

How to Live (Part 2)

Philippians 2:5-18

Paul writes, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (2:3-4). Then he presents the supreme example of humility. Read Philippians 2:5-11.

Having the Same Mindset as Christ

1. What do verses 6-7 tell us about the identity of Jesus Christ? Who is he?¹

2. How is Jesus Christ the supreme example of humility? (2:6-8)² How should Jesus’ mindset and actions affect *us*?³



Philippians 2:6-8 describes “the humiliation”⁴ of Jesus Christ. But that’s not the end of the story! Jesus suffered a humiliating death on a cross, but he did not stay dead. He was raised from the dead! And he was “exalted to the highest place” (2:9) where he *will* receive the honor that he deserves (2:10-11). So “the humiliation” of Christ was followed by “the exaltation” of Christ.

3. While following Christ’s example of humility may be difficult, verses 9-11 should encourage us. How can Christians be encouraged by verses 9-11?⁵

After presenting the supreme example of humility, and obedience (2:8), Paul continues telling the Philippian Christians how to “conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). Read Philippians 2:12-18.

¹ Jesus Christ was (and is) ‘in very nature God’ and ‘equal with God’ (2:6). In other words, Jesus was (and is) God. He is God the Son. The Bible teaches that God is ‘triune’ – one God existing in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At a particular time in history, the Son took ‘the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness’ (2:7). God the Son entered into humanity (which is called ‘the Incarnation’). Thus Jesus Christ is the one and only true God-man.

² God the Son greatly humbled himself to identify with human beings. Though God, he ‘made himself nothing’ or ‘emptied himself’ (2:7). The NLT translates it, ‘he gave up his divine privileges.’ He entered into humanity through physical birth and passed through infancy and childhood before beginning his earthly ministry. Though God, he was a ‘servant.’ He was the supreme example of obedience to God the Father. Though perfect God, he identified with sinful humans. He took our sin and shame upon himself and died in our place, on a cross – the most degrading form of execution. To ‘humble oneself’ is to lower oneself. No one could ever lower themselves more than Jesus did!

³ Jesus provided much more than an example of humility. His mindset and actions provided for our salvation! How should we respond to God? How should we respond to God’s word concerning our relationships with others?

⁴ When we think of ‘humiliation,’ we may think of ‘being humiliated’ against our will. Certainly, Jesus was unjustly treated, insulted, ridiculed, mocked, beaten and crucified by sinful people (Luke 22:63-23:41). However, Jesus ‘humbled himself.’ As he said, ‘No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord’ (John 10:18).

⁵ Followers of Jesus are followers of the victorious and exalted King of kings and Lord of lords! Followers of Jesus share in his sufferings, but this leads to sharing in his glory (Romans 8:17). As followers of Jesus, ‘God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus’ (Ephesians 2:6).

Shining the Light of Christ

Paul tells the Philippian Christians, "...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12). This does *not* mean we can earn (gain) our salvation by working for it.⁶


4. How is "working out our salvation" different from working for it?⁷



The Philippian church is apparently experiencing some disharmony. Thus Paul emphasizes the need for unity and humility (1:27; 2:1-5).

5. Paul says, "Do everything without grumbling (complaining) or arguing" (2:14). What are some reasons that Christians may complain or argue within their church or Christian community today? How may this affect nonbelievers' thoughts about Christians?⁸

6. In what ways should Christians "shine like stars"? What do we need to do? (2:14-16)

 *Jesus says, "You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14,16, NIV)*⁹

After telling the Philippian Christians "how to live," Paul adds encouragement.¹⁰ Even though he faces possible death,¹¹ Paul is still rejoicing in the Philippians' progress and service. He says, "I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me" (2:17b-18).

Reflection & Application

- What do you think about Jesus' great demonstration of humility? (2:6-11) Do you believe it? If not, keep seeking knowledge of Jesus. If you do believe, are you following Jesus?
- Brothers and sisters, are you "shining" among your family, friends, schoolmates, coworkers, and community? Make a specific commitment to shine more brightly for Jesus.

⁶ As Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians, 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast' (Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV).

⁷ God graciously initiates and completes our salvation. We are saved by God's grace, not by our works. But we have a responsibility in living out the salvation God has given us. Paul earlier said that God had begun a good work in the Philippian Christians, and God would complete it (1:6). Along the way, the Philippian Christians need to conduct themselves in a manner that honors and advances the gospel. They (and we) are to do this 'with fear and trembling' (that is, with deep reverence for God), relying on God's grace and power. 'For it is God who is working in you, enabling you to desire and to work out His good purpose' (2:13, HCSB). We are totally dependent on God. As Jesus said, 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing' (John 15:5, NIV). And then Jesus said, 'go and bear fruit' (John 15:16).

⁸ Of course, Christians should be more concerned about what God thinks than what people think, especially people who are opposed to God. Christians living in 'a warped and crooked generation' should not expect the approval of the society. But Christians should not misrepresent their Lord! Jesus said, 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another' (John 13:35). Differences between Christians are not necessarily a problem. However, if we fail in love, humility and basic unity, nonbelievers may rightly see 'fault' in us (Philippians 2:15).

⁹ Jesus is *the* Light of the world (John 8:12). Our 'shining' is actually the light of Jesus shining in and through us.

¹⁰ Paul wants to 'boast' (2:16) not about himself but rather about what Christ has done through him (1 Cor. 1:31).

¹¹ 'poured out like a drink offering' likely refers to his death, though it could refer to his own service and suffering.