

Paradox: An Unnatural Response to Natural Circumstances: Humility  
Philippians 2:1-11

Humility is important because it is God's pathway to infinite pleasure. Listen to what God has to say: Proverbs 16:19, "It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil of the proud." Better humble and poor than proud and rich. Really? Why? 1 Peter 5:5, "Clothe yourselves all of you with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Poor humility is better than rich pride because God is against the proud. Even riches will be a snare to bring him to ruin in the end. If God is opposed to you, to whom can you turn for help? But He gives grace to the humble.

There are four "ifs" in verse 1. These "if" clauses in the Greek are in the first-class condition which is better translated as "since" or "because." They express the idea, "If this condition is true, and it is, then..." In essence, they are "a given."

**Encouragement in Christ:** Encouragement (paraklesis) has the meaning of coming alongside someone to help them by giving comfort and/or exhortation. It is related to the word used for the "Helper" (the Holy Spirit) in John 14:16. Indeed, our encouragement comes directly from the Spirit of Christ in us and is extended to others by the Spirit at work through us.

**Consolation of love:** Consolation (paramuthion) means to persuasively and closely speak to someone to give them comfort. Consoling love is "that which the Lord grants to unworthy sinners in the grace of salvation."

**Fellowship of the Spirit:** Fellowship (koinonia) is the same word used in 1:5 as "participation" and also translated "communion".

**Affection and Compassion:** Affection, used also in 1:8, is used to describe personal longing in close relationship with those we love. Compassion can also be translated mercy.

Once Paul defines genuine unity and further describes the means of that unity, humility, he then gives us the quintessential example: Jesus Christ. He commands us "Have this attitude (of humility) in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." This is the attitude that will result in true spiritual unity and Jesus is the supreme example. His "incarnation calls believers to follow Jesus' incomparable example of humble self-denial, self-giving, self-sacrifice, and selfless love as He lived out the Incarnation in obedient submission to His Father's will."

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**Growth Questions for 10/25 – 11/1**

1. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find most helpful, eye-opening, troubling?
2. Give an example from your life experience that displays humility in action.
3. What type of reaction do you typically have to proud people?
4. What areas of your life do you place your interests above the interests of others? Why is this area difficult to place others first?
5. James 4:6 states that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Discuss the characteristics of proud and humble people. Which are you more naturally inclined to identify with?
6. Philippians 2 teaches that Jesus entered into a process of humiliation for the sake of others. Discuss why Christ setting aside his glory to become a man is important to us today. What type of example is that for people who claim to follow after Jesus?

***Proclaim...Reach...Connect...Go***  
***Living on Mission***

1. Paul speaks of the intent of a person's actions in verse 3 of chapter 2. What internal motivations drive your charitable work, giving, and relationships?
2. Develop a plan of action for the upcoming week in order to intentionally make someone else more significant than you. Maybe this means you hold doors, give a bigger tip, speak a word of encouragement, or simple smile or wave. Share your ideas with the group.
3. How can you possess the same mindset (vs. 5) that Jesus had? Does this give us a glimpse into the motivation of our action? How can a heart and mind in tune with Christ develop into hands and feet that resemble the work of Christ?
4. Start reading Philippians 2:12-30...next week Paradox: Temptation.

***...to proclaim the Gospel and reach those far from God.***