

Series: The Fellowship of the Gospel	Reference: <i>Philippians 2:1-11</i>	Title: The Way Up is Down	Date: 10.18.2020
Website Writeup:			
In following Christ, we're not just unified in Spirit, but we take on the Mind of Christ leading us to humility, sacrifices & to empty ourselves to be filled with Him for the sake of salvation in others!			

Jesus said in Luke 9:23... *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves & take up their cross daily & follow me."* This is the basic reminder & challenge coming from Paul to the Philippian Church, and likewise, to us. With that in mind, let's begin with prayer...

We've been looking at Philippians. Today we find ourselves in chapter 2:1-11. If you'd like to follow along in your pew bibles, it's on p802.

Paul writes from prison to a church which has & will experience persecution, or suffering for the Gospel. Reminding them, God's mission is worth their suffering for the sake of His glory. For Paul, suffering & persecution for the sake of Christ is always to the end of making Jesus known to all peoples - for the sake of proclamation.

In that process Paul urges us to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ no matter what happens & of being one Spirit. Today he continues this thought. The Lord's been strumming on this chord of unity with us for months, sometimes as a central theme, but at the very least a directive thumping bass note in the background.

Let's listen as Paul takes us further in understanding, as he says...

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness & compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit & of one mind. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place & gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven & on earth & under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When Jesus said, “*Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves & take up their cross daily & follow me,*” He was making sure His followers would be willing to be living sacrifices for the furtherance of God’s kingdom - but that has to do everything with our thinking, attitudes, and even our moral conduct, especially in relationship with one another. Paul’s simply reiterating all this.

Jesus, with all integrity never garnered popular support. He was after people who’d be unwavering in devotion, own His character & desires, and therefore become trustworthy even in crisis. We remember Paul said, “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ*” (1 Co 11:1). This seems almost arrogant to say, but in essence it’s the exact opposite of pride, it’s humility. As believers, we’re to be followers of Jesus, not just imitators. Following means letting Jesus live in & through us, to be what He was about - allowing Jesus to increase as we decrease. Letting all others see Jesus in our actions, attitudes & speech, reflecting His central purpose of ushering in the Kingdom of God. It goes far deeper than just a facade, and gets down to the level of addressing even our internal desires & willingness to suffer for the sake of others. We can’t just play act Jesus, we must actually become deeply concerned about others & their eternal salvation. Paul’s already said we should be of one Spirit as we live in this world facing possible suffering & persecution. Here he takes these concepts a bit further.

He speaks of why Jesus came, His attitude concerning mission & purpose, and allows us a peek at the glory it brings Christ in the end. Paul begins with a bunch of ‘if’ statements, but that’s not to mean he doubts their devotion, or questions their resolve, remember he held these people in high regard. They’re simply meant to be truth statements, as if to say, you already have encouragement from being united with Christ, comfort from his love, common sharing in the Spirit, and tenderness & compassion due to Jesus. As a result of these things, do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but to the interests of the others. Which all deal with our interactive relationships. How we treat others & interact is either a positive or negative witness in this world. In short, we are to be Jesus to the world.

We’ve all too often heard how the negative view of the church has been fed & driven along by the sad actions & attitudes of a few in how they’ve treated others. Whether that be the sick indulgence of errant desire behind closed doors, or the damage of pride in insecurity & victimhood, or the unbridled anger which so many seem self-justified in expressing these days. We need not revisit such examples, we know them all too well.

Negative advertising spreads faster than positive - a dissatisfied customer tells 100 people, a satisfied customer, only a few. We must grow in self-awareness, to grow up as we grow old in the faith. But the sad fact is we’ll only be young once, but many choose to be spiritually & emotionally immature for a lifetime. If we don’t understand how our own personal words & actions affect the whole churches witness, we’ve not achieved any great level of maturity. Think about social media posts, in no other place right now do people feel the freedom to vomit up what might never be expressed in polite company.

As a result we're afforded a glimpse at the true nature of their character as we could in no other way.

