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Taking the Form of a Servant

[Philippians 2:1-11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202%3A1-11&version=ESV)

**Key Verse 7: “but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”**

Introduction:

Philippians were spiritually active and supported Paul. They were spiritually gifted and alive. But they were poor in unity. There were some divisions. Paul wants to encourage them to be united. Especially, he emphasized having the same mind and love. In doing so, he preached following the great humility of Jesus. He said, “Have the mind of Jesus which is yours in Christ Jesus”.

**Look at verses 1-4.**

**So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

1. What is a common motivation for people in the world? (3a) What does Paul encourage the Philippians (and us) to do? (2-4) What should be our starting point for living in this new way? (1) What is a practical example of what it is like to experience one of the items listed in verse 1?

A.   What is a common motivation for people in the world? (3a)

Selfish ambition and conceit. People are motivated to work hard for their selfish ambition or conceit. They are excited when they have the opportunity to increase their glory, selfish ambition, and conceit.

B. What does Paul encourage the Philippians (and us) to do? (2-4)

**2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others**

Paul talks about “same” mind and “same” love. It is also “one” mind and full “accord”. He emphasized “unity”.

He taught to count others more significantly than themselves in humility. Paul sees the discord and division of Philippian churches, including the two women coworkers (Php 4:2), is a “pride” issue. The solution is “humility”. Pride counts us more significantly than others. Humility counts others more significantly than us.

When we count others more significantly than ourselves, we can look to their interests properly.

C. What should be our starting point for living in this new way? (1)

Verse 1 reads, “**So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,”**

People can become conceited and consider themselves more significant than others when they experience a special blessing from the Lord. Such special blessings are described as encouragement, comfort, participation, affection, and sympathy in Christ. When we experience such special blessings from Christ, we may consider ourselves more significant than others and look down on them. Then division appears.

D.   What is a practical example of what it is like to experience one of the items listed in verse 1?

When we pray deeply, we can experience encouragement in Christ. Such a happening can be a personal one, but it can give us deep encouragement. Another example is participation in the Spirit. When we do, we may even prophesy or see visions.

Additional notes from v.1-4

**So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

The Additional questions.  What is the meaning of verse 1, and why is it important to experience blessings in verse 1? What does it mean to count others more significant than ourselves, and why is this important? Why is it important to look to others’ interests? What is Paul’s intention in saying all these things?

Four things such as (1) encouragement, (2) comfort, (3) participation, and (4) affection and sympathy are great blessings from Christ. But it is easy for the people who have these blessings to lack in taking care of others or just enjoy such blessings for themselves. Paul says having these blessings are great, but they should go to the next step, which is to be united with others with the same mind and love.

Let’s think about four things.

a) Encouragement in Christ. When we come to Christ, we are encouraged through his divine help. This encouragement in Christ is different from human one. When it happens, we are truly encouraged.

b) Comfort from love. Love means Christ’s love. For example, when we are convinced of his love or even hear his voice, “I love you” we are truly comforted.

c) Participation in the Spirit. This is a special experience. When it happens, some people can prophecy or see visions. If it happens, something touches our deep inner being through the Spirit.

d) Affection and sympathy. – This is probably affection and sympathy from Christ.

These four blessings are divine things, and they come from Christ. They (Philippians) were really blessed because they experienced such blessings. So they were spiritually alive and active. We know some churches are dry. But the Philippians were different.

Because of many divine blessings from Christ, Paul was very joyful. But it was not his complete joy. So, he said his joy will be complete if they are “**being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”**

V.3 “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.” Paul says here very clearly it would be better not to do anything if they are motivated by selfish ambition or conceit. In Php 1:17-18 he says if Christ is preached out of selfish ambition, he would rejoice. (Php 1:17-18) But here he said “do nothing out of selfish ambition” because it is not related to proclaiming Christ

**“in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”**

When we count others as more significant than ourselves, we can look not only to our own interests but also to the others’ interests. Basically, we are selfish. So, unless we count others more significantly than ourselves, we may seek interests half for us and half for others.

**V5-8.**

**5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

1. What did Jesus do? (7-8) How was Jesus the best example of someone who humbled themselves to become a servant? (6) How does knowing that Jesus humbled himself and took the form of a servant give us confidence that we can do the same? (5)

A.   What did Jesus do? (7-8)

**7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

Jesus humbled himself and emptied himself by becoming a human, and humbled himself once more to the point of being obedient to the death on the cross. He did not consider himself equal to God, although he was equal to God.

B. How was Jesus the best example of someone who humbled themselves to become a servant? ( 6)

**6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped**

He became a servant because he did not count himself equal to God. He was equal to God. But he did not grasp the equality as his own.

