
UNBROKEN JOY
THE ULTIMATE DISCIPLESHIP PART 2
Philippians 2:5-11

We find ourselves today at one of those mountain peaks, a majestic passage of scripture. Our focus will be verses 9-11, but I would like to go back to verse 5 and read beginning there to provide the first portion of this scripture as a context. So let's begin. Chapter 2, verse 5 of the book of Philippians:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

ESPN just presented a piece, an article on Arian Foster. Arian Foster is an exceptionally talented athlete, a professional football player. The article caught my attention because it talks about the fact that Arian Foster is an unbeliever. In fact, he has just identified himself, his name, his story with a group called Openly Secular. They exist to make people aware and sensitive to the presence of unbelievers, or secular people as they call themselves, within society. Foster has identified himself with this particular group.

Part of what caught my attention about this article is that it portrays Foster as finding it difficult to be a non-Christian in professional football. In other words, there is an association that's assumed, that's made between Christianity and the NFL. Now, that was surprising to me. I, really, personally have not seen the NFL as a Christian organization. It seems that its members are constantly being put in jail. They are participating in domestic violence and steroids and drugs. I

know that that's only a percentage, perhaps even a very small percentage, but they are in the media all the time.

So I approached the article with some skepticism. But when I got into the article, I found it really interesting and I think it has something to say to us. I think Arian Foster's story, though it needs to be qualified and filtered, perhaps, has a message for Christians. He has played his entire collegiate and professional career in the Bible Belt. He played college at Tennessee. He was there in Tennessee, and his entire NFL career has been in Texas. He plays for the Texans.

You need to understand that within those contexts, to start with, there would be a more public expression of Christianity. If he played for the Jets, well then we know.....or the Patriots. According to Foster, he only recently made his unbelief public, not that he has ever hidden it. People that would have been close to him, the players that would have been close to him throughout the years would have known that about him, but he only made it public because he was afraid of how it might affect his career, the perception of him. And I thought, "Wow, he's really presenting himself as persecuted or treated unkindly because he is an unbeliever in a context where there are a lot of believers."

Now it would be easy to discredit his story. It would be easy as a Christian. As you read the article. one could say, "Oh wait – that's not accurate, and that's a misrepresentation." If you know anything about Arian Foster you know he has had issues and you could discredit him by highlighting that. That's the easy thing to do. I think the more difficult thing to do is to listen, and to learn. And I believe that it's not an uncommon perception that Christians can be arrogant in the expression of their faith, or insensitive. So this passage, which calls us to follow the example of Jesus, to walk in humility, I think is very timely for us.

In the article, there is an exchange that took place. It's told from Foster's point of view. He overheard, according to him, two players, two fellow teammates talking about immigration. One said to the other, "We should close off the border with Mexico." Well, Arian Foster's mother is Mexican American, so he said to these two guys, "Hey, aren't you guys Christians?" They both

said that they were, so Foster then said, “Didn’t Jesus say, ‘Love thy neighbor?’ And isn’t Mexico our neighbor?” It’s an interesting application of the words of Jesus, but nonetheless it is an interesting response and fun just imagining that exchange.

The article continues. The two individuals then began to argue with Foster, telling him he was missing the point, that they weren’t talking about religion, that this wasn’t about religion. To which Foster said, “I’m not saying this to throw it in your face. I’m not religious myself, but I agree with a lot of the core tenets that Jesus held.”

This is fascinating. Again, we are hearing it from Foster’s perspective, so we have to take it for what it is. I don’t think it’s correct to say you have to hold to a certain view on immigration based on the teachings of Jesus. As Christians, we may disagree on this issue. We may disagree on what the immigration policy of the U.S. should be. I think there is latitude to do that as Christians. However, I do believe that as a Christian, your view on immigration should be informed by your faith. You should be working to apply the teachings of Jesus. You should not say when you talk about immigration, “Well, this is not religion; therefore, whatever Jesus taught us and whatever scripture has to say doesn’t apply.” I don’t think that’s the correct approach. More importantly, *much* more importantly, it is the spirit with which we approach these discussions. It’s our attitude. I do not think it is helpful for Christians to insensitively post things in social media and say things about “them” and “us.”

