

Humility (Phil 2)

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 4th July 2010

Intro-

- Awoke yesterday to Sarah saying 'they've knocked down our garden wall' -temptation to go and lose the plot with neighbours, but also had a check in my spirit to stay humble and not lose the plot (literally) because a part of the land they owned could block our access and if we were stroppy they would fence it up blocking our rear access completely. We managed to come to a mutually acceptable agreement through dialogue, but this could have been lost if either side was not prepared to exercise humility.
- Humility is a huge key in the Christian life to being an effective disciple of Christ. Without it we end up serving ourselves instead of Christ and we end up spoiling the beautiful relationships God has for us in His body. We will look at the Church in Philippi and how Paul encouraged them to seek after it.

Read Phil 1:15-18; 27-30; 2:1-11

The background to this letter: written by Paul at the same time as he wrote Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon, during his first imprisonment at Rome about AD 60-62. He was under house arrest, and guarded by soldiers, but was allowed visits (Acts 28:30; Phil 4:18) and he could share his faith (Acts 28:1; see also Phil 1:12-14; Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:2-4).

Humility keeps our motives right when serving God- 1:15-18

- There were 2 reactions by Christians to Paul's imprisonment:
 - i) Some realised that Paul was arrested as part of his defence of the gospel (1:17) and they preached Christ all the more boldly because they were encouraged by Paul's example under persecution.
 - ii) Others were pleased he was arrested, as they were actually jealous of his ministry and were in competition with him, and hoped to win more converts than him now that he was banged up (1:16). Paul highlights the root of their problem in verse 16- selfish ambition- they were motivated by pride rather than humility.
 - Those with bad reactions were actually doing the right thing, but with the wrong motives. Their ministry was more about them than about God- they were the 'My ministry' brigade, they were singing 'it's all about me, Jesus, and all this is for me, for my glory and my fame, it's not about You, as if I should do things Your way..'. We laugh at this, but how many Christians today are living in competition to Christians in other Churches, or even within the same Church? How many of us measure our worth by our performance? We sometimes forget that the gifts we have are just that- gifts- we did not earn them but received them freely by God. The Church in Corinth measured people and themselves by their gifts, rather than by character. This led to comparisons- some preferred Paul, others Apollos- Paul explained that this was nonsense as we are all just servants of God and that we should not get puffed up on behalf of one against another, 'for who makes you differ from one another? And what do you have that you did not receive?' (1Cor 4:6-7). Paul however knew that his ministry was not his own doing 'by the grace of God I am what I am' (1Cor 15:10). It is only by God's grace we are saved, let alone able to serve- this should keep us humble. Alex Haley, the author of Roots, has a picture in his office, showing a turtle sitting atop a fence. The picture is there to remind him of a lesson he learned long ago: 'If you see a turtle on a fence post, you know he had some help.' "Says Alex, 'Any time I start thinking, Wow, isn't this marvelous what I've done! I look at that picture and remember how this turtle - me - got up on that post.'"
- We can actually be doing the right thing but with the wrong motives. Repentance is the key to break this when we recognise it in ourselves, and this takes humility.

- Paul in humility just rejoiced that the gospel was being preached more (v18). How would we react? How do we react when we are wrongly judged by other Christians who should know better? Can we, like Paul, rejoice in their ministry even though they have a bad attitude towards us? Forgiveness is the key to break this when we recognise it in ourselves, and this also takes humility.
- In verse 27 Paul says in contrast to those serving out of wrong motives 'let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ'. We can ask ourselves 'is my attitude to what I do in serving Christ worthy of the gospel of Christ?' 'Has it become more important to me than Jesus?'
- God entrusts ministry to those with humility- Moses was more humble than any on the face of the earth- Num 12:3; John the Baptist said 'He must increase I must decrease'- John 3:30. How much can God entrust to us without us taking the glory to ourselves? "I used to think, that God's gifts were on shelves - one above another, and the taller we grow, the easier we can reach them. Now I find that God's gifts are on shelves - one beneath another and the lower we stoop, the more we get!" -F.B. Meyer
- This week look at areas you are serving in, or would like to serve in and honestly review your motives asking God for forgiveness where necessary.

