Imitate Christ
Philippians 2:1-11
SS Lesson for 01/27/2019

Devotional Scripture: 1 Cor 2:6-16

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Key Verse: Philippians 2:3
Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

Preparation to Imitating Christ (2:1-4)

Prepare by having consolation in Christ
Commentary on consolation in Christ from Barnes' Notes
Consolation through peace given by Jesus (John 14:27)
Consolation through Jesus' comfort (2 Cor 1:5-6)
Consolation through God's encouragement (2 Thess 2:16-17)

Prepare by having comfort from Jesus' love
Comfort through having complete joy (John 15:10-12)
Comfort in having the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22)
Comfort through encouragement and understanding (Col 2:2)
Comfort in being born of God and knowing Him (1 John 4:7-8)

Prepare by having fellowship with the Holy Spirit
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Mutual partakers of the Holy Spirit (from Adam Clarke's Commentary)
Fellowship or joint participation of the Spirit (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary)
Fellowship with the Holy Spirit through spiritual baptism (1 Cor 12:12-13)
Fellowship with the Holy Spirit through obedience (1 John 3:24)
Fellowship with the Holy Spirit through adoption (Rom 8:15)

Prepare by being tender and compassionate
Compassionate through forgiveness (Eph 4:32)
Compassionate through the God of compassion (2 Cor 1:3-4)
Compassionate through being God's chosen people (Col 3:12)
Merciful to those who need it (Jude 1:22)

Prepare by being united with other believers
Perfectly agreed (from Adam Clarke Commentary)
Think the same thing (from Barnes' Notes)
On one accord (from Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament)
United through harmony (Rom 12:16)
United through endurance and encouragement given by God (Rom 15:5-6)
United through agreement (1 Cor 1:10)

Prepare by being humble
Having a modest mind (from Barnes' Notes)
Humility through grace (James 4:6)
Humility before God (James 4:10)
Humility that is not false (Col 2:17-19)
Humility that comes from godly wisdom (James 3:13)

Prepare by serving others (from Barnes' Notes)

Elements of Imitating Christ (2:5-11)

Imitate Jesus who has the nature of God [Holiness] (5-6)
Having God's glory (Heb 1:3)
Being the image of God (Col 1:15)
God's Divine Nature is seen in His creations (Rom 1:20)
We can also participate in God's Divine Nature (2 Pet 1:4)

Imitate Jesus who is a servant [Servanthood] (7)
God chose Jesus as His servant (Isa 42:1)
Jesus, as a servant, brought the light to the Gentiles (Isa 49:6)
God's Spirit was upon His servant Jesus (Matt 12:18)
Jesus became a servant to confirm God's promises (Rom 15:8)

**Imitate Jesus who humbled Himself in obedience [Humble Obedience] (8)**
- Humility to want God's Will above His own human will (Matt 26:39)
- To Jesus obedience was His nourishment (John 4:34)
- Jesus suffering also brought about His obedience (Heb 5:8-9)
- Jesus came to do God's will (Heb 10:7-9)

**Imitate Jesus who has preexistence (9)**
- Jesus existed as God (John 1:1-6)
- Jesus existed from the beginning (1 John 1:1)
- Jesus existed before all things (Col 1:15-18)
- Jesus existence has no beginning or end (Heb 7:3)

**Imitate Jesus who is Lord [Authority] (10-11)**
- Jesus is Lord because God made Him Lord (Acts 2:36)
- Jesus is Lord because through Him we live (1 Cor 8:6)
- Jesus is Lord because the Holy Spirit testifies to us He is (1 Cor 12:3)
- Jesus is Lord because He confirmed He is (John 13:13)
- Jesus is Lord because the Church is built on this fact (Matt 16:16-18)
- Jesus is Lord because the angels agree that He is (Rev 17:14)

**CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS**

**Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

*Humility: The Key to Unity (2:3-4)*
*Jesus Christ: The Ultimate Standard of Humility (2:5-11)*

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY**

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY**

**Lesson Background and Key Verse**

**Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Experts offer a surprising conclusion about victims of drowning: they often die not because they cannot swim but because they do not know where to swim. Suddenly submerged deep underwater, victims often swim toward where they believe the surface to be, but in fact they are swimming deeper into the water. We can compare that situation to a vital biblical idea communicated in today’s text. Sinful human beings are swimming for their lives, trying to find the surface. But as they swim toward what they think is up—toward power, prestige, wealth, comfort—they are swimming deeper into what will ultimately ruin their lives. The gospel teaches us that the true way up is the way we usually think of as down.

