

Recap

Last week we discussed the humility of Christ in becoming like you and me, being obedient unto death, and death on a cross for our gain. He not once pulled the power card for his own agenda but rather obeyed his heavenly father and counted others more significant than himself in becoming like you and me and being crucified.

Though we cannot be Christ, Christ's example is the model for our life. In exemplifying Christ, Paul also uses Christ's humility to motivate our obedience and challenge our selfishness. As a result, we as Christians are called to count others more significant than ourself because Christ did that for us.

Read Philippians 2:12-18

I. Why? (why is this lesson important?)

Because Paul just got through telling us some incredible news: that Jesus was highly exalted, to unparalleled supremacy. Therefore we are to serve him no matter what.

Paul is writing to Christians who are being persecuted for being Christian (**Acts 16**). And it is because Christ has been glorified and sits in power, that they may be obedient, not grumble, be a light in darkness, and serve God with joy.

FOR US TODAY in America: We are not physically persecuted but we do experience mild forms of marginalization by the cultural mainstream. Who ascends to prominence in our culture? Secularist, relativist, and individualist.

For example, influential news media have little respect for people who believe that Christ is the only way to God or believe in God's revealed moral absolutes. Media wants to promote organizations who believe all faiths are connected to God. For Hollywood, you are supported as long as you share their opinion that each person determines what's right for him or her.

In your experience, you may not realize the state of our current culture. So mild persecution may look like the possibility of being excluded if you don't fall in line. Will you be sat aside if you believe Christ is the only way to God? Will you be left out if you are a virgin? Will you be excluded if you believe marriage was created for one man and one woman? Will you be ignored if you believe your DNA determines your gender?

II. What? (what is this lesson about?)

First, know **God is at work**

What is the good news in **verse 13**? If we are honest this life is difficult. Not living for self is difficult. It is hard because we are sinners and we care more about ourselves. But there is good news. God has not left us alone. *He is in us. God has given His people the Holy Spirit. So God is at work in us.* That is what we read in **verse 13**.

Second, the Christian lifestyle is **hard work**.

If God is at work then does that mean I can just chill? But in **verse 12** we see that we also are to work. God calls us to work hard too. Yes, our salvation is free but we are not to treat it as if it is cheap. It is valuable because it was accomplished by Christ and it cost him his very life. Secondly, even though our salvation is free, it does not come without personal cost.

A humble lifestyle may cost you something. Considering another's interest before your personal wants, will cost you. Counting others more significant than yourself, will cost you.

We have to intentionally say no to our selfish desires and yes to serving others. It is not wrong to enjoy hanging out with a particular person. But if I do it at the exclusion of others then I may be entering the realm of a self-centered lifestyle. What might your faith cost you?

Third, Rejoice and be Glad in your obedience

What does obedience in a humble lifestyle lead to? Saying no to our sinful, selfish desires is not intended to make us miserable. It is not a buzzkill. Take a look at **verse 17** Paul says this is joy! Joy is found in saying no to sin and selfish ambition and yes to righteousness and counting others more significant. This is not a foreign teaching. At our core, children find pleasure in pleasing their parents.

There is a temporary cost but there is great eternal reward for obedience. Even that is true, the temporary cost is understood in light of God's grace to us in sending Christ. So we come to God with the question, what can I do? (it's not what must I do). It is "what can I do" because God has been gracious to us in giving his only son so that we may have life.

Uh oh, the Old Testament is relevant! Does your christian life resemble the Israelites in the wilderness? Remember, they grumbled against God because they lacked contentment in their circumstances. They distrusted God and thought that he was holding out on them. Is the Christian lifestyle a buzz kill for you?

Fourth, People are watching

Does everyone believe what the Bible teaches? Take a look at **verse 15**. No matter what we are doing in life, we are to care most about Christ's name being known and bringing glory to God. Think back to our brother Daniel. He was placed in the lion's den because he held to his faith in Christ. He chose to worship God and chose His ways. Daniel was delivered and the nations worshipped the one, true living God.

We are to shine like lights before a watching world. We are like the stars shining bright in the night. Remember back to **Acts 16**. Paul was persecuted so the situation seemed to be going south. But once Paul got to jail, what happened? God used him to bring a family into the family of God. He brought salvation to the Philippian jailor and his family.

God is always at work. Christ has unparalleled supremacy. He is King of the Universe. And knowing this changes everything for our lives.

III. Now what? (what do I do with this?)

"The darker the social setting around you, the brighter your Savior shines through you."

We reflect the beautiful, powerful radiance of our Savior to a watching world. Paul is calling us to the hard work of counting others more significant than yourself. He is calling us to obedience to God's ways despite what others say.

Pray not only for our desires to be for obedience, but we also pray that God would strengthen us to be obedient in our lives.