Think about it. In this passage, we have the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus, pre-incarnate, pre-existent Jesus, the Son of God in all of his glory, the creator of the universe became a man and emptied himself. He humbled himself to become a servant, to become obedient to the Father, even to the point of death, death on a cross, death which was for you and me, to save us as we were enemies of Christ. *This is the gospel!* And this gospel is held up to us in the passage as a model, as an example. Paul was saying, “Follow your savior. Follow your Lord. Follow him! Act like him.” So whereas we may have strong views about moral issues, and family, and sexuality, and then other issues which are very relevant to our day, let us express them according to the mind and attitude of our Lord Jesus. “Have this mind among yourselves.”

I think it is proper for us to listen, and not dismiss those who even at times bring criticisms to us. This passage, as we said in our previous study, is given to us as a model. The ESV study bible, for example, records these words: “Jesus is the paradigm of genuine spiritual progress.” Jesus is the paradigm. He is the model. He is the way of seeing, perceiving genuine spiritual progress. “Not a self-aggrandizing struggle for supremacy, but a deep love for God and neighbor, shown in deeds of service.”

Normally when we hear the gospel, we don’t emphasize, “Go and do what Jesus did.” No, no, no. In fact, we want to say that you are not saved by works. Don’t try to live like Jesus until you just come and trust in Jesus and receive the gift of salvation. In fact, it would be a sin to insist on your own works and your own following of Jesus as the means which saves you. We cannot save ourselves. We need a savior. If you are here today and you are not a Christian, the message would be: Stop. Trust in Jesus. Humble yourself before him and receive the gift of salvation.

So, unusually so, this passage makes an application and has an emphasis which is not common in scripture. It’s what we would say in the overall message of scripture is a secondary application of Jesus’s life. But it’s an important one. We are to follow the example of Jesus. We are to live as Jesus lived. We are, in the words of Peter, “to walk in his steps.” So here’s how this passage is going to help us today, in several ways.

- I. It is **timely**. I think it brings a message for us culturally that’s very relevant.
- II. It’s also very helpful, very **practical**. We know that the call to humility is biblical and it’s right. But we don’t always know how to do humility and as we’ve said frequently in the last few weeks, sometimes as we focus on humility and we get all turned in, we become more focused on self and the end result is that we become more prideful. It’s so, so practical to see Paul apply the example of Jesus as a model for us to follow.
- III. So, it’s timely, it’s practical, but it’s also very **personal**.

I am concerned that you might be here today and you hear this message. Okay, Paul is addressing disunity. He is addressing pride. He is talking to us about humility and you may be in

a situation where you say, “I’m just not sure that’s going to help me. I’ve got real issues. I’m in sexual addiction and I’m tied up in sexual sin. I’m so ashamed of it that if others knew, I would be embarrassed to tell them. Or you might be here and say, “You know, this is great. I’m sure that this is all good spiritual truth, but you know, I’m having trouble in my marriage, or I’m having trouble dealing with this issue.”

What’s interesting is that whatever your particular focus is this morning, whatever is urgent to you, this passage is relevant. The scripture tells us, “God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.” Pride is what C.S. Lewis called “the great sin.” He and many others have taught us that it’s a root, it is *the* root at the heart of sin. Many times we cannot address our addictions, our broken relationships, our broken family, our lack of provision because of a root. We are not even seeing the connection between our own pride and the way we are controlled by what we might call “surface sins.”

So this passage helps us in many regards and it’s a part of what we have said is a model. Let me remind you of the first three aspects of this model that we looked at last week:

- I. Verse 5: **Have this mind.** In some ways, this first point makes the point that Jesus is being presented to us as the model, but I’ve listed it as a specific point in this regard. The battle begins in your thinking. It begins at the heart level, and in your thinking and embracing the lifestyle of Jesus. It’s more than superficial acts of service. It’s a way of thinking.
- II. **Empty yourself.** In particular, this is expressed by serving. As God, Jesus emptied himself. Then...
- III. **Humble yourself.** This, in particular, is expressed by obedience. As a man, Jesus humbled himself. He obeyed God the Father, even to the point of death, even death on a cross. This is the example of Jesus that we want to follow. **Have this mind. Empty ourselves. Humble ourselves.** And today, the summary of verses 9-11 is this:
- IV. **Live for Christ.** Live to know and exalt Christ.