Under his own humble circumstances of Roman imprisonment, Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians. This situation was addressed in the Lesson Context of last week’s lesson and need not be repeated here. Paul wrote, in part, to address the church’s problems with interpersonal conflict (Philippians 4:2, 3). But the core of Paul’s teaching is found in today’s text. Philippians 2:6–11 of our text is poetic in form in that the lines have parallel structure and build to a climax. Many scholars suggest that this is an early Christian hymn. It is easy to imagine the first generation of Jesus’ followers singing or chanting these verses together as an expression of their new, revolutionary faith. In addition to the poetic rhythm of the original text, the content of this passage closely resembles other texts that also seem to cite ancient hymns. Some possibilities in that regard are John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15–20; and 1 Peter 3:18–22. These focus on the nature and work of Christ by highlighting his divinity and preexistence, role in creation, incarnation, painful death, resurrection, and exaltation (although not all these passages contain all these elements). The hymn in Philippians 2 includes most of these elements.
**Key Verse: Philippians 2:3**

*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*

**Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary**

This passage is a continuation of the exhortation begun in 1:27-30. The entire section (1:27-2:18) states what Paul called the saints at Philippi to do. It includes the famous kenōsis or self-emptying passage (2:5-11), in which the Son of God Himself is set forth as the One whose attitude the believer should share.

**2:1.** In 1:27 Paul had written about living the Christian life in harmony with the message on which it is based. He followed that message with a call to show forth spiritual unity. This unity is possible because of the reality of the four qualities mentioned in 2:1. The “if” clauses, being translations of first-class conditions in Greek, speak of certainties. So in this passage “if” may be translated “since.” Paul wrote here about realities, not questionable things. Paul appealed on the basis of (a) encouragement from being united with Christ... (b) comfort from His love... (c) fellowship with the Spirit... (d) tenderness and compassion. “Encouragement” is from a Greek word related to the one Christ used in referring to the Holy Spirit as “the Counselor” (John 14:16; “Comforter,” KJV). It may also be translated “exhortation” in the sense of either rebuke or comfort. Since each believer had received this work of the Spirit, Paul used it as a basis to appeal for their spiritual unity. Also they each had “comfort from His [God’s] love.” God’s love in people’s hearts produces spiritual unity in their lives. “Fellowship with the Spirit” is a result of the Spirit’s permanent indwelling ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19). This may refer, however, to fellowship that comes from the Holy Spirit, just as encouragement comes from Christ and comfort comes from love. Paul also spoke of “tenderness (splanchna; cf. Phil. 7, 20) and compassion.” One of the Spirit’s ministries is to produce within each believer a concern and love for other members of God’s family. This may be received or rejected by a believer, but the Spirit’s work is a reality and is a basis for spiritual unity.

**2:2.** On the basis of what was presented in verse 1, Paul exhorted his readers to show in practical ways the unity which was theirs in Christ. Their expression of that spiritual unity would make his joy complete. Corresponding to the four realities in verse 1 are four specific ways in which their spiritual unity would be realized. They would be like-minded, have the same love, be one in spirit (sympsychoi), and be one in purpose.

**2:3-4.** Paul gave further exhortations, also based on the declaration of the fourfold reality expressed in verse 1. The terms the apostle used reveal an underlying problem in the church at Philippi. The situation Paul addressed evidently was prompted by self-centeredness among certain Christians. Nothing was to be done out of selfish ambition (v. 3). The same word (eritheian) appears in 1:17 to describe the attitude of those who opposed Paul. Without question such behavior is of the flesh and not the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:20, which uses the same word). Vain conceit, meaning “empty glory,” was probably the root cause of their selfish ambition. The two negatives are followed by a positive exhortation: in humility consider others better than yourselves. But, a word of contrast, introduces these words. Humility before God and man is a virtue every child of God needs to strive for. A spirit of pride in human relations indicates a lack of humility before God. Paul exhorted the Philippians to consider others before themselves (cf. 1 Peter 5:5-6). “This will go far toward removing disharmony” (Homer A. Kent, Jr., “Philippians,” in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, 11:122). Paul explained how humility can be expressed (Phil. 2:4). Instead of concentrating on self, each believer should be concerned for the interests of others in the household of faith (cf. Rom. 12:10). Preoccupation with oneself is sin. Christ is the supreme example of humility and selfless concern for others (vv. 5-8). These verses, along with verses 9-11, constitute a grand statement on Christology.

**2:5.** Believers are exhorted to have the same attitude—selfless humility—Christ exhibited in His humiliation and condescension. The word here translated attitude is translated “like-minded” in verse 2.

