

## **The Humility of Christ**

### **Philippians 2:1-11**

Paul has already raised the importance of unity. However, it is of such importance, he returns to it.

#### **A Call to Unity**

Despite all that Paul is facing in jail, he knows joy. But that joy would be made even greater if he knew that the Philippians were united. He has personally experienced the damage done by disunity. But he also knows that disunity is the opposite of the gospel.

So he points out to them in v1, that if the gospel is doing its work in their hearts, how could they not be united? And yet, he needs to encourage and exhort them and us to unity. It is not natural, we prefer to have our own way, and maintaining unity is not a passive activity. But the greatest threat to unity is not that we disagree on things, it is our inner selfishness.

#### **The Need for Humility**

Too often life seems to be about getting an advantage over others, whether in business or in relationships. It comes from our engrained desire to keep 'me' at the centre. But that destroys unity. So Paul calls us to something deeply counter-cultural: to count others more significant than ourselves. But to do that requires a total change in our thinking. Even so, it is all of our responsibilities. And just imagine how relationships would be transformed if this was how we treated one another.

But given how difficult it is to prefer one another, and to count them as more significant than yourself, how can we get there?

#### **The Way to Get There**

In our modern, media-driven world, we are faced with lots of so called role-models. The problem is those on offer will not help us pursue humility. Paul gives a much better example: Christ. His kind of thinking, his way of relating, his way of behaving should become the mindset of our community life. His example should mold and shape our churches, families and marriages.

Christ emptied and humbled himself. He did not use his divinity for his own advantage, rather he humbled himself to the total humiliation and rejection of the cross. Given all that crucifixion symbolized it's impossible to imagine anything else as profoundly in contrast to His eternal majesty as the cross.

But why does he do that? For you and for me. He pours out his life to bring us to himself, to take on himself the punishment and rejection we deserve, so that we never have to experience it.

But we will never be able to live like that if Jesus is only an example and we try to do it in our own strength. It can only come from us being 'in Christ'. When we allow his grace and love for us to humble us, then it will transform the way we think and live. Then we realize that it's Christ who is exalted by God, and not us, that it's him who's the Lord, and not us, then our selfish ambition will come to an end.