It was somewhat difficult to come up with this fourth and final aspect of the model because verses 9-11 are difficult to apply to our own lives. What we have here is the exaltation of Jesus. Jesus humbled himself. He emptied himself. He became a servant, even to the point of death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him. The Father exalted him. Now, the action has changed. In the first part, it's Jesus doing the action, emptying himself, humbling himself, becoming a servant. Okay, we kind of step into that to say I follow that model, I follow that example. But now, the language changes. The first word of verse 9 clues us in: therefore. In light of what Jesus did here, the Father has exalted him. We have here what we call a pattern of scripture: the *humiliation and exaltation*, in this case, of Jesus.

I think we know that we are not individually going to be given a name that is above every other name. It would be improper for us to look for a literal fulfillment of this model. People are not going to bow down to you and call you, "Lord." But, every knee will bow before the Lord Jesus Christ, and acknowledge him, confessing Jesus Christ is Lord. Not all as believers, but all will acknowledge his sovereignty, his majesty, his lordship. There's a lot that we are not told about, the specific details of how history will be concluded, about the climax of where we are going in history, about the end. But we are told this much clearly: Jesus will be exalted and recognized as Lord.

Humiliation and exaltation. Today we come to this exaltation portion. We are going to apply it to our model and we want to answer several questions:

1. **What does it mean** when we talk about exaltation? How does it apply to our lives, the exaltation of Jesus?
2. **How do we do it?**
3. **Why is it important?**

We take this difficult idea of exaltation unique to Jesus and yet there is an application to us. Let's see if we can flesh it out as we talk about how it applies to our life. Let's begin with the question: **What does it mean?** When we say Paul is presenting to us Jesus as a model to follow, we

understand the humiliation aspect. Why? What? How? Let's answer those questions, the first one being: What does it mean?

Well, it means first of all this: that **God is pleased with us**. That's the implication of Jesus' actions. He humbled himself. He became a servant. Therefore, God highly exalted him. I think the first general principle that we want to apply to answer this "What does it mean?" question is: When we follow the example of Jesus and walk in humility, when we go through the daily exercise of emptying ourselves of self, dressing ourselves to serve, focusing on obedience, it pleases God.

This pattern is found throughout scripture. Jesus himself in Luke 18:14 says, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." James 4:10: "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." 1 Peter 5:6: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you..."

We have here the words of Jesus, James, and Peter focusing on this pattern of humiliation and exaltation. When we humble ourselves, God is pleased. We have this pattern that God will show his favor and blessing in response to that. So the first thing it means when we say, "What's the significance?" is, well, there is a similar significance to what Jesus experienced. He humbled himself, therefore the Father exalted him.

The second aspect of this, which I think is very important, is that it means for us that life and everything is all about Christ. **It's all about Christ**. You would expect Paul to not necessarily change such a focus to where now we really, in verses 9-11, almost forget what he is doing. He is so taken up with who Christ is and the exaltation of Christ that we almost forget that he is in the middle of giving us Christ as an example to follow.

This has been an issue for me many times before. I will be reading through Philippians, Chapter 2, and thinking there is a problem of disunity. Paul is addressing disunity. What's the problem underneath disunity? It's pride. It's selfish ambition. It's vainglory. It's wanting personal glory. The response to that is humility. Count others more significant than yourselves. Look, Jesus is

the ultimate example. Follow his model. You are reading through. It's making sense. And then you get to this: "therefore God highly exalted him," and he is in this place of exaltation. Many times I have just found myself saying, "Okay, Lord, I'm not tracking at this point in terms of how this fits in the model." I think we need to understand it in light of the wider context of Philippians and Paul's emphasis, where now he is just speaking out of his own mission, his own purpose statement. **It's all about Christ.**

You remember Philippians 1:21 – we studied this glorious verse. It's one of our bookmarks. "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Philippians 3:8-10, something similar, but now Paul is breaking down what it means to know Christ. He says, "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Skip to verse 10: "...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death..." Here is what Paul is saying throughout the book of Philippians: Listen, as a Christian we have joy. We called it "Unbroken Joy" to summarize Paul's great message, and it's found in Christ, only in Christ. The Christian lives for Christ. He lives to know Christ. He lives to exalt Christ. He lives to experience the glory of Christ.

So when we are reading about how Jesus is humbling himself and emptying himself and we get to this glory part, we are like, "Okay, I know it's not about me. It's about Christ, and about Christ's glory." Right. Exactly. So here is what Paul is saying. He is saying, "Listen, you humble yourself. The Father will be pleased and he will meet that with his response. But don't forget that the greatest joy and all joy and all your blessing and all your reward is found in knowing Jesus Christ." We live to know him. We live to exalt him. We experience greater joy the more Christ is exalted. The more we are individually exalted, the less joy. The more Christ is exalted, the more joy.