**2:6-8.** The word translated nature (morphē) in verses 6 and 7 is a crucial term in this passage. This word (trans. “form” in the KJV and NASB) stresses the inner essence or reality of that with which it is associated (cf. Mark 16:12). Christ Jesus, Paul said, is of the very essence (morphē) of God, and in His incarnation He embraced perfect humanity. His complete and absolute deity is here carefully stressed by the apostle. The Savior’s claim to deity infuriated the Jewish leaders (John 5:18) and caused them to accuse Him of blasphemy (John 10:33). Though possessing full deity (John 1:14; Col. 2:9), Christ did not consider His equality with God (Phil. 2:6) as something to be grasped or held onto. In other words Christ did not hesitate to set aside His self-willed use of deity when He became a man. As God He had all the rights of
deity, and yet during His incarnate state He surrendered His right to manifest Himself visibly as the God of all splendor and glory. Christ’s humiliation included His making Himself nothing, taking the very nature (morphē) of a servant, and being made in human likeness (v. 7). These statements indicate that Christ became a man, a true human being. The words “made Himself nothing” are, literally, “He emptied Himself.” “Emptied,” from the Greek kenoō, points to the divesting of His self-interests, but not of His deity. “The very nature of a servant” certainly points to His lowly and humble position, His willingness to obey the Father, and serve others. He became a man, a true human being. “ Likeness” suggests similarity but difference. Though His humanity was genuine, He was different from all other humans in that He was sinless (Heb. 4:15). Thus it is true that Christ, while retaining the essence of God, was also human. In His incarnation He was fully God and fully man at the same time. He was God manifest in human flesh (John 1:14). Some have wrongly taught that the phrase, being found in appearance as a man (Phil. 2:8), means that He only looked human. But this contradicts verse 7. “Appearance” is the Greek schēmati, meaning an outer appearance which may be temporary. This contrasts with morphē ("very nature") in verses 6 and 7, which speaks of an outer appearance that reveals permanent inner quality. The condescension of Christ included not only His birth—the Incarnation in which He became the God-Man—but also His death. And it was the most cruel and despicable form of death—even death on a cross! (v. 8) This form of capital punishment was limited to non-Romans and the worst criminals. No better example of humiliation and a selfless attitude for believers to follow could possibly be given than that of Christ. With this example before them, the saints at Philippi should be “like-minded” (v. 2) and live humbly before their God and each other. God the Father is the subject in these verses, whereas in verses 6-8 God the Son was the subject. Christ’s obedience was followed by the Father’s exaltation of Him to the place of highest honor. God exalted and honored the One despised and rejected.

2:9. Christ’s exaltation and His receiving a name that is above every name was the answer to His high-priestly prayer (John 17:5). The exaltation refers to His resurrection, ascension, and glorification at the Father’s right hand (Acts 2:33; Heb. 1:3). His “name” is not merely a title; it refers to His person and to His position of dignity and honor.

2:10. In keeping with Christ’s exaltation and high name... every knee will one day bow and acknowledge Him for who He really is. Paul stressed the same truth in his letter to the Romans (Rom. 14:11). Both instances reflect Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa. 45:23) of the singular greatness of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The extent of Christ’s sovereign authority is delineated in the three-fold phrase, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. No intelligent being—whether angels and saints in heaven; people living on the earth; or Satan, demons, and the unsaved in hell—in all of God’s universe will escape. All will bow either willingly or they will be made to do so.

2:11. What all will confess is that Jesus Christ is Lord. This, the earliest Christian creed, meant that Jesus Christ is Yahweh-God. One day all will be made to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is all He claimed to be—very God of very God. Unfortunately, for many it will be too late for the salvation of their souls. The exalted place the Savior now occupies and the universal bowing in the future in acknowledgement of His lordship is all to the glory of God the Father.

Major Theme Analysis
(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Preparation to Imitating Christ (2:1-4)

1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy.
2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.
4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.
Prepare by having consolation in Christ

Commentary on consolation in Christ from Barnes' Notes

He appeals to the tender considerations which religion furnished—and begins by a reference to the consolation which there was in Christ. The meaning here may be this: “I am now persecuted and afflicted. In my trials it will give me the highest joy to learn that you act as becomes Christians. You also are persecuted and afflicted (Phil 1:28-30); and, in these circumstances, I entreat that the highest consolation may be sought; and by all that is tender and sacred in the Christian religion, I conjure you, so to live as not to dishonor the gospel. So live as to bring down the highest consolation which can be obtained—the consolation which Christ alone can impart. We are not to suppose that Paul doubted whether there was any consolation in Christ but the form of expression here is one that is designed to urge upon them the duty of seeking the highest possible. The consolation in Christ is that which Christ furnishes or imparts. Paul regarded him as the source of all comfort, and earnestly prays that they might so live that he and they might avail themselves in the fullest sense of that unspeakable enjoyment. The idea is, that Christians ought at all times, and especially in affliction, so to act as to secure the highest possible happiness which their Saviour can impart to them. Such an object is worth their highest effort; and if God sees it needful, in order to that, that they should endure much affliction, still it is gain. Religious consolation is always worth all which it costs to secure it.