Think about the posts some Christians simply 'like' of others. It's amazing that some who seem to be solid Christians 'like' the posts of others which reflect the opposite of Christian value, belief & conduct! There's no reason to applaud sin by 'liking' & approving the wrong words, or behavior of another. As a matter of fact, it's better 99.9% of the time to not react. And sometimes, 'looking out for the interests of others' is lovingly to confront their sin privately. That often doesn't go well, but how does a person grow if we simply applaud wrong behavior & ideas? Liking is approval, even though actions & words contradict the mind of Jesus.

Consider how you act & react to people at work, in a restaurant, any walk of life...we're ambassadors of Christ, but sometimes it's as if some leave Jesus in the sanctuary when exiting Sunday worship. The negative few get the sound-byte. But thankfully, quietly in the background many Believers don't engage in the vitriol, but lead quiet, faithful lives for the sake of others, like the Philippians had been doing. Amen to that!

One evangelical Christian recently wrote about this silent majority in social media. He said...*"There are many Evangelical Christians who have zero social media influence, quietly living their lives working, raising families & trying their best to make the world a better place...I'd say, I know many unseen people doing amazing things without broadcasting any of it on social media platforms. In one instance, I know a husband & wife who adopted 6 special-needs children. They have done all of this from a heart of love in hiddenness, they're Conservative Evangelical Christians.*

The American church is filled with very good regular people who practice a very realized faith by doing things like caring for the poor, the downtrodden, the outcast & the orphan. We can't fully trust Twitter Zealots for the whole story...let's all back away from extreme sweeping generalizations...[because] the devil is in the lack of details."

Those are good true words. Paul's statement to follow him as he follows Christ is the exact opposite of arrogant, it's humble. He's saying, I'm following Christ, if you need a good honest living example - follow me as I follow Jesus. Paul outlines the idea of being of one Spirit further when he uses the terms of 'being like-minded', 'the same love', 'having the same mind-set' & 'being of one mind'. It's difficult to imagine taking on someone else's mind. But that's what Paul's saying, take on the mind of Jesus.

There was an old movie, a comedy, with Gene Wilder & Marty Feldman called, *Young Frankenstein*. Marty Feldman, plays the part of Egor with his weird googly eyes. Dr. Frankenstein is played by Gene Wilder with his wild hair. Dr Frankenstein sends Egor to the local 'brain depository' to get a brain for his monster creation.

But Egor's kinda stupid & as he's taking the brain of a great scientist off the shelf, he drops the beaker & shatters it ruining that great mind. So, he shrugs & picks up the one next to it which is labeled abnormal. After Frankenstein's monster's found to be dumb &

awkward, Dr Frankenstein realizes it wasn't the brain he'd requested. So, Wilder asks, "What was the name on the jar?" Feldman says, "Abby someone...Ahhh, Abby Normal, that's it, yep."

We've seen heart transplants, but have yet to see a brain transplant! But this is exactly what we're asked to do! Paul urges having the same mind within us as Jesus. We know Christ through the hearing of His Word. Romans 10:17 says...*"faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ."* But before we heard His word, we had our own thoughts, values & beliefs. And Jesus, as King, says, "To be my follower, you must take on my mind." And, Paul proceeds to tell us exactly what that mind looks like.

Jesus' mind led Him to do what was necessary for *our* salvation. He obeyed God the Father for our sake, giving freely & willingly His life upon the cross, to forgive & redeem us. His mind led Him to do anything necessary to make us right with God, thinking of us, not Himself. If we're to have the mind of Christ, what we need is a complete attitude adjustment. And that doesn't mean a weak pale adoption of ethereal ideas of love, grace & mercy defined only by the individual in what they want & desire in life. It means great sacrifice. It entails repentance & turn around, and overhaul of our worldview - coming under Christ. True sacrificial love calls us higher, it confronts the wrong thinking & attitudes which lead to immoral sinful destructive attitudes & actions for the betterment of the individual & society.

It's an adoption of everything communicated in the Scriptures, because Jesus said in *Mt 5:18*, *"For truly I tell you, until heaven & earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."* Meaning all the teachings of the Bible, including the ever-consistent moral law by which Jesus calls us upward in reflection of the godhead. As Paul stated earlier, to live a life worthy of our calling, a reference to the moral law governing God's kingdom.

