

The Cost and Benefits of Unselfish Living (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] You know, from the time we were born, we do whatever we can to get our needs met. Now, as infants, it's just natural, normal for us to cry until mama comes to feed us or change us. Well, as we grow up, become children, teenagers, we begin to think in terms of, I'm going to get what everybody else is getting around me. And so as children, teenagers, we demand, we're going to get everything that our brother and sister gets. We're not going to be left out. They're not going to outdo us. As adults, we work, save, borrow, do whatever we can to get the best job, biggest house, newest car. We can afford or get. Now, I want you to think about that progression. We start out as infants just using our survival skills.

[1 : 09] That's the way God made us. We cry out. We get attention. We let people know we have needs and they can come and meet our needs.

But it doesn't take long as we get a little bit older that our sinful, selfish nature begins to kick in. And we learn to push our way to the front of as many lines as we can with little to no regard for the people around us.

Long before we ever reach adulthood, we become experts at being selfish and self-centered, don't we?

You know, that explains why we have trouble, at times at least, getting along with people. It's why we have conflict at home. It's why there's sometimes conflicts at church.

Conflicts at work, at school, even out in the community. Now, after we become Christians, we have the Spirit of God living within us to prompt us, cause us to desire and actually be able to please God.

[2 : 26] We have the Word of God that tells us how we can please Him. So as Christians, with the Spirit of God and the Word of God, we have a lot of help to restrain our sinful tendencies.

We have a lot of help to become more self-giving, don't we? More looking out for the interests of other people in addition to our own.

But it's hard not to be selfish, isn't it? I mean, it's just hard every day to go all day, every day, and never be selfish.

Sometimes we just fall back into our old habits, even as committed Christians. We know better and we don't want to just ignore people, push yourself forward.

But it's just hard not to look out for me first. That's why we're commanded, as we saw last week in Philippians chapter 2, verses 1 through 4.

[3 : 36] We're commanded to be unified, to be humble, to be unselfish in our relationships with one another in the church. And we spend a lot of time applying that to relationships in the home.

Well, today I want us to move on in Philippians 2. We're going to look at how Paul drives home the point of living an unselfish life by telling us to follow the Lord's great example of His unselfishness.

And then we're going to look next week in verses 9 through 11 of Philippians. We can live an unselfish life. It's costly, but the benefits one day will make all of our sacrificing worth it.

But for now, let's look at Philippians chapter 2. We're going to read together verses 5 through 8.

We're looking today and next week at the costs and benefits of unselfish living.

Look at it in verse 5. We're talking about Jesus.

[5 : 12] The life He lived before He came to this world and in this world. How do we go about living this kind of unselfish life?

Well, Paul tells us first, we need to look to Jesus as the ultimate model for what it means to be unselfish. Jesus is the ultimate model.

He may not be the only model in your life. There may be some people that live with you or just stand out to you as their real self-giving self, you know, go out of their way to help others all the time.

That's good. But the greatest example of what it means to be unselfish is Jesus because of who He is as well as what He did. Living an unselfish life begins, though, with developing an unselfish attitude.

I want you to look at verse 5 again. He begins this section. Have this mind, or have this mindset, some translations say. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

[6 : 21] This phrase, have this mind, it means have this attitude. The New American Standard translates it that way. In fact, I want you to look at how the New Living Translation makes this statement. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

Very simple. We're supposed to develop the mind, the attitude of Christ. Now, why would Paul say that? Well, there's many reasons, but I want to give you two very practical ones.

Number one, attitude is a powerful force in everyone's life. Your attitude, my attitude, it is a powerful force because it determines how we relate to other people.

It determines how we approach our jobs, how we approach our schoolwork. And then attitude is a choice that everyone makes every day.

We choose our attitude. A good example. After serving three years in a Nazi concentration camp, or various Nazi concentration camps, Viktor Frankl made this observation.

[7 : 25] He said, we who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts, comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that, and look at this next part.

Everything can be taken from a man, but one thing. The last of the human freedoms to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

Now, from a human perspective, there's, it would be hard to find a more powerful demonstration than a Nazi concentration camp that attitude is a choice.

Under the most extreme agony, hopelessness that you could imagine, Frankl saw that people chose their attitude.

And then actions follow our attitude. Now, before we go any further, I want all of us in this room to let this sink in. Children, we're talking about attitude.

[8 : 43] Let it sink in. Youth, teenagers, and adults. We are responsible for our attitude.

Now, some people can provoke you. And it's not good if you know how to pull people's chain in your life.

There's some people you like to push your buttons, make them mad, get them all frustrated. It's not good to do things like that, to provoke someone to get angry or frustrated or whatever.

But I want us to understand, even with that in mind, we choose our attitudes. We choose our attitudes every day. Your attitude is not beyond your control.

Everything about your situation at work may be. You can't do a thing in the world about it, but you can choose the attitude you bring to it. Same thing at school. You can choose to develop a good attitude and approach things that way if you want to.