Consolation through peace given by Jesus (John 14:27)

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Consolation through Jesus’ comfort (2 Cor 1:5-6)

5 For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.

Consolation through God’s encouragement (2 Thess 2:16-17)

16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Prepare by having comfort from Jesus’ love

Comfort through having complete joy (John 15:10-12)

10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Comfort in having the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Comfort through encouragement and understanding (Col 2:2)

2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,

Comfort in being born of God and knowing Him (1 John 4:7-8)

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.
Prepare by having fellowship with the Holy Spirit

Participation in the influences of the Holy Spirit (from Barnes' Notes)

The idea here is, that among Christians there was a participation in the influences of the Holy Spirit; that they shared in some degree the feelings, views, and joys of the Sacred Spirit Himself; and that this was a privilege of the highest order. By this fact, Paul now exhorts them to unity, love, and zeal—so to live that they might partake in the highest degree of the consolations of this Spirit.

Mutual partakers of the Holy Spirit (from Adam Clarke's Commentary)

If there be an intimate relation established among all Christians, by their being made mutual partakers of the Holy Spirit;

Fellowship or joint participation of the Spirit (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary)

'If any fellowship of (joint participation of) the Spirit' (2 Cor 13:14). As pagans meant those who were of one village, and drank of one fountain, how much greater is the union which conjoins those who drink of the same Spirit (1 Cor 12:4,13). The adjuncts of "fellowship of the spirit." The first (united with Christ) and third (fellowship with the Holy Spirit) mark the objective sources of the Christian life—Christ and the Spirit; the second (comfort of love) and fourth (tenderness and compassion), the subjective principle in believers. The opposites of the two pairs into which the four fall are reprobated, (Phil. 2:3-4)

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit through spiritual baptism (1 Cor 12:12-13)

12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit through obedience (1 John 3:24)

24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit through adoption (Rom 8:15)

15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Prepare by being tender and compassionate

Compassionate through forgiveness (Eph 4:32)

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Compassionate through the God of compassion (2 Cor 1:3-4)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Compassionate through being God's chosen people (Col 3:12)

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Merciful to those who need it (Jude 1:22)

22 Be merciful to those who doubt;

Prepare by being united with other believers

Perfectly agreed (from Adam Clarke Commentary)

Being perfectly agreed in labouring to promote the honour of your Master; and of one mind, being constantly intent upon this great subject; keeping your eye fixed upon it in all you say, do, or intend.
Think the same thing (from Barnes' Notes)
Greek - That you think the same thing. Perfect unity of sentiment, opinion, and plan would be desirable if it could be attained. It may be, so far as to prevent discord, schism, contention and strife in the church, and so that Christians may be harmonious in promoting the same great work--the salvation of souls.

On one accord (from Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament)
Same thing." The expression is a general one for concord, and is defined in the two following clauses: unity of "affection, the same love; unity of sentiment, of one accord." The general expression is then repeated in a stronger form, "thinking the one thing." The King James Version and English Revised Version (1885): "of one mind."

United through harmony (Rom 12:16)
16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

United through endurance and encouragement given by God (Rom 15:5-6)
5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

United through agreement (1 Cor 1:10)
10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Prepare by being humble

Having a modest mind (from Barnes' Notes)
This is one of the effects produced by true humility, and it naturally exists in every truly modest mind. We are sensible of our own defects, but we have not the same clear view of the defects of others. We see our own hearts; we are conscious of the great corruption there; we have painful evidence of the impurity of the motives which often actuate us--of the evil thoughts and corrupt desires in our own souls; but we have not the same view of the errors, defects, and follies of others. We can see only their outward conduct; but, in our own case, we can look within. It is natural for those who have any just sense of the depravity of their own souls, charitably to hope that it is not so with others, and to believe that they have purer hearts. This will lead us to feel that they are worthy of more respect than we are. Hence, this is always the characteristic of modesty and humility--graces which the gospel is eminently suited to produce. A truly pious man will be always, therefore, an humble man, and will wish that others should be preferred in office and honor to himself. Of course, this will not make him blind to the defects of others when they are manifested; but he will be himself retiring, modest, unambitious, unobtrusive. This rule of Christianity would strike a blow at all the ambition of the world. It would rebuke the love of office and would produce universal contentment in any low condition of life where the providence of God may have cast our lot.

