

Digging Deeper
 Blackhawk Ministries
 02-19-12

Philippians 2:1-11 - "Christ's Example"

Review

Philippians 2:1-11 is an enormously important passage that is essentially about two things: the encouragement of Christ, and His example. Coming out of Philippians 1, we find that Paul's state of mind is not tied to his circumstances. He has an eternal perspective (with regard to his suffering). Paul understands that his present suffering will be met with encouragement both from the LORD and from His church (1:29,30; 2:1,2).

Paul begins Philippians 2 by provoking the church at Philippi by asking if they have encouragement in Christ, comfort from love, and participation in the Spirit. All of these things are both available and present to those who are attached to Christ. The common experience of comfort follows after the common experience of suffering. Paul encourages the church at Philippi with unity of both thinking and feeling (2:2).

God's desire is that we would not live to make a good impression on others. How much of our energies do we expend doing this. The Lord is not encouraging a false sense of modesty, but rather a proper view of ourselves (2:3;4). True humility is not focused inward, but outward. It is staggering to consider what our families, marriages, churches and schools would be like if we did "nothing from selfish ambition or conceit" (2:3). How much easier will it be for wives to submit to this kind of a husband? (Eph. 5) Selflessness is a Christ-honoring orientation. Selflessness is the "mind....which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). In Mark 9, Jesus powerfully illustrates this point for His disciples by saying: "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). The way to greatness is through service.

We learn from Philippians 2:5-11 that Jesus is equal with God, and let it go out of His incomparably great sacrificial love. Jesus does not count His equality with God as something that He could exploit for His own advantage. Every day we are tempted to exploit our position for our own advantage, and every day we should be reminded that Christ faced that temptation and did not give in.

The end of Jesus' selfless sacrifice was the highest exaltation (2:9-11). This is probably a pointer to the Philippians' own future glory with Christ. Bowing down in worship before Christ is the only appropriate response to this amazing passage.

Research

C.S. Lewis on Philippians 2:3...

“[God] wants to bring the man to a state of mind in which he could design the best cathedral in the world, and know it to be the best, and rejoice in the fact, without being any more (or less) or otherwise glad at having done it than he would be if it had been done by another. [He] wants him, in the end, to be so free from any bias in his own favour that he can rejoice in his own talents as frankly and gratefully as in his neighbour’s talents—or in a sunrise, an elephant, or a waterfall. He wants each man, in the long run, to be able to recognise all creatures (even himself) as glorious and excellent things...When they have really learned to love their neighbours as themselves, they will be allowed to love themselves as their neighbours.”
 ... [C. S. Lewis](#) (1898-1963), [The Screwtape Letters](#), Macmillan, 1944, p. 73

Seth Godin on “The Sad Irony of Selfishness”

More often than not, the selfish person is insecure, fearful and filled with doubt. The selfishness springs from his belief that this is his only good idea, his last dollar, his one and only chance to avoid failure. "I need this, not you," he says, because he truly believes he's got nothing else going on, no other chance, no hope.

The irony, of course, is that selflessness (not selfishness, its opposite) is precisely the posture that leads to more success. The person with the confidence to support others and to share is repaid by getting more in return than his selfish counterpart.

The connection economy multiplies the value of what is contributed to it. It's based on abundance, not scarcity, and those that opt out, fall behind.

Sharing your money, your ideas, your insights, your confidence... all of these things return to you. Perhaps not in the way you expected, and certainly not with a guarantee, but again and again the miser falls behind.

- Seth Godin - “The Sad Irony of Selfishness” February 12, 2012
<http://sethgodin.typepad.com/>

Anthony T. Hanson on Christ’s example of humility:

“How did Jesus show his authority? Not by making vast claims for himself, though such claims were implicit. His authority seemed to reside in what he was and what he did rather than in what he specifically claimed to be. Especially in Mark’s Gospel there is an elusive quality about his authority, the mystery of the hidden Messiah. His authority was at the same time most deeply hidden and most clearly expressed by his servanthood...The more the Church in its life shows forth the character of the Servant, the more will its teaching bear the marks of the authority of the Servant.”

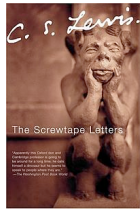
...[Anthony T. Hanson](#) (1916-1991), [The Church of the Servant](#), London: SCM Press, 1962, p. 113

Handley Moule on the victory of Christ at the cross... (Philippians 2:8)

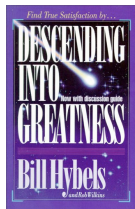
“There is no situation so chaotic that God cannot from that situation create something that is surpassingly good. He did it at the creation. He did it at the cross. He is doing it today.”

... [Handley Moule](#) (1841-1920)

Recommended Reading:



C.S. Lewis - The Screwtape Letters



Bill Hybels - Descending Into Greatness



John Dickson - Humilitas

Reflect

Do you have any Philippians 2:1 people in your life?

One of the many benefits of salvation is that we're now part of God's family. We've been adopted as his sons and daughters. That means that we're brothers and sisters to one another. God has given us one another, and we need fellowship with other believers. Philippians 2:1 shows us some principles which describe healthy, Gospel-centered relationships within the family of God.

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,”

Do you have beneficial relationships with other Christians? Are they characterized by these things: encouragement, comfort, love, affection, and sympathy? How can you extend these things to others?

How might your relationships change if you put their needs before your own?

Philippians 2:3-4 says,

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Pause for a moment and consider how your relationships with other people would change if you truly treated them as more important than yourself? How would your home change if you looked after the interests of your spouse, children, siblings, or parents rather than your own? If you were more concerned about the good of others than getting what you want, making sure you look good, or getting what you deserve?

Consider Christ's example.

Living in a genuinely unselfish way, genuinely caring for the concerns of others, is impossible if not for Christ. He not only set us an example, he accomplished payment for our sins and gives us his Holy Spirit to enable us to do this. Read 2:5-11 slowly. Notice the great distance that is travelled in these few short verses. From everlasting communion in the Godhead, down to the likeness of a man, and to a grinding halt at the cross. Why did he do this? Simply because he chose to save us. Try to grasp the immensity of what is going on in these verses. Dwell long on them.

Respond

Let Christ's example and salvation transform your relationships.

In Christ, God humbled himself to the point of letting himself be killed by his own rebellious creations. What greater example is there of self-sacrificial love? And yet it is more than an inspiring example. It has power in itself to cleanse us of sin and selfishness. Let the Gospel transform this area of your life. Look to Christ and love others like he has loved you.