

Philippians 2:3-11

As we now turn our attention to the Word of God, we're going to learn from Scripture that we, the saints in Christ Jesus, are not competitors but companions.

We must not strive against each other; we must strive for each other.
I must never do my best to be the best. You must never do your best to be the best.

Why does the Lord Jesus strengthen me to do my best? To act in your best interest.
Why does the Lord Jesus strengthen you to do your best? To act in my best interest.

And what is our best interest that we should seek together for one another?
Our best interest is to be like Jesus Christ, to imitate Him.

Why should we function this way? Because of what's written in Philippians 2:3-11.
So, in your Bibles, turn with me to Philippians 2 and let's read verses 3-11 where Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, writes:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory (selfish ambition or conceit); but in lowliness of mind (humility) let each esteem other better than themselves (count others more significant than yourselves, value others above yourselves). Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others). Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God (did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage): but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion (appearance) as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things (those) in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When we read what's written here, we see the fruit and the root.
Verses 3 and 4 are the fruit and the root is verses 5-8.

Just as there is no fruit without the root, verses 3 and 4 can't exist without verses 5-8.
Why? Because Jesus says in John 15, verse 5:

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Without Christ Jesus, we can't do what's required of us in verse 3.
Without Christ Jesus, we can't do what's required of us in verse 4.
This is why Paul says in verse 5: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*

What's the essential reason for you to *let nothing be done through strife or vainglory* (selfish ambition or conceit); *but in lowliness of mind* (humility) *let each esteem other better than themselves* (count others more significant than yourselves, value others above yourselves)?

The essential reason for doing this is Christ Jesus.

What is the essential reason for obeying verse 4: *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others* (Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others)? The essential reason for doing this is Christ Jesus.

I know we're saying the same thing in several ways and simply repeating ourselves, but it's so vital to recognize that Christ Jesus is the foundation and the fuel for everything we do.

As we pointed out last week, Lord Jesus says in Matthew 10, in the first part of verse 25: *It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.* So when Paul says in verse 5--*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*--he's exhorting/urging us to be like our Master, our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, with the aim to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, let's define what is meant when Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, writes in verses 3 and 4.

Nothing undermines and destroys unity more than pride. Pride sabotages everything. A prime example of this is the older son in Jesus' parable about the man who had two sons in Luke 15.

When the younger came back home with a repentant heart for sinning against heaven and his father, the father went all out to celebrate his son's return, saying to his servants:

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

And Jesus says: *And they began to be merry.* However, the older son wasn't one of them. We found out what all the excitement was about and that his father killed the fatted calf for his younger brother (the family's prized possession), Jesus says: *he was angry, and would not go in.*

When the father came out to plead with his son, the older son give his father an ear full, proudly pointing out that he had served him all these years stayed and never defied him once.

Yet, as soon as his sexually immoral son who wasted his life savings comes home, he gives him the best of everything.

And when the father hears his older son say all this, what was the father's response?

And he said unto him,

Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Notice the father says to his eldest son: *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad*
(It was right that we should make merry and be glad)

The eldest son didn't see that it was right or fitting for them to celebrate his younger brother's return. Why? Because he was blinded by pride. Through his pride, the eldest son tried to sabotage the fitting celebration by not joining in and rejoicing himself.

Based on what he said to his father, the eldest son believed he deserved to be given the fatted calf because, between the two sons, he was the one son who faithfully served and obeyed.

What all it boils down is that he did everything *through strife or vainglory* (selfish ambition or conceit). He didn't, *in lowliness of mind* (humility), *esteem* his brother *better than* himself. He didn't count others more significant than himself; he didn't value others above himself.

The eldest son looked out only for his own things/interests and not the interests of others. He's so wrapped up in his self and own welfare that he didn't have love to rejoice that his brother who was once dead was now alive by the grace of Jesus Christ and who was once lost was now found by the grace of Jesus Christ. No, instead, he had a pity party because he felt cheated.

Are you like this? Do you count yourself as more valuable than someone else and, therefore, more worthy to be honored? Are you so preoccupied with your own interests that when you see the evidence of the Lord's work in someone's life where others are rejoicing, you say to yourself: "What about me?"

Do you see God's blessing upon someone's life as something you're worthy of but deprived of? If so, then you're not following the Word of God.

When I hear or witness God doing something in your life that helps you *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, where I have every reason to rejoice and say--*To him be glory both now and for ever.*--if I see His gift to you or His work in you as something I didn't receive, then I'm guilty of selfish ambition and conceit.

In 1 Corinthians 12, verse 26, Paul wrote to the church of God about the church as a whole: *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

When you read this, if deep down you're thinking or even if it's your first thought, I hope I'm the one who is honored, then you're not in lowliness of mind/humility, esteeming other better than yourself.

When I read what Paul writes here in verses 3 and 4, my mind goes to what he wrote in Romans 9 where he said in such remarkable humility: *I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites*

What's Paul saying here? He's saying: I wish I could be damned in their place so they'd be saved. I wish I could forfeit my union with Christ, where I'd be cut off from Christ and they'd

belong to Him and not be cast out. I wish I could trade places with them and suffer the punishment of God's wrath for their sins so they would not perish but have everlasting life.

The question is this: How can Paul be so humble, valuing others above himself? Paul gives the answer here in Philippians, verses 5-11:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God (did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage): but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion (appearance) as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things (those) in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Being equally God as the Father and the Holy Spirit is, the Lord Jesus took on flesh to be God in the flesh. Yet though Jesus Christ is the Almighty who has power over all flesh, He didn't brandish His divine power for self-serving reasons.

No, instead, Christ Jesus humbled Himself in obedience to His Father's will which was for His Son Jesus to die for your sins, for my sins, and for the sins of the whole world so that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

And Jesus humbly did so through His death on the cross.

Even when Peter tried to prevent the soldiers from arresting and taking Jesus away, even cutting a soldier's ear off, Jesus rebuked Peter and said to him (verses 53-54):

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

Jesus only used His power to submit to the Father's will. Before Jesus died on the cross, we read in John 17:1-5 that Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven and said:

Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Notice how Jesus says to His Father: *as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should (what) give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* Then, Jesus says to the Father: *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

In lowliness of mind/humility, Christ Jesus esteemed us better than Himself. How so? Because God gave His Son Jesus Christ power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as He gave Him and Christ Jesus did just that when He *made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion (appearance) as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things (those) in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

After Christ Jesus made the perfect atoning sacrifice for our sins by shedding His blood through His death on the cross, the Scriptures says that God the Father *raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all* (Ephes. 1:20-23).

As the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 23, verses 11-12:

*But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.
And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased;
and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*