Humility through grace (James 4:6)
6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Humility before God (James 4:10)
10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Humility that is not false (Col 2:17-19)
17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. 19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.
Humility that comes from godly wisdom (James 3:13)

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

Prepare by serving others (from Barnes' Notes)

It is the duty of every man to do this. No one is at liberty to live for himself or to disregard the wants of others. The object of this rule is to break up the narrow spirit of selfishness, and to produce a benevolent regard for the happiness of others. In respect to the rule we may observe: (1) We are not to be "busybodies" in the concerns of others. We are not to attempt to pry into their secret purposes. Every man has his own plans, and thoughts, and intentions, which no other one has a right to look into. Nothing is more odious than a meddler in the concerns of others. (2) we are not to obtrude our advice where it is not sought, or at unseasonable times and places, even if the advice is in itself good. No one likes to be interrupted to hear advice; and I have no right to require that he should suspend his business in order that I may give him counsel. (3) we are not to find fault with what pertains exclusively to him. We are to remember that there are some things which are his business, not ours; and we are to learn to "possess our souls in patience," if he does not give just as much as we think he ought to benevolent objects, or if he dresses in a manner not to please our taste, or if he indulges in things which do not accord exactly with our views. He may see reasons for his conduct which we do not; and it is possible that he may be right, and that, if we understood the whole case, we should think and act as he does. (4) we are not to be gossips about the concerns of others. (5) where Christian duty and kindness require us to look into the concerns of others, there should be the utmost delicacy. Even children have their own secrets, and their own plans and amusements, on a small scale, quite as important to them as the greater games which we are playing in life; and they will feel the meddlesomeness of a busybody to be as odious to them as we should in our plans. A delicate parent, therefore, who has undoubtedly a right to know all about his children, will not rudely intrude into their privacies, or meddle with their concerns. So, when we visit the sick, while we show a tender sympathy for them, we should not be too particular in inquiring into their maladies or their feelings. So, when those with whom we sympathize have brought their calamities on themselves by their own fault, we should not ask too many questions about it. We should not too closely examine one who is made poor by intemperance, or who is in prison for crime. And so, when we go to sympathize with those who have been, by a reverse of circumstances, reduced from affluence to penury, we should not ask too many questions. We should let them tell their own story. If they voluntarily make us their confidants, and tell us all about their circumstances, it is well; but let us not drag out the circumstances, or wound their feelings by our impertinent inquiries, or our indiscreet sympathy in their affairs. There are always secrets which the sons and daughters of misfortune would wish to keep to themselves. However, while these things are true, it is also true that the rule before us positively requires us to show an interest in the concerns of others; and it may be regarded as implying the following things: (1) We are to feel that the spiritual interests of everyone in the church is, in a certain sense, our own interest. The church is one. It is confederated together for a common object. Each one is entrusted with a portion of the honor of the whole, and the conduct of one member affects the character of all. We are, therefore, to promote, in every way possible, the welfare of every other member of the church. If they go astray, we are to admonish and entreat them; if they are in error, we are to instruct them; if they are in trouble, we are to aid them. Every member of the church has a claim on the sympathy of his brethren, and should be certain of always finding it when his circumstances are such as to demand it. (2) there are circumstances where it is proper to look with special interest on the temporal concerns of others. It is when the poor, the fatherless, and the afflicted must be sought out in order to be aided and relieved. They are too retiring and modest to press their situation on the attention of others, and they need that others should manifest a generous care in their welfare in order to relieve them. This is not improper interference in their concerns, nor will it be so regarded. (3) for a similar reason, we should seek the welfare of all others in a spiritual sense. We should seek to arouse the sinner, and lead him to the Saviour.
**Elements of Imitating Christ (2:5-11)**

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Imitate Jesus who has the nature of God [Holiness] (5-6)**

*Having God's glory (Heb 1:3)*

3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

*Being the image of God (Col 1:15)*

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

*God's Divine Nature is seen in His creations (Rom 1:20)*

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

*We can also participate in God's Divine Nature (2 Pet 1:4)*

4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

**Imitate Jesus who is a servant [Servanthood] (7)**

*God chose Jesus as His servant (Isa 42:1)*

1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.

*Jesus, as a servant, brought the light to the Gentiles (Isa 49:6)*

6 he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

*God's Spirit was upon His servant Jesus (Matt 12:18)*

18 "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

*Jesus became a servant to confirm God's promises (Rom 15:8)*

8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs

**Imitate Jesus who humbled Himself in obedience [Humble Obedience] (8)**

*Humility to want God's Will above His own human will (Matt 26:39)*

39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”
To Jesus obedience was His nourishment (John 4:34)

34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Jesus suffering also brought about His obedience (Heb 5:8-9)

8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

Jesus came to do God's will (Heb 10:7-9)

7 Then I said, 'Here I am-- it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.' " 8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). 9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second.

