

Humility - the Key to Joy

Philippians 2:1-4 HCSB If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, (2) fulfill my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, sharing the same feelings, focusing on one goal. (3) Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. (4) Everyone should look out not *only* for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Introduction

As you study the book of Philippians you'll discover a couple of keys to becoming a joyful person. They include:

1. Being thankful for what God has done.
2. Being confident in His ability to complete his work in your life.
2. Developing relationships of agape love toward others. AND
3. Living life with an eternal perspective.

Today we're going to discover that in order to become a joyful person we're going to have to do an ATTITUDE CHECK. We'll discover that according to Paul there are some attitudes that will help us become joyful and some that won't. And we'll discover how we can develop the attitudes we need to be joyful in our lives.

Now remember, Paul is writing to his friends in Philippi while he's under house arrest in Rome, awaiting a hearing before Caesar which will end in his release or his execution. He has been kept from seeing the Philippians for over a year, and he is concerned that they not fall away from what he's taught them. So he wrote the passage we just listened to. And what is the key attitude that Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to develop? HUMILITY!

I. What does it mean to be HUMBLE?

A. Consider others better than yourself. (v. 3-4)

- **Philippians 2:3-4 HCSB** Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. (4) Everyone should look out not *only* for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Our natural way of thinking is that the more we can get for ourselves the happier we'll be. But God's word tells us just the opposite is true. If you want to be great, you've got to be the last. If you want to get everything you want, you've got to be willing to put others first.

Survivor All-Stars. More than any other Survivor show the final two lied, cheated, broke promises to get there. It was interesting that in the final "tribal council", they were called on this behavior by Lex, who said basically "I hope all the money is worth it, because you traded your friendships and your integrity for it."

One thing I know about myself is that I'm basically a selfish person. At heart, I want what I want and I want it now! The whole idea of considering others better than myself seems completely unnatural...even un-American! And I don't think I'm alone in struggling with this.

But if we want to be a joyful person we must understand that it doesn't come from stepping on and over other people but comes instead from looking out for the interests of others!

Our role model for all of this "humility" business is Jesus himself. Paul lays that out when he says in verse 5

- **Philippians 2:5 HCSB** Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus,

Paul then spends the next few sentences telling us exactly what Jesus did in laying down an example of humility. It starts in verse six where we learn that being humble like Jesus means to...

B. Be unconcerned about your personal position. (v. 5-6)

- **Philippians 2:5-6 HCSB** Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, (6) who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage.

The word “grasped” here brings the idea that it was not something to be seized. Though Christ was in very nature God, he did not go grasping after it, putting himself forward, demanding others treat him in a way befitting someone of his stature. He didn’t say “That’s mine for the taking!”

The application is simple. Whatever titles we may have earned, whatever degrees may hang on our wall, being like Jesus will mean we must never flaunt our authority over others, or try to make them feel inferior to us.

- **Mark 10:42-45 HCSB** Jesus called them over and said to them, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and their men of high positions exercise power over them. (43) But it must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, (44) and whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave to all. (45) For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life--a ransom for many."

You want to know what to call me? “Most Holy Reverend Pauley”? No - My friends call me Cajun. I understand that in certain situations protocol demands certain titles; it demands respect for people with certain titles. We teach our children to address their elders respectfully, we teach them to respect authority by addressing it properly. But when you are the one who has the title, how do you treat people? Let Jesus be your guide. Though he was in nature God, he did not consider it something to be grasped. Instead, he set us an example of humility, teaching us to..

C. Make yourself a servant. (v. 7)

- **Philippians 2:7 HCSB** Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when He had come as a man in His external form,
- **John 13:12-17 HCSB** When Jesus had washed their feet and put on His robe, He reclined again and said to them, "Do you know what I have done for you? (13) You call Me Teacher and Lord. This is well said, for I am. (14) So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done for you. (16) "I assure you: A slave is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. (17) If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

How can there be joy in making yourself a servant? How can it be that if you want to be joyful it is somehow bound up in choosing to be a servant to those around you? Perhaps it is in this: Do not let your joy and happiness in life be based upon having others serve you, because if you are ever deprived of such honor, your life will take a turn for the worse. Instead, make the choice to serve others; to make yourself nothing of your own accord. Then your happiness will no longer be founded upon how others treat you – which is completely out of your control.

D. Obey even when it is inconvenient. (v. 8)

- **Philippians 2:8 HCSB** He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death--even to death on a cross.

The question I've been asking myself this week in relation to this verse is...How far does my obedience go?