[9 : 53] It's a part of the human makeup. The way God made us. We can do that. But if you're a Christian, the Holy Spirit lives within you, and He gives us the supernatural power to do everything that God calls us to do, including developing the attitude of Christ.

So before we go any further, I want all of us to understand, we have no excuse for going around with a bad attitude toward anyone in our lives.

No excuse. No matter what they do to us. And we have no excuse for going around with a bad attitude toward anything in our life, regardless of how they treat you at work.

Regardless of how bad or hard school is right now. So as we get into this message, the first step in following the example of Christ and becoming unselfish is developing His attitude.

Now, let's look at what that attitude involves. Number B, living an unselfish life requires that we not hold tightly to all of our rights.

[11 : 13] I want to pause here. I emphasize not hold tightly to all of our rights. We're talking about in this passage of Scripture, Paul is writing to a church.

He's thinking about relationships between Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ in a church. And as we go through this, the last three weeks now, counting today, three weeks, it applies to our

relationships at home.

But even Paul the Apostle, he was a Roman citizen. And there were times, you can read it in the book of Acts, where he insisted, he demanded that his rights as a citizen be respected.

There were times when Paul, the only way he avoided a beating, he didn't avoid all of them. The only way he could avoid imprisonment or death was to say, I'm a Roman citizen.

I demand my rights. There are times that we, as Americans, we need to demand our rights. We don't need to back down, apologize.

[12 : 22] We need to demand our rights. There may be things at your work that you need to demand your rights in the workforce in South Carolina or according to the policies of your company.

We're not talking here about becoming a doormat to the world, giving up all your rights everywhere in life. We're talking about relating to one another in the church and relating to one another in the home.

And in the church and the home, we can't focus on, demand our own privileged rights.

Now, as we go through these verses, think, let it just sink in. The self-giving, self-humiliating, self-sacrifice that Jesus made to come into this world as a man and save us by dying on the cross. Let's look at this. First, Jesus has always existed as God the Son. Look at the first part of verse 6. We look at these verses phrase by phrase. Who, though he was in the form of God. Jesus has always existed.

[13 : 40] He's always been God. It's his nature. It's who he is. He's the eternal Son of God. He didn't begin at a stable in Bethlehem.

He's always been God. John, the apostle, describes this in his gospel, the first chapter, the first verse, and then verse 14.

Look at this. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In verse 14, he explains Jesus is the Word. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus has always existed.

He's always been the Son of God. He's always been divine. But look how he viewed himself next. He did not consider that his divine existence was only for his own benefit.

[14 : 41] Look at the next phrase. Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. The NIV says he did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

He didn't consider his divine nature. He didn't consider the glory he had always known as something that he had to hold on to and use for his benefit, for his privileges, for his advantage. I want you to think about this. I want you to think about this. It has always been in the DNA of God the Father and God the Son to be self-giving.

It's one of the ways they demonstrate their love. For God so loved the world. The verse that most people hear, if you know any verse of Scripture, you know John 3, 16.

For God so loved the world that he gave his Son. It's in their DNA to be self-giving. Number three, Jesus chose to lay aside the glory he had always known.

[15 : 47] The phrase is he emptied himself. He laid aside the glory, the honor he had always experienced in heaven. But he did not lay aside his divine nature.

He didn't cease to be God. When Jesus came into this world, he was born in the stable in Bethlehem. That little baby in the cradle, he was still God.

But he had become also a man. He'd taken on human form. He became the God-man. God in the flesh. That's who Jesus is.

Who he's always been, since he was born in the stable, the God-man. He never ceased to be God. The NIV translates this. He made himself nothing.

And we can move on next and see what that involves. Number four, Jesus willingly stepped down from his position as the ultimate somebody to become a nobody.

[16 : 54] Look at it. By taking the form of a servant or bond slave or bond servant, some translations will say. Some will just say plain slave.

By taking the form of a slave. Being born in the likeness of men. Jesus came to this world as a man. I mean, Jesus was as real a human being as you and I, as well as having his divine nature.

He was the God-man. But he was a human being. He would look. He thought. He talked. He drank. He ate. He was like us. Except for he did not sin.

But this passage is saying he became more than just a man. He became a servant. A bond servant. A slave. Here's the point. A slave has no privileges.

None. That's what made Jesus a nobody. He was nothing. He came to this world and became the lowest form of humanity that humanity can be.

[17 : 59] A slave. Not to serve himself. Not to be served. But to serve others. We'll see in a moment. Now, I want us to pause here. We cannot compare ourselves with Jesus in any shape, form, or fashion with his preexistence as the son of God.

If we think about being like Jesus, we don't start out like this. Divine. Son of God.

Divine nature. And we'll never, because of that, even come close to demonstrating his level of unselfishness. Of humility.

The Lord's attitude. From where he was to where he became. His attitude and actions of becoming humble. Lowering himself.

Humbling himself. It can never be matched. And so we're not going to try. But what we can do is put it in more simple terms so that we can evaluate ourselves and our attitude.

[19 : 11] So let's say this. Jesus had the attitude, I will not demand my rights. I will not hold on to what I have had in heaven.