That's just counterintuitive. I don't know about you, but I kind of like to be exalted. I like to be fussed over, at least a little bit. I like it when people talk well about me. I don't like it when people talk poorly about me. We read Arian Foster's story and we want to get defensive. We want to react. We want to....it's counterintuitive. But we also know from experience how when we pursue our own glory, when out of selfish ambition and pride we pursue, "It's about me," we lose peace,

we lose joy. We welcome in anxiety and fear. So what does it mean? **It means when we humble ourselves, God is pleased and it points us back to Christ and his exaltation.**

Okay, the second question is “**How?**” How do we live this out? If I’m not going to be exalted as Jesus is exalted, how will God the Father express his pleasure in my life? There are three answers to that. The first and the most important is this: **We look for eternal reward.** We live for eternity. We are not expecting personal full reward in this life. Paul will give a little bit more specific expression to this idea in Chapter 3, verses 20 and 21, where he writes: “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

Do you hear Chapter 2, verses 9-11 being echoed here? Jesus is going to be exalted. Every knee will bow. There is coming a time when the authority, the lordship, the majesty of Jesus will be fully, perfectly expressed. Everything will be subjected to him. And in that moment, if you are a follower, a believer of Christ, you will receive a transformed body. I will lose the back brace in eternity. I hope to lose it a lot sooner. You will get a glorious body. But, if you believe that you can totally, by faith, reject the impact of aging, that’s a lot of faith. That’s a lot of faith, and it’s not especially biblical.

Christians, I understand that we have ambitions and plans. We have financial goals. We have career goals. Last week’s message and this message are not intended to say that there’s never a place for godly ambition and planning and strategy. But we must ask the question, “Is my treasure in heaven? Am I living for that reward?” That is the primary fulfillment of the exaltation of Jesus. We will be with him. We will see him face to face. We will receive transformed bodies. And we will live gloriously with him. So, **how** do we experience this? That’s #1.

#2: Well we read, remember, Philippians 3:8-10, where Paul said, “I want to know Christ. I want to know him in his resurrection power and share in his sufferings.” And so you see where we are

going with this. #2 is: **We will walk in resurrection power.** To some degree, God shows us his favor now. He shows us his pleasure now. We experience answered prayer. We ask God to heal us. We ask God to help us. We stand in the middle of the service and we bring our requests to God, not just because we want to say, “God, help us get through a tough time.” We do pray for that. We do pray that God would strengthen us from within and if he doesn’t change the circumstances, well, “Help us, Lord. You’ve got a purpose in this.” But we also pray for God to bring change. We pray for him to manifest his resurrection power.

Perhaps the best illustration of this is found right here in Philippians. Where is Paul writing from? He’s writing from prison. And in Chapter 1 he is telling us, “Here I am – in prison. But don’t worry. I’m going to get out. I’m absolutely sure of it. God is going to take me out. By the way, if he doesn’t, to die is gain.” Right? #1 – **we look for eternal reward.** If God says, “No, you are going to die right there in prison” – praise God! I’m going to heaven! I’m just punching out early, right? I am going to be with him. But Paul, praying, believing for what he believes to be the most fruitful, obvious blessing, says, “You know what? I’m sure God is going to get me out of this place.”

So we do pray and walk in by faith God’s resurrection power. Why is it phrased that way before we give the third point here? It’s phrased that way because Jesus has paid the penalty of your sin. If you are a Christian, you are forgiven. In one sense, all that is represented by sin and destruction, the bad things in your life are a consequence of living in a fallen, sinful world. In one sense, all of that is paid for in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus which was received, and is vindicated in the resurrection of Christ. Just as Jesus came out of the grave, conquering the consequence of death, there is a place where God manifests his victory over sin and its consequences in the lives of believers, and we should humbly ask God to bring his blessing in that regard.

The third way that we experience this – it’s the one we don’t want to hear, but it’s very important – is we share in his sufferings. **We share in the suffering of Christ.** Paul said, “Listen, my great aim in life is to live for Christ. To live is Christ. That’s what my life is about. And I want to know him. I want to exalt him. I want to know him. I want to know him and the power of his

resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering.” There are times where we know Jesus so personally, intimately, in the place of suffering, where we don’t experience him in any other way. That is a reality that we really don’t want to hear, but it is biblical, scriptural truth.