Imitate Jesus who has preexistence (9)

Jesus existed as God (John 1:1-6)

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

Jesus existed from the beginning (1 John 1:1)

1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

Jesus existed before all things (Col 1:15-18)

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Jesus existence has no beginning or end (Heb 7:3)

3 Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

Imitate Jesus who is Lord [Authority] (10-11)

Jesus is Lord because God made Him Lord (Acts 2:36)

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Jesus is Lord because through Him we live (1 Cor 8:6)

6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Jesus is Lord because the Holy Spirit testifies to us He is (1 Cor 12:3)

3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is Lord because He confirmed He is (John 13:13)

13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am.
Jesus is Lord because the Church is built on this fact (Matt 16:16-18)

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Jesus is Lord because the angels agree that He is (Rev 17:14)

14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Humility: The Key to Unity (2:3-4)

I came across a great definition of humility this week, attributed to John Newton:

If I ever reach heaven I expect to find three wonders there: first, to meet some I had not thought to see there; second, to miss some I had expected to see there; and third—the greatest wonder of all—to find myself there.41

Paul begins by contrasting humility with its opposites: selfish ambition and vanity. Selfish ambition is what motivated those who sought to take advantage of Paul’s imprisonment (see 1:17). Selfish ambition seeks to gain at the expense of others. Humility desires the advance of others, at our expense. This is the way Paul felt toward the Philippians (1:8-11, 18-26). It is the way Timothy felt as well (see 2:19-22). Pride and ambition are a part of our fallen nature, inciting us to compete with others, rather than to contribute to their well-being.

If we are truly humble, we are not impressed with ourselves, and we are not desperately seeking to enhance our own standing. Paul’s words in the last half of verse 3 are crucial to us, and it is most urgent that we properly understand what he is saying, and what he is not saying! We are to treat one another as “more important than” ourselves. The translations differ here, and some are misleading, in my opinion. A number of them render the verse in such a way as to indicate that we must consider others “better” than ourselves. Our Lord is the model for humility, and we would surely not think that He considered sinful men “better than” Himself. The danger is that we will only consider those “better” than ourselves whom we think are better—and if we are arrogant, that won’t be very many people!

The NET Bible is very careful here, indicating that we are to treat the other person as “more important than ourselves.” This does not mean that in every case they are “more important” than we are. It does not mean that they are “better” than we are. It means, as verse 4 indicates, that we set the interests of our brothers above our own. Their interests are to come higher on our agenda than our own selfish interests.

Let’s imagine that I am a doctor, working in the emergency room of a hospital. It may be my lunch hour, and I am on my way out the door to get something to eat at a nearby restaurant. An ambulance may arrive just as I am leaving, bringing in a street person who has overdosed on drugs. Indeed, this person might even be a murderer. Yet at the moment, his life is in great peril. Without prompt attention, this man will die. Regardless of his previous sins, and without regard for my desire to eat, I give this man my full attention and seek to provide medical assistance to him. At this moment in time, he is “more important than” my agenda and my hunger.

Humility prompts me to serve others, assigning my interests a lower priority than their needs. I should hasten to say that putting the interests of others ahead of my own does not mean that I should be subject to the selfish desires and whims of everyone who makes ungodly demands of me. Sometimes seeking the “best interest” of others calls for a rebuke on my part. Sometimes it means that I must say “No” to a request, or a demand. There are many who would like to inform us as to what constitutes their “best interests.” We must seek the best interest of our children, but they do not necessarily know or appreciate what this should require of us.

Jesus Christ: The Ultimate Standard of Humility (2:5-11)

Paul has been exhorting the Philippian saints to practice unity and harmony among themselves. He has indicated that the basis for such unity is humility, considering the best interest of others more important than our
own (2:3-4). Paul now moves to the ultimate example of humility—our Lord Jesus Christ (2:5ff.). He begins by establishing His position and status, which would give Him claim to certain rights and prerogatives.

Taking into account the additional information supplied by other biblical texts, the essence of verses 2:6-8 might best be summed up this way. Our Lord Jesus Christ has always existed as the second person of the Godhead, and He was actively involved in the creation of this world (John 1:1-3; 8:58; Colossians 1:15-16). He existed as God and was fully equal with the Father in His essence. Even though He was equal with God the Father, He did not seize this as an opportunity to independently further His own interests.