1. How does knowing that Jesus humbled himself and took the form of a servant give us confidence that we can do the same? (5)

**5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,**

Jesus showed the example. And the mind of Jesus is ours in Christ Jesus. Since Christ dwells in us, we can have the mind of Christ. We just need to claim it as our own and practice it.

Additional notes from v.5-8

**5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

In humility, Jesus is our role model, and we need to follow him. Jesus could want the same glory and honor as God because he was equal to God. But he did not do it.

Additional question: What can we learn from Jesus?  What is the nature of Jesus’ humility and his sacrifice?

Verse 6 says “**6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,”.** We want to receive proper honor and respect from others. So we want to seek their recognition and respect and our honor. We are hurt when others do not treat us properly because we seek our glory and honor.

We are created in the image of God. God is full of glory. Therefore, our desire to seek honor and glory is not a wrong thing. [**Romans 2:7**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%202%3A7&version=ESV) **“to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life”**

 But, Jesus gave up his honor and glory due to him and sacrificed them.

a. So the first thing we can learn from Christ is that we should not seek our own interest, honor, and glory although we deserve them.

b. The second thing we learn from Jesus is to put ourselves under everyone.

The definition of a servant is to meet the desire or interest of his master only. A servant lives for his master.  Jesus said, “I came not to be served but to serve” (MK 10:45). Then we can put others’ interests above our interests.

c. Then Jesus became nothing. This is true humility,

d. “Becoming obedient” – this is Jesus' self-denial, obeying God’s will, although it was very hard to deny his desires. In order to obey we also need to deny our desire, although it is very difficult and challenging.

e. Jesus was willing to sacrifice even his own life. To him, there was no limit of his sacrifice.

If we think about Jesus, we cannot have any hint of self-interest or self-seeking . We cannot have any sense of pride. The ultimate foundation of pride is seeking glory and honor for oneself.

**V9-11.**

**9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

1. What will happen to us if we become servants? What happened to Jesus after he humbled himself, even to the point of death? What heavenly principle is being demonstrated? ([Matthew 23:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2023%3A12&version=ESV))

A.   What will happen to us if we become servants?

God will exalt us as we become servants in Christ.

B. What happened to Jesus after he humbled himself, even to the point of death?

God exalted Jesus’ name above all nations, and all people and beings worship Jesus, kneeling down before his name.

C. What heavenly principle is being demonstrated?

**Mt 23:12 12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.**

We all want to exalt ourselves. We all want glory and honor. However, when we try to exalt ourselves, we become ugly, and we cannot have the same mind as others. When we humbled ourselves in God and offer ourselves to God as servants of others, putting ourselves under everyone no matter how challenging it is, God will exalt us. When God exalts us, we will be truly exalted. This can happen even after our life here on earth.

Additional notes from v.9-11

**V9-11.**

**9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

We need to follow Jesus. We must believe the heavenly principle in Matthew 23:12. Otherwise, we cannot follow Jesus’ example because following it would be a losing business for us.

We can learn a couple of things.

a) **“Therefore God has highly exalted him**.” In this world, we compete with each other and seek glory for ourselves. We want to glorify ourselves. But instead of glorifying ourselves, we should follow Jesus’ example and wait for God to exalt us.

b) Jesus put himself below everyone. But God put him above everyone. The principle is this: The more we lower ourselves, the higher God will exalt us.

Here we see how Jesus became Lord and Savior. He became our Lord and Savior through his humility and sacrifice. He did not become the Lord and Savior by his own work. But through the work of God he became.

 How can we be truly exalted and honored? Not by seeking our own glory, honor, and putting ourselves above others, but by putting ourselves under everyone and letting Go exalt us. We need to believe in God that he sees everything and he will reward us accordingly.

People in the world do not believe in God. So, they try to put themselves above everyone else. But we have faith in God. So, we need to follow the heavenly principle and Jesus’ example. If we do, then our church can be fully united. Everyone will seek the interest of others, and complete unity will appear, and there will be no divisions in the church.

1. Application: What does it mean to you to take the form of a servant? What could be a practical example of how you can live this out in your life this week? What about more long-term?

A.   Application: What does it mean to you to take the form of a servant?

I do not demand anything from others. I only see myself as a person who can meet the needs of others.

B. What could be a practical example of how you can live this out in your life this week?

When I serve others or my bible students in Christ’s humility, I can be their servant. It means I am ready to meet their needs instead of my needs.

C. What about more long term?

Have Jesus’ mind which is mine, and keep obeying God. It means obeying God no matter how difficult it is as Jesus did.

[Matthew 23:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2023%3A12&version=ESV)

“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”