- Am I willing to obey the word of God if it means someone else might not understand?
- Am I willing to obey the word of God even if I don't really like what it has to say?
- Am I willing to obey the word of God if it means I lose?

Our humility is shown in these types of situations. Will we humble ourselves before God's will or raise ourselves up above what his word says and say, "In my situation it just doesn't apply!"

Jesus gave us the most perfect example of humility – and Paul exhorts us to live our life with the same kind of humble attitude.

But you might say to me, "That's great, but all that advice in Philippians sounds out of reach for me. How can I become that type of person, and begin knowing the joy that comes from becoming a humble servant?"

II. How can you develop humility? (The answer is found in verses 12 and 13.) **Work hard and let God change your will.** (v.12-13)

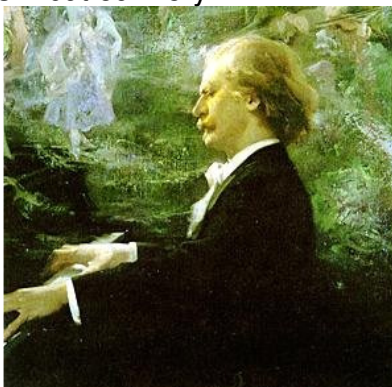
- **Philippians 2:12-13 HCSB (12)** So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. **(13)** For it is God who is working in you, *enabling you* both to will and to act for His good purpose.

Don't be confused. This verse is NOT saying that we must work to earn our salvation. There are really two parts of our salvation, and they are described by the words justification and sanctification.

Justification is the one time act of God by which we are pronounced NOT GUILTY of our sin. We are cleansed of our sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, and able to enter into a relationship with Him. This cannot be earned – it is a gift of God.

But sanctification, on the other hand, is the process of being made more and more into the image of Christ in our physical lives here on earth. It is the lifelong process of submitting our lives to His will moment by moment, until we've finally reached a place where our will and His will are the same.

So Paul is not saying here we need to work hard to earn our salvation. Instead, he's saying, keep on obeying God's word and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, working out in the physical realm the spiritual salvation you have already received. If we do our part, we're promised God will begin changing not just our actions – but our very WILL!



¹Paderewski, the famous Polish composer-pianist, was once scheduled to perform at a great American concert hall for a high-society extravaganza. In the audience was a mother with her fidgety nine-year-old son. Weary of waiting, the boy slipped away from her side, strangely drawn

¹ <http://www.dfsheetmusic.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderpictures/paderewski.jpg> Illustration from Today in the Word, Moody Bible Institute, Jan., 1992, p.8

to the Steinway on the stage. Without much notice from the audience, he sat down at the stool and began playing "chopsticks." The roar of the crowd turned to shouts as hundreds yelled, "Get that boy away from there!" When Paderewski heard the uproar backstage, he grabbed his coat and rushed over behind the boy. Reaching around him from behind, the master began to improvise a countermelody to "Chopsticks." As the two of them played together, Paderewski kept whispering in the boy's ear, "Keep going. Don't quit, son, don't stop, don't stop."

In a sense, that is how God is at work helping us to "work out our salvation." Although God is behind it all, he does require our effort. If you want to know the JOY that comes from living a humble life – it is going to take hard work on your part. It is going to take deliberate choices to be like Jesus in how you relate to others. But it's worth the hard work!

III. What will be the result of a life lived with humility? Your life will bring light to dark places. (v.14-16)

- **Philippians 2:14-16 HCSB (14)** Do everything without grumbling and arguing, **(15)** so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world. **(16)** Hold firmly the message of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn't run in vain or labor for nothing.

I kept thinking about Mother Teresa all week. How she dedicated her life to helping the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, India. How somehow, this humble servant woman achieved world-wide fame for her service. Talk about being a shining light in a dark place!

Paul says that when we live lives of humility, being a servant, putting others first – the result is we will shine like stars in the universe as we hold out the word of life to others.

The world is full of people clamoring for attention, for honor, for prestige. You want your life to be set apart from the crowd? Live humbly and put others needs before your own.

CONCLUSION:

- How will your life be different this week?
- Who is it that God is whispering in your ear that you might serve this week?
- What action can you take to literally empty yourself of your rights and become like a servant?
- What task do you routinely do that causes you to complain?

I challenge you to live in the shadow of our Lord Jesus, who lived a humble life, and because of it now basks in eternal glory with the Father. I urge you to write down one concrete step you can take this week to develop this attitude of humility and follow the example of Jesus. Becoming a joyful person will stem from your willingness to serve others from a heart of humility. Will you risk it?