I will not hold on to what I have just for my personal enjoyment. Just for my personal well-being.

Jesus had the attitude, I will give up my rights.

Or I will use my rights to benefit others. Now, do you have that kind of attitude toward other people in this church?

Do you have that kind of attitude in your home? Toward members of your family? Or, as I said last week, do you think of yourself as a king?

As a queen? As a little princess? Or prince? Do you think of yourself in one of these elevated positions in your home with your family?

[20 : 22] And you expect everybody to treat you like you're something special? If you're truly a follower of Jesus, you cannot live that way.

You can't demand your rights. You can't come in here and be a member of this church and think, I'm something. I'm special.

And when I say something, you better listen. If you have that mentality, you're crazy. And we are going to look at you funny, different. You are going to be special in terms of lunatic special in this church.

And I want you to understand something. You may have little children at home. And they're impressed with you.

But as time goes on, and they get older, and they get more mature, and they really see the reality of who you are, that you're just a man or a woman, imperfect man or woman, they're not going to look at you in that king-like or queen-like way anymore.

[21 : 38] So what we need to do, men, do you really think I am the king? I know some of y'all talked to me after the service last week. I talked about that, about joking and carrying on.

Fun's fun. I like to have all kinds of fun about things like that. We're talking about being serious. If you really are, put yourself on some kind of pedestal as a king or as a queen.

Or as a little prince or princess. Step down from it now. Give up those rights.

Be like Jesus. Choose to be a servant. And serve the other people of your home. Serve your brothers and sisters in Christ here in this church.

Don't demand that anyone serve you. If we're going to have the attitude of Christ, look at this now. Jesus made this clear.

[22 : 44] This was his attitude. The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve. And to give his life as a ransom for many. And this leads us to the final and greatest act of self-giving we can ever see.

Look at this. Living an unselfish life requires that we humble ourselves and obey God sacrificially. Verse 8. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

This entire passage we've been looking at this morning reveals how Jesus humbled himself. The whole passage could be described as Jesus' humility. He humbled himself.

The point here is how Jesus humbled himself. He humbled himself by dying on the cross. He humbled himself by submitting to God's plan that he suffered that way.

The emphasis really is on, look at this in the phrase, death on a cross. And what that meant in Jesus' day. Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians.

[23 : 48] It would have been read by leaders in the church, the congregation. When they heard death on a cross, they would have been horrified. They would have thought, should this even be said in polite company?

Death by crucifixion was something that was reserved in the Roman Empire for slaves, for rebels, for anarchists.

Unless you were an anarchist, unless you were trying to bring down the government, a Roman citizen couldn't be executed by crucifixion.

The Romans considered it too cruel and shameful for a Roman citizen to die this kind of death. So what Jesus did was submit himself to the most revolting, humiliating death possible in his day.

That's how far he went to humble himself. That's how far he went to obey his heavenly father's will. And that is the attitude that we're called to have if we're going to be followers of Jesus in this world.

[25 : 12] I want to ask you, are you willing, are you seeking now, to consider yourself above no one?

Are you now or are you willing to consider yourself above no form of service to any of your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Is that your attitude here as a member of this church? Is that your attitude at home with your family members? Let me ask you this.

Is there anything about your attitude right now that you need to change in order for you to become a better member of this church, a better brother and sister to the rest of this church family?

Is there an attitude that needs to change about your involvement, participation in this church? Does your attitude need to change about or towards certain people?

[26 : 20] Or does it need to change about the way you serve the Lord in some kind of ministry of this church? And then, is there anything about your attitude that you need to change or improve as a member of your family?

Or does it need to change about your family in the way that you talk to and treat your spouse or your parents or your children?

And even your brothers and sisters? Does your attitude need to change or improve and the way you serve one another in that home.

I want us all to ask God to show us if we need an attitude adjustment right now. You know, there's times, think about being a parent, there's times when every child needs an attitude adjustment.

And you know, as a parent, how to go about adjusting the attitude of your child. Well, as children of God, there's times we all need an attitude adjustment.

[27 : 46] So let's just be still in just a moment before God and ask Him, are there sins I need to confess? Are there people that I need to go to and say, I was wrong?

Will you forgive me in this church or at home? Are there some lifestyles that you need to change?

It's the way you're approaching being a member of this church or being a family member at home. I want us to bow together and pray, ask God to show you how you need to respond, and then make the commitment that with God's help, you'll change your attitude.

You'll be the self-giving, sacrificial follower of Jesus that God's calling us to be.

Let's pray. Dear God, help us to see right now how we need to respond to you. Lord, we confess we don't always have the right attitude.

[29 : 01] We don't always have a Christ-like attitude for sure. But help us not to be content in that and help us not to defend bad attitudes.

Father, show us how we should respond to what you've said in this passage.

Show us how we should respond to be more like Jesus and laying down our rights and serving others and especially dear God here in this church and at home.

Let's just in an attitude of prayer, listen to the Lord and you respond to Him. So, talk to God and respond to Him that you walk out of here with the kind of attitude that I want to be a true follower of Jesus and live an unselfish life.