How different our Lord was from Satan. Equality with God was never a possibility for Satan because he was a created being, vastly inferior and subordinate to God. Nevertheless, Satan sought to assert himself and to attain equality with God (Isaiah 14:13-14). This brought about his downfall and will ultimately end in his eternal destruction (Revelation 20:1-10). Satan later tempted Adam and Eve to do likewise, assuring them that in disobeying God by eating of the forbidden fruit, they would gain knowledge that would make them like God (Genesis 3:4-5). It was, of course, a lie, resulting not only in the sin of Adam and Eve but also in the fall of the human race.

Satan sought to do the same thing to our Lord when he sought to tempt Him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-12). Satan sought to persuade our Lord to lay hold of His rights as the Son of God, so that he would act independently of the Father. Our Lord’s humility, expressed by His rebuke of Satan, and in His submission and obedience to the Father, is what Paul is talking about in our text as well.

Though equal with God (or, we might say, equally God), our Lord did not seize this as an opportunity to further His own interests at the expense of the Father. Instead, He “emptied Himself, by taking the form of a slave” (2:7). A great deal of discussion and debate has occurred over this word “emptied.” We know from other Scriptures what it cannot mean. It cannot mean that our Lord set aside His deity, that He ceased to be God when He took on human flesh, or even that He diminished His deity, becoming less God (however that could be). Our Lord did not set aside any of His divine attributes. What He set aside, so to speak, was the pursuit of His personal interests, interests that would have been in competition with the Father.

Here is the best illustration that comes to mind. Let’s suppose that a very successful businessman—Bill Gates, for example—decided to run for the office of President of the United States. Let’s further suppose that he is elected to that office. You can imagine some of the ways that a businessman could seize the power of that office as the opportunity to further his own business interests. He could insist that all government agencies use his products. He could punish foreign countries (trade agreements, tariffs, customs inspections) for not using them. He could use his position and power to destroy his competition. This is why a man who runs for office divests himself of his business interests, usually by placing his business in a kind of blind trust that leaves decisions and control to someone else, making it difficult (if not impossible) to further his own interests by the misuse of his position and power as a public official. The businessman does not give away all that he owns; he simply divests himself of the power to profit from his position.

So it was with our Lord’s “emptying” of Himself. He did not cease to be God; He divested Himself of self-interest, so that He could glorify the Father and bring about the salvation of lost sinners. Our Lord did not reduce His deity by taking on human flesh; He added perfect, sinless humanity to His deity, and this was prompted by His humility.

The humbling process had several facets. The first element of our Lord’s humbling would be His leaving the glory and splendor of heaven and coming to dwell on earth. Think of this for a moment. It would be like owning a chauffer-driven limousine, and choosing to give that mode of transportation up to ride a broken-down bicycle. It would be like living in a castle, constantly attended by servants, always having the finest in food and clothing, and choosing to live in the squalor and poverty in the streets of Calcutta. Since the glory of heaven is beyond our human ability to comprehend it, we have difficulty grasping the sacrifice that was required for our Lord to leave heaven and to live on earth.

But that is not all. Our Lord’s humbling also involved living on earth as a man, living on earth with men. I don’t think we really grasp all that is involved here. I fear we are inclined to think of our Lord’s suffering as being limited to a few hours on the cross. I believe his “suffering” lasted all the years of His life on earth. This is implied by the writer to the Hebrews:

For when he “put all things under his control,” he left nothing “outside of his control.” At present we do not yet see all things under his control, 9 but we see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by God’s grace he would experience death on behalf of everyone. 10 For it was fitting for him, for whom and through whom all things exist, in
14 Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help (Hebrews 4:14-15).

1 For every high priest is taken from among people and appointed to represent them before God, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal compassionately with those who are ignorant and erring, since he also is subject to weakness, 3 and for this reason he is obligated to make sin-offerings for himself as well as for the people. 4 And no one assumes this honor on his own initiative, but only when called to it by God, as in fact Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming high priest; but the one who glorified him was God who said to him “You are my Son! Today I have fathered you,” 6 as also in another place God says, “You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.” 7 During his earthly life he offered both requests and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his devotion. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through the things he suffered. 9 And by being perfected in this way, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, 10 and he was designated by God as “high priest in the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 5:1-10).

Our Lord not only suffered as a man, He suffered by living among men. Think of the agony of living among unbelieving men who were hard-hearted (Matthew 19:8; Mark 3:5; 10:5). Even the disciples of Jesus were hard-hearted (Mark 16:14) and slow to believe (Luke 24:25). We should not be surprised when we read, 17 Jesus answered, “You unbelieving and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How long must I endure you? Bring him here to me” (Matthew 17:17; see Mark 9:19; Luke 9:41).