Humility comes from an appreciation of God's love- 2:1-4

- Paul points to the benefits of knowing Christ as a motivation for Christians to exhibit a lifestyle of humility. The 'if's he uses in verse 1 could be translated as 'since' because they are realities that the Christians have already experienced and it is also true of us. Because we too have experienced the benefits of belonging to Christ we too should be motivated towards a lifestyle characterised by humility.
- The first word Paul uses 'consolation' is the same word in John 14:16 to describe the Holy Spirit as another 'paraklete' like Jesus- our advocate, comforter, one who comes alongside us and pleads our case for us. Jesus did this for us as our High priest before God the Father, just like our defense lawyer in court. When we think we're in the right and demand justice God has a way of showing us how He gave us mercy instead of justice because of God's kindness to us. This should lead us to humble ourselves in our conflicts with others and be quicker to offer mercy to them than judgement.
- So we know the comfort of God's Holy Spirit in our lives. Paul goes on to say we also know the comfort of His love, the fellowship of His Spirit and also His affection and mercy. All of these things should motivate us to humility.
- Isn't it annoying when you want to have a go at someone and you end up being nice to them instead? It is the fruits of the spirit -'longsuffering/patience'-Gal 5:22 'love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up'- 1Cor 13:4
- This week ponder again how much you have been forgiven by God and how generous He has been to you. Look for ways you can show generosity to others.

Humility is necessary for Church unity- 2:2-4; 4:2-3

- We all hate to admit when we are in the wrong- some of the arguments in the Big Brother house going on and on about something trivial- me and Sarah too at times, finally humbling ourselves and admitting we are in the wrong and things get resolved- feels so good, that's why Jesus said 'blessed are the meek, blessed are the peacemakers'. Humility diffuses situations and can save us a lot of heartache and pain. Gal 5:15 'but if you bite and devour each other beware lest you be consumed by one another'.
- Euodia and Syntyche Paul implored to be of the same mind in the Lord. Who is God imploring you to be of the same mind in the Lord?
- 2:2 'fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord,

of one mind'. 'Make my day (punk) by actually agreeing with each other'. In the world people resolve when they agree to disagree. The kingdom of God calls for more humility than that- the focus should not be on our disagreement but on our agreement- we agree to agree even though on minors we disagree, our focus is on agreeing together- we are of the same mind- glorifying Christ. Unity releases the power of God- as people are of 'one accord' in the book of Acts things start to happen-Acts 1:14; 2:1; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12. Humility is a precursor for revival.

- 2:3 'do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit (lit. 'empty glory')- this is the world where people promote themselves, feather their own nests. 'But in lowliness of mind let each person esteem others better than himself'- 2:3- the 'after you' mentality which makes people feel accepted, valued and loved. In Corinth during the love feasts the rich people scoffed all the food first before the poor people could get any- humility makes us serve each other instead.

Heaven=long forks but serving each other, Hell=long forks and serving selves but forks too long to feed selves. In old England, the intestines of animals were known as "umbles". After a hunt, the upper class would keep the meat as their own and give the entrails to their servants. It was traditional for the lower class folk to make a pie out of the innards, and the "umble pie" became known as "humble pie" because of their low position in life. The name stuck as a way to describe any disagreeable or humiliating situation. In the Church the humble pie should be shared by all.

A nineteenth century painting shows a long row of beggars waiting in a soup line. They are all ragged and sleazy looking. But around the head of one, barely perceptible, is a halo. One of them is Christ! You may see no halo around the heads of your brothers and sisters in need, yet to serve them is to serve Christ, for the King is hidden in them.

- Over this coming week what crazy acts, motivated by humility, could you do to anyone around you that you may be out of sorts that would really irritate Satan and thwart his plans, but to make heaven sing? Be creative.

Humility was role-modelled by Jesus 2:5-11

- Have same mind of Christ: Humble yourself that you may be lifted up in due time. The question is not whether we will be humbled, but when and how- better now rather than later and better voluntary than forced. 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble' (James 4:6); 'humble yourselves in the sight of God and He will lift you up' (James 4:10). Read Lk 14:7-14 humble people get asked to move up, proud to move down and our humility is also seen by those we invite and hang out with. Jesus became downwardly mobile- we must do the same.
- v6-'Robbery'='holding onto something in a tight fisted way' Was God yet didn't exploit His 'winning hand'
- 'Made Himself of no reputation'- lit. emptied Himself- the 'kenosis'- self-emptying 'emptied Himself of all but love'- from 'And Can it be' by Charles Wesley- still God, but did not exploit His God qualities (e.g. Jesus could have summoned 12 legions of angels to rescue Him from cross Matt 26:53- a legion had between 4500 and 6000 in it).

