

*If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

*Phillipians 2:1-11*

I don't believe there is any greater challenge to us as Christians than to count others as more worthy than ourselves. But this is what Christ did, in counting his own life and pleasure as nothing compared to our own. We must act in unity, without seeking to get our own way, without thinking of ourselves as super important. We must look after the interests of everyone else. This does not mean that we stick our nose where it does not belong, but that we try to protect other people and the things that they care for. We must not have factions, or different groups struggling against each other to promote their own will. This is totally foreign to God's plan, in which He only is to be our authority, our will.

Verses 5-11 are in a sense the core of the gospel. This is one of the greatest passages in all of the Bible! It is one of the best descriptions of Christ that I know. First of all, Paul tells us to have the mind of Christ, or to have the attitude that he has been describing. Part of this relates back to verse three, which talks about counting others as more worthy than ourselves. This is an incredible thing that Christ did for us, and Paul describes it further by showing how much Christ gave up for us. He was in a sense equal with God, for He was involved in the creation and made of the same spiritual stuff as His Father. But rather than cling to all of the glory and pleasure of heaven, He chose to relinquish the majority of His power for a time so that He could come to earth as a man and so save man. Paul says He 'emptied' himself; it is as if we would get rid of every possession that we had and went to a foreign country to try to help people there. Christ became our servant; He did not come in a glorious manner, with great pomp and circumstance. No, He came in the most humble manner, seeking to help man and not pad His own account. He became a man so that he could teach man, so that man could have God expressed to him in a way that he could relate to. He came as a man so that He could experience and share with man all of His troubles and sufferings. In this way He could be a proper high priest for us, for we know that He endured all things in this life without sin.

When we think of the contrast that Christ went through to come to this earth, we may compare in our minds our home now to the most vile garbage dump that we can imagine. Think of what Christ must have left in the beauty of heaven, to come and live in the world. This was an humbling experience for Him, and yet He humbled himself even further by becoming obedient unto death. It was not enough that He had to walk on this earth away from His own Father for over thirty years, but the very people that He was trying to save turned on Him and made Him endure the most cruel death imaginable. Truly, this is the greatest act of loving sacrifice that we could possibly imagine. It should prick our hearts and cause us to respond to Him in complete submission and faith. We can ignore Him now, but the day will come when we cannot help ourselves, but will submit to Him totally.

We might think of Christ in His coming to earth as though mankind were in prison, and Christ allows himself to be captured and put in the same prison with us! We are all now in the same predicament, and that is wonderful to know that Christ understands how we feel. But Christ has the power to enable us to escape; He holds the door himself and allows himself to be sent to solitary confinement while we escape. But when the guards check on Him a little later, they find that He also has escaped from an escape-proof room! Christ came to substitute Himself for us, to bear our sin on His back. How can we not be grateful and respond to Him?

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