

Same Mind, Same Love, Same Joy (Part 5)

Philippians 2:5-11

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October 4, 2020

When I worked for a pharmaceutical company, we had a system in place to train us to execute tests following Good Manufacturing Practices. First the trainee would observe the trainer running a test, then they would assist the trainer, then perform the test by themselves with the supervision of the trainer, then finally the supervisor would observe the test execution and sign off. In my family we employ a similar process to teach the kids how to perform certain tasks. There is benefit to seeing someone else do something before you attempt to do it yourself. It makes what previously seemed impossible feel more possible for us. Jacob was reluctant to have me pull his first loose tooth, but after watching a YouTube video of a girl having her tooth pulled and afterward saying that it didn't hurt, he was then willing to have me pull the tooth. When you see someone do something before you, you no longer feel that it is out of reach. So in Philippians 2, when Paul exhorts us to be humble and put others before ourselves, he also gives us the example of Jesus, who humbled Himself first. When we see Jesus' humility, we can follow in His example.

The first aspect of humility we see in this chapter is that it is an attitude that we must choose to have. In vv. 2 and 5 Paul urges us to have the same mind, that of Jesus. And in v. 3 he tells us that this way of thinking is to consider others above ourselves. He gives this exhortation to all of us, not just those who seem naturally more humble. Humility is not one of those spiritual gifts that are only given to some, which Paul mentions in his other letters. It's not a natural talent like perfect pitch. Don't be deceived into thinking that humility is just not for you. Don't make the excuse that it's just not natural to you. Humility is not natural to anyone. We must change our thinking in order to be humble. It's not natural to put others before yourself. It's something we must be determined to do. While God gives us grace and the power of the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, we must be determined to walk with the Spirit and follow His leading. Just as Jesus struggled at Gethsemane, we also will struggle to put aside our own good for the sake of others. But we must not be discouraged, but rather be determined to follow Jesus' example.

The second aspect of humility is that it requires setting aside what is rightfully ours. Most of us know that the rules of the road dictate that at a stop sign the car on the right has the right of way, and that when two lanes merge the cars from each lane must take turns moving

ahead. But when people insist on going first without the right of way, it is extremely irritating. It's hard to willingly give up our right of way, to let go of what is rightfully ours. But this is exactly what Jesus shows us how to do. In vv. 5-6, Paul says that Jesus was once in heaven, having the form of God, being a spiritual being unconstrained by matter, having all honor, glory, and authority. All this was rightfully His, but He didn't consider it something to be held on to. He let go of what was rightfully His and in vv. 7-8 we see that He took on the form of a lowly human, confined to flesh and its weakness. He humbled Himself even to death on the cross. And even after being raised with a new perfected body and ascending to heaven, He still retained His flesh and His humanity. For our sake He was humbled forever, to be fully man and fully God. We should therefore follow in His example and have this same attitude of humility, giving up what is rightfully ours for the sake of others.

Finally, we see that humility is rewarded in vv. 9-11. Jesus humbled Himself for all, and God exalted Him above all. Paul tells us that just as we are to follow Jesus' example in being determined to give up our rights for others, like Jesus we will also be rewarded. Throughout the Bible we see that God lifts up the humble. God gives grace and favor to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5; Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 3:34). Admittedly it's not that clear what the reward is exactly, but we can say that there is some reward, that when we are humble God does take notice and is pleased. This is what God wants for us. Though we struggle, let us follow Jesus' example and set aside our rights to put others before ourselves. Let us all strive to emulate Jesus' humility in our lives.