About 50% of ancient combs are found to contain lice or louse eggs. "Monks were especially attractive for this purpose [searching for ancient lice] because lice were often considered a sign of a saintly way of life. Pursuant to their ascetic philosophy, early Christian hermits and monks often regarded louse infestation as a sign of humility. Even the emperor Julian the Apostate (A.D. 331-363) boasted of his unkempt appearance and his shaggy beard with lice scampering through it as if the whole thing were a thicket of wild beasts. St. Francis of Assisi (A.D. 1182?-1226) is said to have called lice 'pearls of poverty.'"

- God became a man to reach men & women- how humiliating. This is called being 'incarnational'. Are we prepared to become like people (without sinning) to reach them? Paul was 1Cor 9:19-23.

During Sunday school, a teacher told the children in her class about the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer praying in the temple (Luke 18:10-14). She said that the Pharisee prayed, "God, I thank You that I'm not like other people," while the tax-gatherer said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." The teacher explained how the pious, self-righteous attitude of the Pharisee caused him to look down on the tax-gatherer. At the end of class, she asked one little body to close in prayer. He prayed, "God, I thank You that I'm not like that Pharisee."

Humility will make us look for ways to relate to people and enter into their world in order to show them Christ's love. Are we prepared to go clubbing in Brynmawr to

reach a vast percentage of Brynmawr? You would think that the body of Jesus was really handsome, like some of the paintings and films. Is but 53:2 says He had 'no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him'- He probably had a big nose and had to go through all the bodily functions we go through.

- God became a bondservant- did whatever He was told- by God the Father. He became obedient to Him even to death. There is a saying 'If I said jump off a cliff would you?' Jesus literally did for God the Father. He was even prepared to be obedient to earthly parents (Lk 2:51) and we often make such a big deal about any authority figures God would have us submit to. Jesus showed His obedience to the Father in serving His disciples and washing their feet (John 13:1-17).
- Jesus was obedient to undergo the worst of deaths-
Roman Crucifixion was a gruesome form of capital punishment used by several ancient nations, especially the Romans. Crucifixion was incredibly painful, hence the term excruciating. Death by Roman crucifixion was a result of the whole body weight being supported by the stretched arms. When nailed to the cross there was a massive strain put on the wrists, arms and shoulders often resulting in a dislocation of the shoulder and elbow joints. The rib cage was constrained in a fixed position, which made it extremely difficult to exhale, and impossible to take a full breath. The victim would continually try to draw himself up by his feet to allow for inflation of the lungs enduring terrible pain in his feet and legs. The pain in the feet and legs became unbearable and the victim was forced to trade breathing for pain. The length of time required to die from crucifixion could range from hours to a number of days. The main cause of death by Roman crucifixion was due to asphyxiation. The punishment of Roman crucifixion was chiefly inflicted on slaves and the worst kind of criminals. Crucifixion was considered a most shameful and disgraceful way to die and condemned Roman citizens were usually exempt. The manner and process of crucifixion was that the criminal, after sentence had been pronounced, carried his cross to the place of execution, which was outside the city with their crime put around their neck for mockery. The practice of scourging appears to have formed a part of this, as with of other capital punishments among the Romans. The Romans used a whip for scourging called a flagrum, which consisted of small pieces of bone and metal attached to a number of leather strands. The skin of the back was ripped to the bone from scourging. The criminal was next stripped of his clothes and nailed or bound to the cross. The latter was the more painful method of crucifixion, as the sufferer was left to die of hunger. Instances are recorded of persons who survived nine days.
- Because Jesus humbled Himself further than any other, God raised Him higher than any other. In the same way to the measure we choose to humble ourselves in this life, that will be the measure God raises us in the life to come. Jesus went to the lowest place in humility for our salvation, how low are we prepared to humble ourselves to serve Him in gratitude?

I am persuaded that love and humility are the highest attainments in the school of Christ and the brightest evidences that he is indeed our Master. John Newton (1725-1807)

Summary

- Humility keeps our motives right when serving God, comes from appreciating God's love, is necessary for unity and was role-modelled by Jesus.

Song- *I give you all the honour/Jesus at Your name we bow the knee/When I survey*