Part 7: The Grace of Humility

Philippians 2:1-4

The gospel remedy to disunity is the model of Christ and the grace of humility.

I. Christian Unity in an Age of Disunity

We are living in a turbulent time with anger, contempt, suspicion, and even hatred in the air we breathe. It leaves us exhausted and afraid as we navigate potential relational landmines.

There are many anecdotal stories around of the stress this has brought to families – either marriages or broader familial relationships. And the same anecdotal stories are heard of conflict and division in many churches too.

This cultural atmosphere seeps into our churches wanting to form us in its image by either enticing or intimidating us into taking a similar posture towards one another.

Q – What is our response as followers of King Jesus? What guidance is there for us in the Scriptures? What are the resources of the Kingdom available to us?

II. The Philippian Context

Last week Wes introduced us to the place where Paul pivots from his own situation to the situation for the Christians in Philippi. They were facing external pressures to compromise the gospel and their witness (1:27-30).

“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ…stand firm in one Spirit, contending as one community for the faith of the gospel…” Philippians 1:27

But there were also internal pressures brewing from a conflict between two women in the church, and they were at risk of letting this conflict destroy their unity and their witness.

“I plead with Euodia and Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel…whose names are written in the book of life.” Philippians 4:2-3

So now, as we move into chapter 2, Paul is going to try to pastor them into the Gospel remedy for disunity.

The gospel remedy to disunity is the model of Christ and the grace of humility.

Q – What is humility? How do we receive the grace of humility?

A. What is humility?

Whatever humility is, it is the opposite of “selfish ambition” and “vain conceit.” More on this next week.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourself.” Philippians 2:3

Humility is seeing God and ourselves in the true light of God’s Word. It’s acknowledging our totally dependent status on God for life and our salvation.

“Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.” John 13:3-4

Humility is an honest acceptance of who God says we are, what he has given to us, and what he has not given to us. False humility denies these realities and may manifest itself in co-dependent behavior.

“He who has not accepted himself is obsessed with himself.” – Leanne Payne

III. The Grace of Humility

Q - How do we receive the grace of humility?

Paul makes his heart-felt appeal to the church with a series of clauses that reveal his Trinitarian view of God and our salvation.

"…if you have any encouragement (comfort) from being in Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete (full) by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind." Philippians 2:1-2

A. 'In Christ" = we are united to Christ like the vine and the branch (John 15). Everything we need to grow in humility is available to us.

Ex. Bookmark inside a book.

B. "Comfort from his love" = the compassionate and comforting love of the Father (Psalm 103; 13-14; Rom. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:3-7).

Ex. Image of our earthly father may interfere with our image of the Father. Suggested prayer exercise: What are the words that rise from your heart unedited that describe your earthly father. What are the words that arise about how you see your heavenly Father?

C. "Sharing in the Spirit"= their salvation personally and together is made real through the Holy Spirit. The Presence and power of God is available to us to guide, heal, and strengthen us to walk in humility. We must engage our minds and wills to obey – "Set your minds on…"

Ex. Walking in the Spirit is like sailing.

IV. The Grace of Humility to Heal Conflict

"…then make my joy complete (full)

by being like-minded,

having the same love,

being one in spirit and of one mind." Philippians 2:2

Ex. Matthew the tax collector and Simon the zealot were the epitome of two people with different perspectives and agendas that made them bitter enemies. But their common experience of the grace of Jesus melted their hearts, removed their relational barriers, and gave them a genuine love and respect of the other.

> "And so the life of the saved ones, of the saints, must bear this stamp of deliverance from sin and full restoration to their original state. Their whole relationship to both God and man must be marked by an all-pervading humility. Without this there can be no true abiding in God's presence or experience of His favor and the power of His Spirit. Without this there can be no abiding faith or love or joy or strength. Humility is the only soil in which the graces

root; the lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure. Humility is not so much a grace or virtue along with others; it is the root of all, because it alone assumes the right attitude before God and allows Him as God to do all." – Andrew Murray, *Humility*

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Philippians 2:1-11 out loud. Doug's main point in the sermon is: The gospel remedy to disunity is the model of Christ and the grace of humility. Do you think this is a faithful summary of the Scripture? What in the Scripture supports your opinion?
2. Read Philippians 2:1. Which of the three Persons of the Trinity do you most easily think of and relate to? Why?
3. Which of the three Persons of the Trinity do you think of the least? Why?
4. Is there anything in the sermon that you find helpful as you seek to relate to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
5. Read Philippians 2:2. What practical steps does Paul exhort them to take? What do you think this presumes about us? What does it require of us?
6. What are your thoughts about the Andrew Murray quote at the end of the sermon?