jesus Christ is Lord instead of saying Caesar is Lord and it meant their head it meant the cross for them but one day every tongue and every knee will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord isn't it something the father is so pleased with his son and his humble self sacrificing service on the cross that he lifts him up to the highest place and he says every intelligent being in my universe will one day acknowledge the worth of him you know this morning that the name of

Jesus is being used in profanity those very lips will one day acknowledge he is Lord the name of Jesus is being treated as a curse word Jesus is not being given the praise the father is very determined that his son be rewarded for what for his humble death on the cross and so he'll have every intelligent being in the universe heaven earth the underworld all acknowledging that he is who he is God Lord Jehovah did you see every tongue every knee kids touch your knees your hands are close those knees your knees one day they're going to bow when Jesus

Christ returns your tongue you feel it there that same tongue that tasted the orange juice this morning that tongue is one day going to confess Jesus is Lord now men will confess him to be Lord either with joy as all of his people will who have received him by faith and who have served him as their Lord and their master here on this earth when they see him they will confess him gladly but those who have rejected this Jesus and have rather lived for themselves and treated God's one and only son as if he's not worthy of their lives not worthy of serving him their tongues will also confess him but it will be in regret it will not be with joy it will be with dismay I wonder how it will be with you in that day your tongue going to confess how will it be will it be joy or will it be with dismay and regret confess him today as

[45:36] Lord bow before him today as king trust in him to save you and you'll confess him in that day with joy and notice how the text ends and it will all be to the glory of God the Father you see for Jesus Christ to be honored by all his petition here for glory rather he who honors the son honors the father and so when the father sees his son receiving the honor that he deserves the father who sent him will be glorified all of this the humbling the coming from heaven as God becoming man the exaltation back up to the fathers all of it will redound to the glory of God he alone deserves glory for the salvation of sinners and he alone will receive it before we close why does the apostle

Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit bring up the exaltation of Christ I mean after all what he's after is our humble selfless sacrificing to each other that's seen so beautifully in Christ humbling himself why does he speak here of the exaltation of Christ well I believe it's to teach the Philippians saints that this is the true way to exaltation this is the way to true exaltation to motivate them to this flesh withering work that's before them that whoever humbles himself will be exalted not just Jesus who humbles himself was exalted but whoever humbles himself will be exalted humbly denying yourself out of concern for others in the body is the road to true glory the way down is the way up in the kingdom of God you say it sure doesn't look like the glory road service lowly service doesn't feel like the glory road will trace out the steps of the son of

God who trod this road before you see where it leads yes it will lead you down but it didn't end there following from the tomb to the father's right hand and know that whoever humbles himself will be exalted you don't need to be concerned about yourself forget yourself God will take care of you even as he did his son's honor and glory see the one who in that human nature humbled himself see that same human nature now shining in glory and know this that if you humble yourself you too will be exalted this is a word from the Lord to his church this morning and he is saying to us this is the road to glory trust me will you trust him this morning or will you fight for your own rights trust him lay them down surrender them serve humble yourself trust me this is the road to glory this is the road to unity follow!

me this is the way the savior! should not the servants tread his word let's respond to him in a moment of silent prayer let's have dealings with him he's spoken to us return your response to him in whatever fashion is needed some of you need to bow before this king right now not take another step without surrendering to the son of God do that right now even as we pray silently may