

Meditation #4 – Philippians 2:1-5, “A Plea for Humble Christian Love”

I saw a funny meme the other day which said this, “*you know what people don’t talk enough about? Masks, I wish I knew everyone’s opinion about them.*” We live in a *divided world*, don’t we? Just think about the hot button issues of the day that drive people apart - Covid-19 restrictions, the term Black Lives Matter, mask-wearing, & political elections. We live in a day where anyone can easily publish their views on these issues online, & we don’t always do a good job of truly *listening* to other people. Humility is not a very popular virtue in our day.

1. St. Augustine was once asked to state the central principles of Christian living, his answer was “first, humility, second, humility, third, humility.” He also said, “if you plan to build a tall house of virtues, you must first lay deep foundations of humility.”
2. This is what we see here in Philippians 2. Philippians 2 is a fitting word for our day, because it is not only calls us to humble love but shows us a life-giving example of love in Jesus Christ. My prayer is that...

As we continue to live a *divided* and *tribalistic* world, with many perspectives on various issues, that we as Christians might develop an attitude of humility no matter what our convictions may be. First thing Paul does here is give us a plea for humble Xian love.

The Plea to Christian Love (v.1-5)

1. This plea flows from Paul’s words in **Phil. 1:27** “*Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come & see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, w/ one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel*”
 - a. In the same vein, Paul goes on to further show the *implications* of the gospel for God’s people. The Christian experience of salvation should lead to holy living.
 - i. What is true a believer? V.1, a Christian is vitaly united to Jesus Christ. A Christian has come to know the intimate love of the Savior. A Christian enjoys true fellowship in the Spirit with other believers. And a Christian has experienced the compassion and gentle care of the Christ, that he does *not break a bruised reed, or snuff out a smoldering wick.*
 - b. Those glorious gospel *indicatives* fuel the *imperatives* of how we are to live. Paul is saying that *since* believers enjoy such great privileges in the gospel, they are to show kindness of humble love to one another.
2. “**Complete my joy.**” Paul had brought them the gospel message, now he wants them to show their maturity in Christ by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. This is a call for UNITY in the body

- a. This doesn't mean every believer s to have the same opinions on everything. But they are be united in God's word, in loving one another, & in promoting peace within the body of Christ. ***The problem for some of these believers in Philippi was that they were concerned for truth, but they weren't always concerned about one another's wellbeing. Paul actually calls out two individuals in his letter - **Phil. 4:2** - *I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord*. Imagine being called out by an Apostle for quarreling!
 - i. APP: The truth is, we could all put our names here. You know what it is like to sometimes speak the truth, but *not* in love for others. Especially online, we can forget that person we are arguing w/ is made in the image of God and is at times a brother or sister in Christ.
 - b. Paul is saying to the church, if you have received comfort from your life-giving union with Christ, & have experienced the love for Christ toward you, & rejoiced in the fellowship of the Spirit, and known the compassion and care of Christ, then show your hearts thankful to CHRIST by loving your brothers and sisters in the church. *Since* this is true of you...*this* conduct must necessarily follow.
3. But in **v.3** Paul shows us *two poisons* that eat away at Christian unity. Notice...
- a. Selfish ambition – the desire to be right or seen as right. Self-ambition means we care more about our *own reputation* than other people. This was true of Paul's opponents in **Phil 1:15-17**. They were trying to jockey for power and promote their own agendas. They wanted to share truth, not for God's glory, but for our own glory. Remember the words of Jesus concerning the Pharisees who practice godliness to be seen by men. He said, "*they have their reward.*"
 - b. Conceit – thinking we know it all. We see this lack of humility today, which is expressed in the fact that we *don't listen* well to one another. Whether it be online debates, church squabbles, we don't always follow **Jam. 1:19** which says, "*let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.*" We don't always consider the other side b/c in our conceit we already know what is right. What is at the root of selfish ambition and conceit?
 - i. PRIDE – **Martin Luther** said the essence of sin is *incurvatus in se* (to be curved in on oneself). What is the antidote to these two poisons?
4. The antidote to these to sins is *gospel humility*. As Christians, we know that we ought to be virtuous people, but I think we often tend toward those virtues that are valued by the world – military power, influence, status, and all the rest. But Paul here points us to the way of Jesus, which is the way of the cross.
- a. Paul says in **v.3-4**, *in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interest of others.*
 - b. What does this mean? It means we *genuinely value other people*. We value *who* they are, their *opinions*, their *concerns*. We think more about them, and less about

ourselves. In fact, we listen in such a way that we *forget* for a moment our agendas, our opinions, our concern, our feelings, & we take time to enter into to what they are saying. Tim Keller says it this way, “The thing we would remember from meeting a truly gospel-humble person is how much they seemed to be *totally interested* in us. Because the essence of gospel-humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less.”

5. Do you know people who are just good listeners? Who take genuine interest in others, and who expect to learn something from people? Would those closest to you describe you in this way? We need God’s help in this! HOW can we grow in this kind of humility?
6. It’s *hard* not to walk in pride, in conceit of our own minds, our own opinions, our own preferences. It’s hard to give that all up. How can we grow!? God says this mind is yours *in* Christ Jesus! Next time, we’ll consider how the gospel of grace can *undo* the curve and lift our eyes to God & to the service of others! Until then, may God help us to prefer one another in love.

In a world of so much controversy, may we shine as those who prefer others in love. In a new season of church life, where there are new *hurdles*, *challenges*, and *no shortage* of opinions on how to move forward, even in our disagreements, may we display an attitude of humble love toward one another. Ready to show honor & prefer one another in love.