



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Short Study 068: Philippians Study 3: Humility Promotes Unity

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Read Philippians 2:1-11

Introduction: An underlying tone of disunity in the Philippian Church can be detected in this letter (it is seen clearly in a specific relationship in the final chapter). In Chapter 2 Paul addresses one of underlying reasons for disunity – the lack of humility. He points to Jesus as the perfect example of true humility in laying down His life for the sake of others.

1. True Unity (vs 1-2). Paul mentions five things that *unite* believers:

- (i) Belonging to Christ (v1). He is the Head of the Body (Eph 4:15). Why should that unite us?
- (ii) Love (vs1 & 2). Love is nothing less than a command of our Lord. Refer to John 13:34-35.
- (iii) The Holy Spirit (v1). How does the Holy Spirit unite believers?
- (iv) Compassion (*affection and mercy* NKJV / *tenderness and compassion* NIV) (v1).
- (v) Single-mindedness (v2). Whose mind should that be?

2. Causes of disunity (vs 3-4) Paul also mentions three things that *threaten* unity:

- (i) Selfish ambition (v3). Following one's own aims. Whose aims should one follow?
- (ii) Conceit (excessive pride) (v3). What does Peter have to say about this in 1 Pet 5:6?
- (iii) Self-seeking (v4). Thinking only of themselves & not the needs and feelings of others.

Notice all three causes are when people are putting themselves above others – even above Christ!

3. Christ's Example of Humility (vs 5-11). In contrast to the attitude of those who make true unity difficult, is the perfect example set by Jesus. Christians are to have the 'same mind' as His. How would you describe Jesus' mind, in the light of verse 8?

- (i) vs 7-8 How low Jesus went. Can you identify in these verses 5 examples of Jesus' humility?
- (ii) vs 9-11 How high God exalted Him. Now identify in these verses how highly God exalted Him.

Note: *Under the earth* (v10) In those days the souls of the dead were thought to be under the earth, so this probably means those who had died without submitting to Him during their life, and were bound for hell. Their homage will be with reluctance. It will be too late.

- (iii) Who gets the glory for Christ's exaltation (v11)? God the Father.

The lesson is that those who likewise humble themselves will likewise be exalted. What did Jesus say in Mathew 23:12?

To think about: Is there anything in *me* that hinders my acceptance of and love for a brother or sister in Christ, or maybe a hinderance to their acceptance of me?

To dig deeper: With the aid of a concordance or other resource, explore the subject of unity amongst Christians. (Selecting *Unity* in the Concordance section of The Bible Hub online resource gives a useful list of scriptures.)