I was just trying to get ready in one more step, so I made my wife and some of my kids listen to this sermon last night. What that means is that we talked about it at the dinner table for five minutes. And to Bonnie, who is here, just having gone through the death of our dear friend and her husband Dennis, I thought about this truth. I thought about the first truth: He is now with Christ, face to face, not suffering, as he did for six and a half years with cancer. We wanted God to demonstrate his resurrection power. We prayed for that. I think he wanted that. I know he wanted that. God in one sense prolonged his days six and a half years with pancreatic cancer. But God said, “No Dennis. You are going to know me intimately and personally and all those who walk through this with you will share fellowship with Christ in his suffering.”

Gordon Fee has said, “Through our suffering, the significance of Christ’s suffering is manifested to the world.” Just consider that for a moment. It’s a very helpful sentence. When you suffer, when you fellowship with Christ in suffering, you are not adding anything to the cross. The cross was perfect. It was sufficient. There is nothing lacking. But when the Christian goes through difficulty, though we do it imperfectly, fellowshipping with Christ as we go, there is something that the world gets to see. The glory of Christ and the significance of his perfect suffering are manifested in the world that we live in. This is part of what it means for us to walk with Christ in this world. We walk as he walked. We live as he lived. *So we pray in full faith for the manifestation of his resurrection power, and we trust him for grace to walk through suffering and to fellowship with him as we do.*

The third point is very short, but very important. **Why?** Why is it important? Why is it important to take the exaltation of Jesus as a part of this model and work out how we experience it in life? **It’s because it guards us from two extreme errors.** If, as a Christian, you will live your life ultimately for the reward of heaven, believing God for both resurrection power and to know him in suffering, then you will know protection from two terrible errors. **The first error is resignation.** It’s going through life, going through sickness, going through trial, going through

difficulty saying, “What does it matter? Why even pray? God’s going to do what God’s going to do. God’s just going to beat me down.” It’s taking verse 5-11 and cutting off verses 9-11. It’s cutting off the second portion. It’s just saying, “You know what? God just wants to empty me and beat me down and make me a doormat and make life miserable. Well just bring it on, God. What next bad thing could happen? How could it get worse?” Don’t ever say that. It can always get worse.

One error is we just stop living. We stop planning. We stop living for the glory of God. We stop expecting. We stop believing. We think all God wants is suffering. **The other error is triumphalism.** Now, that’s a big word, but it’s a word you should know. It’s used popularly in theological terms. It’s this idea that says, “Well, my belief is superior, therefore it’s always going to go well for me. I always win.” Right? What’s wrong with you, Arian Foster, that you don’t believe like I believe? You will soon see that I will be a better running back than you are because I’m a Christian. Well, let me just tell you that there are a lot of Christian running backs that aren’t half the running back Arian Foster is.

Triumphalism is false. There are churches right now who teach it. Christ suffered so that you don’t have to. Christ suffered so that life is always easy and you’ll always be rich, and you will always be, always be, always be...you’ll always win. That attitude, I think, is part of what is expressed, called, identified as arrogance by individuals like Arian Foster and others. It’s contrary to the life and example of Jesus, who entered into a sinful, fallen world to say, “I’m going to live here as a servant. I’m going to humble myself. I’m going to empty myself and live here to serve and to obey the Father.”

So there are these two errors. One is a total lack of faith, and one is a misapplication of faith. When we understand that we are to follow the example of Jesus, daily humbling ourselves, emptying ourselves, focusing on serving, focusing on obeying God, that it will please God, we will know his favor. *We don’t live in just suffering, but we also have a biblical doctrine in place for it.*

Church, I want to close this message out and tell you that in many ways I see you doing this so well. I see you coming alongside people in the midst of trial, standing, believing, comforting.

Unbroken Joy – The Ultimate Discipleship Part 2

Philippians 2:5-11 | Sunday, August 16, 2015 | By Brian Brookins



There are many times I see it in so many of our people. And as a corporate identity, you are getting it right so often. You are believing God, but you are also suffering to the glory of God when that's what God wills, and I want to commend you. I want to tell you that you have a reputation beyond your size, beyond where we are in our community, as being a safe, loving place. I know we are not perfect. But find strength from this passage to believe God to do glorious things in your life. Know his contentment, because it's about him and not yourself. Then stand back and watch him do glorious things.