

Gospel Humility – *Philippians 2:1-5*

Introduction – Pride is thinking too much of yourself. Humility isn't thinking less of yourself. Humility is thinking of yourself less. Arrogance and self-pity are both forms of pride, thinking of yourself more than Christ, trusting in yourself more than in Christ, and counting on yourself more than on Christ. Biblical humility is a gift. It is the supernatural, Spirit-wrought confidence to consider others more important than yourself in every situation. And this gospel humility is the basis by which we are able to fervently love one another and show forth to the world that we are owned and have been transformed by Jesus Christ.

Lowliness of Mind (Phil 2:1-5) – Because of all we have in Christ (v1), the Philippians would fulfill Paul's joy (and God's) by having that same mind towards one another (v2). In other words, imitate Jesus (*"who humbled Himself"* – v8). Nothing is to be done through selfish ambition (looking strictly for personal gain), but rather *"in humility, lowliness of mind"* we are to esteem others better (more important) than ourselves (v3). This causes us to always be considering the interests of others (v4). This is the *"mind"* that is to be in us: the mindset, the humility, the gospel of Jesus (v5 and then ff).

Why "Gospel" Humility? – Why use the word "gospel" when talking about this humility? The Gospel is the "Good News" of how God has made a way for the reconciliation of sinful man to Himself. But that vertical transformation is also manifested in the horizontal transformation of relationships between people. Jesus said, *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:35). This is how we know that we have passed from death to life (1 John 3:14). This is the first commandment given in Ephesians after three chapters of gospel (Eph 4:1-2), and nearly the first after eleven chapters in Romans (Rom 12:10). This is why when the church is a mess, or when Christian relationships are in a huff, it reads as a refutation of the Gospel (Gal 5:13-15). Theological orthodoxy is displayed by how we live with one another.

The Ridiculousness of Christ's Humility – Jesus Christ is God, Supreme over all creation, all relationships, all thrones and dominions. He always was, always is, always will be. And yet, He did not consider this position something He needed to grasp and exploit (Phil 2:6) and so, in love, He humbled Himself. Earlier, Jesus had taught His disciples that they must do the same thing when He took the form of a servant and washed their feet (John 13:12-17). This does not mean that Jesus had to lie to Himself (*"well, these people are really more important than Me"*). And this teaches us that we do not have to lie to ourselves when we choose to consider others more important than ourselves. Humility is not thinking less of yourself (and possibly lying); humility is thinking of yourself less. But how do you do that? Well, how did Christ do that? And what did the Father do for Christ (Phil 2:9ff)? And what will He do for you (1 Pet 5:6-7)? Seeing how ridiculous it was for Christ to humble Himself and serve us answers our flesh which cries out that we are more important or more right or more holy or more worthy than so and so in some situation. Jesus didn't lie. Jesus humbled Himself.

"Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creature. It is a contradiction to be a sanctified man, or a true Christian, and not humble" – Richard Baxter.

The Hard Work of Fervent Love – The goal is not to simply be nice and put on that smiley face no matter what. Rather, we are called to reflect that which has shined down upon us. To have fervent love is therefore to reflect the mercy and salvation that fills this world because of Jesus. But that is not to say that love is not hard. *"Love suffers long"* (1 Cor 13:4). And so Peter uses a phrase that almost sounds oxymoronic to us – *"have fervent love."*

"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart" – 1 Pet 1:22

"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins'" – 1 Pet 4:8.

"Fervent" does not mean "really emotional." It is a word that describes the stretched muscle in strenuous activity being pushed to its limit and beyond. Why does our love have to be so strained and earnest? Because we all stumble in many ways. But fervent love covers a multitude of sins. Fervent love lets go. That only occurs *"through the Spirit"* (1 Pet 1:22); it is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).

Working This Out – When I walk with humility I am not thinking less of myself; I am thinking of myself less and the gospel more. When I esteem others I am saying the gospel is the most important thing of all. When I love and cover the sins of others I am saying that Jesus Christ came to save the world including all of my sins – and all of yours. When I join Jesus in His humiliation I am proclaiming my confidence, because of the resurrection, that I am and will join Him in His eternal exaltation.