In John 1:1-3 Jesus is equated with the Word...*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."* Jesus embodies & lives every jot & tittle of the Scriptures. Which is why it's so important we come at the Scriptures knowing we read the very thoughts of God, and meet Jesus in them. This makes things like a daily quiet time in the Word, scripture memory, prayer & fellowship all vital to the Christian life.

And as it states in Romans 12:1-2 we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God - this is our true & proper worship. We don't conform to the pattern of this world, but are transformed by the renewing of our mind. Then we'll be able to test & approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing & perfect will. It's by the Scriptures, the Mind of God, that we know Jesus more fully & are transformed into His likeness. The mind-set of Jesus must impact & overcome all that we are - body, soul, heart & mind. It's in taking on the mind of Christ where unity is truly found in the Church, and witness

flourishes in the world as a result. And again, that comes through the regular engagement of those spiritual formation practices like a daily quiet time.

Paul mentions three things concerning Jesus in this passage. Firstly, **He empties Himself**, as witnessed in the incarnation; meaning Jesus as God took on the flesh of a Man. John said in 1:14 of his gospel...*“And the Word became flesh & dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace & truth.”* Jesus never promoted His equality with God, but neither did He shy away from it. In John 10:30, Jesus said, *“The Father & I are one,”* and Jewish leaders tried to stone Him because He’d made Himself equal with God by saying so (John 10:33). Jesus never denied or laid aside His divine nature, but He did forfeit the privileges for a time.

He emptied Himself by taking the form of man - a servant or slave, the lowest position possible. An attitude revealed in His washing the Disciples feet at final Passover before His death. Beyond this, Jesus didn’t count his godly status & authority as something to be exploited. The Greek word used speaks of seizing something like a prize - but being in very nature God, Jesus didn’t consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage. And, it was exactly this which began our troubles when Adam & Eve believed a lie sparking desire to be ‘like God’. But thankfully we have models like Paul & King David who said in Psalm 84:10, *“I’d rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”*

Which brings us to the second thing revealed about Jesus here...**Jesus Humbled Himself**. This humility is seen in verse 7 where He made Himself of no reputation, nothing, deliberately & willingly humbling Himself to the point of becoming a human being.

We first see this in His birth, as He’s laid in a dirty manger (Luke 2:12). Throughout life He pointed out, foxes have holes & birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head (Luke 9:57). We see it as He washed the disciples’ feet, a position reserved for the lowest of servants. Which ended by Him saying, *“If I then, your Lord & Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet”* (John 13:14).

But His humility’s seen the clearest in His obedience to a tortuous death on a cross. The word “excruciating” is derived from the term crucifixion, the most degrading of deaths, hung openly for all to mock & jeer. Deuteronomy 21:23 states anyone crucified was under God’s curse. Jesus was surely cursed for us!

Which brings us to the third thing revealed here, **Jesus Sacrificed Himself**. The ultimate sacrifice, as prophesied in Isaiah 53:12 for the coming Messiah...*“Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”*

Jesus voluntarily emptied, humbled & sacrificed Himself for us & He calls us to the same mind-set towards others for the sake of His mission & glory. Which has

implications in every relationship of life, parent, child, spouse, friend, neighbor, foreigner & coworker. As Romans 12:1-2 dictates, we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, willingly & voluntarily sacrificing our needs, wants & desires - this is acceptable to God. As Paul said, we're called not to just believe on Him, but to suffer for Him, as He did for us. As Jesus said, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves & take up their cross daily & follow me."* (Luke 9:23)

And the end result of Jesus emptying, humbling & sacrificing Himself was that...*"God exalted him to the highest place & gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven & on earth & under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* The way up is down, the way to greatness is servitude, humility & sacrifice.

James says, *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up."* (James 4:10)

Jesus said in Mt 23:11-12, *"The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹² For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

2 Corinthians 6:14 says...*"For what do righteousness & wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"*

Ephesians 5:8 states, *"You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light"*

Let's silence the vitriol, offer our bodies as living sacrifices, be humble & empty ourselves to be filled with the Mind of Christ. Let's give our time & devotion to the Word in healthy quiet times to assimilate Jesus' heart & thoughts which prepare us to be about His mission & glory among all peoples. Let's lay down our lives for the sake of salvation in others, making Jesus last command our first concern...and it's promised, like Him, we'll be lifted up because the way up is truly down!