11 Then the Pharisees came and began to argue with Jesus, asking for a sign from heaven to test him. 12 Sighing deeply in his spirit he said, “Why does this generation want a sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given this generation” (Mark 8:11-12).

Even His closest friends failed to grasp what Jesus taught. When He spoke of His crucifixion, they were thinking and arguing about who was the greatest among them. As He prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, they were thinking about the privileges they would enjoy in the kingdom. Jesus humbled Himself by taking on humanity, by becoming a man; He humbled Himself by living among sinful men. Peter was right when he said, “But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Go away from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord!’” (Luke 5:8). Jesus humbled Himself by becoming a man, and by dwelling among sinful men.

His humbling goes beyond this, however. Our Lord came to earth as a man... He was, of course, without sin, the spotless Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36; 1 Peter 1:19). Jesus could have come as One born of noble blood, but instead He was born into a very poor family. He was born in Bethlehem, and raised in Nazareth, not places of great standing (see John 1:46). But beyond this, He came as a servant, a slave. He “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). The Lord of Glory came to earth as a man, not as a man of nobility, but as a most humble man, a servant.

His humbling is not yet complete. It was not enough for Him to come as a man, even as a servant. He came as the “Lamb of God” who would become sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). He came to bear the wrath of God in the place of lost sinners. He came to die the most cruel and ignoble death possible—crucifixion. It is one thing to come as a servant, but our Lord’s service consisted of being condemned as an enemy of the state, and as a sinner against God. You can’t get any lower than this.

He who stooped so low in His humility was elevated to the highest possible place of honor by the Father. In Philippians 2:9-11, Paul turns to the glorification of our Lord by the Father, due to His humility and obedience. As a result of our Lord’s humility and obedience, God highly exalted Him, giving to Him a name above every...
name. He who dwelt among men, and who was rejected and crucified by men; is the one to whom every knee will someday bow. Every tongue will confess Him to be Lord of all. It does not seem to be only men who will acknowledge Him as Lord, either. Every creature in heaven, on earth, and under the earth will confess that He is Lord— all of this achieving what our Lord intended, the glory of God the Father (2:11).

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/7-ultimate-humility-leaving-comfort-zone-phil-23-11)

**Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Think of events in Jesus’ life. He was tempted to turn stones to bread to satisfy his own hunger (Matthew 4:3). He refused. On other occasions, Jesus faced the opportunity to alleviate the hunger of others. He did so (Matthew 14:13–21; 15:32–38). He refused to use his divine authority for himself. He did not consider equality with God something to use for his own advantage. That mind of Christ has been present from all eternity. How would you describe the direction of your life so far? In your career, family interactions, friendships—is your life about your own advantage or is it about others’ needs? Do you follow the common path of modest selfishness that seems so culturally right, or the Christlike way of lowly, self-giving pursuit of others’ advantage? We are not the first or the worst to think that serving ourselves seems the right way to live. We can point in any direction and see lives governed by that common mind-set. But every part of the gospel story tells us the opposite. To experience life as God designed it, we need to put into action the mind of Christ.

**Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary**

Follow Christ’s Example - Paul wanted to see the Philippians truly loving each other, prioritizing the desires of others before their own, definitely exemplifying Christ. Is it possible to keep a compassionate attitude in a congregation with so many different kinds of people? Disagreements and conflicts inevitably occur in Christian fellowships. To counter these unkind interactions and misunderstandings, Paul held Jesus Christ up as their example: imitate His ways.

Draw upon the Holy Spirit - Jesus always placed the needs of others before His own. How did He endure and continue to pour out God's love? By the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives God's people the ability to go beyond themselves, to love people we might call unlovable.

Be Humble Minded - Paul rejoiced as he heard the reports about the Philippians following his instructions in the letter and fulfilling God's will. The church moved out, like a powerful army advancing against the enemy, holding up Christ's banner. In order to spread the Gospel, each individual needed to value each person in the Body, actively attending to each other's needs. Jesus had the power and authority to wipe out those coming against Him, but He chose to love instead. A humble person says, "I have the ability to retaliate, but I choose to grant you peace." It's easy to lord it over others, but God calls us to walk in grace, extending kindness.

Stay Focused - How is it possible to practice such unselfish behavior? Paul exhorted the church to look to Christ. Jesus lowered Himself from heaven to earth to become a servant. The Son took His obedience to His heavenly Father all the way to the Cross, suffering one of the most shameful, cruel deaths known to man. The Savior set His mind and heart on doing the Father’s bidding— period. As Paul encouraged the church of his day and so all believers, don’t merely collect facts about Jesus, but imitate His humility and servant heart.