

Fruit of the Spirit, intro: Humility

Philippians 2:1-12 and Galatians 5:13-26

The story is told of a discussion which happened over radio at sea between the Americans and Canadians:

Americans: "Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision."

Canadians: "Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision."

Americans: "This is the captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course."

Canadians: "No, I say again, you divert YOUR course."

Americans: "THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE SECOND LARGEST SHIP IN THE UNITED STATES' ATLANTIC FLEET. WE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY THREE DESTROYERS, THREE CRUISERS AND NUMEROUS SUPPORT VESSELS. I DEMAND THAT YOU CHANGE YOUR COURSE 15 DEGREES NORTH. THAT'S 1-5 DEGREES NORTH, OR COUNTER MEASURES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THIS SHIP."

Canadians: "This is a lighthouse. Your call."

Pride can be funny can't it (in others) especially when pride comes before a fall, which is what the bible warns us.

The problem is, we are all proud, you are, I am, it's a problem.

I'm really good at parking. I can reverse park, parallel park, I can get into tight spaces.

I once parked my car in such a small gap between two cars that as I stood admiring what a good job I'd done, thinking how marvellous I was, a lady came of her home opposite and said, oh dear – you've been blocked in!

It was fantastic, I turned and smiled and said "no, actually I just parked there"

And I took out my phone and took pictures either side of the tiny gaps.

But do you know what, I watch people struggling with their parking, getting it all wrong, and I think to myself, "no, what are you doing, not like that"

"uh! Some people"

And inside I'm feeling superior, they obviously don't know what they're doing, I know!

They can't do it – I can do better – and even I start to feel like I am better, feeling superior.

And that's what pride is

Pride is when we think:

I know better

I do better

I am better

And we all do it, I wonder when you do?

I do it all the time, you know, I joke about the parking skills, but actually pride is a serious thing.

It's not just that I won't ask for directions, and blokes...

I know lots of you are just as bad.

My pride makes me slow to apologise after an argument.

I have a real problem. I look down on people who aren't as clever as me, and I feel better than them.

I hear people teaching theology all wrong, who give the wrong impression about God
- sometimes that he promises to do things which he just doesn't
- or failing to teach just how powerful he is, that he is in control of everything, that he is awesome in his glory and rules over all.

And it means I look down on people thinking, I know better, I'm doing a better job than you. It's a serious thing.

Who do you look down on?

People who dress outrageously? Who use foul language?

Who are the people you think... "I know better, or I do better, or I am better"? We all do it? Perhaps it's the people who like me won't be honest about their failings, you feel they cover up: at least you're honest!

Perhaps it's people who can't manage their money, can't control their kids?

People who are too fat, people who are too thin?

People who believe the wrong things?

It's so obvious about the EU referendum, how can they be so stupid.

Or even – that other nation, they're so uncivilised, we Brits really know how to live, how to treat one another.

We know better, we do better.... we are better.

It's an outrageous way to think, but all of us do it, something within us, from our hearts, wants to think, to believe... I know better, I do better, I am better.

Friends, you are surrounded by people who are just the same.

Church is a hospital for sinners, not a club for saints.

Everyone around you is just the same, even if you don't see it.

Sadly outsiders come into churches, and one of the things they say is that they find people who feel superior.

That is why we all need to think about humility, and why God has something to say to us about it.

So today I'm going to try to explain three things.

1. What is humility,
2. Christ has made it safe to be humble
3. and Humility helps us to grow

and then I'll end with some practical help, and pray for us all.

So firstly, what is humility.

This question is not *actually* as easy as you might think.

Here is something CS. Lewis said which is really helpful

'True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.

If we take what we said about pride:

"I know better" "I do better" "I am better" –

And flip them around:

"I don't know better" or even "I do worse" or "I am worse" -that's not what humility is.

In fact *I am* better at parking than the poor person I watch struggling, that's the truth.

And I may *know better* than the person who teaches the wrong things about God.

You may be better at managing your money, than that other person.

Humility isn't about denying the truth.

Humility is all about putting God in his rightful place in our minds, and us and others, in their rightful places in our minds too.

It's not just thinking less of ourselves:

Think of someone who is always down on themselves, who thinks they're rubbish at everything, they don't know anything, they don't do anything right, they are rubbish.

A bit like the opposite of those three statements from earlier, they don't know, they don't do, they aren't any good.

Well, if this person is a Christian, they aren't humble – they are actually showing pride. Why?

Because God says he gives his children gifts, he gives them knowledge. God has a purpose and a plan for this person, and he has made them just the way he wants them to be, so that (perhaps with some hard work) they will be capable of just what he wants.

They *are* precious, valuable and useful to him, they do matter.

In believing, saying and thinking that they're not, they are saying: God, I know better than you! God you're wrong, I'm right.

That's pride isn't it, "God, I know better than you"?

A humble person is teachable, they will learn from God and others, they *want* to learn from God, are you teachable?

So what is humility? Humility isn't a fixed thing like athletic ability, so that some of us have it, and we can run and jump well, but some don't.

Humility is an attitude, humility values the importance of others above yourself, and looks to the interests of others above yourself.

A humble person does not think first about themselves, but says: You are important to me, (that's the value) and says, I will look out for you (that's the interests).

And I think to have Christian humility, we need to say those things first about God, then about others.

Now remember, this is an attitude, it doesn't mean that other people *are* more valuable, more important than you. We are all valuable. It means our attitude should be to think of others first.

We're going to move on now to think about how **Christ has made it safe to be humble.**

If you can turn to p1179 and look at Philippians 2:3

As we do that, and as we look at Jesus, as well as seeing how he's made it safe for us to be humble, we will also see he is the perfect example of humility, as the same time.

V3 **"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.**

Rather, in humility

value others above yourselves, ⁴

That's the value: you are important to me

not looking to your own interests
but each of you to the interests of the others.

That's the interests: I will look out for you

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mind set as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage

So Jesus really is valuable, he is God, he is equal with God.

If you saw him now in heaven, you would be overcome with *awe* – his purity and his goodness would be *blazing*, his truth and his knowledge would be *majestic*, he is God!

But in the mind of Christ, he doesn't think about himself, he thinks about others – specifically he thinks about us, and we are important to him, so so precious to him, he loves us! So... (v7)

rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.⁸

And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself

by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross

he is so much more interested in the interests of others, in your interests, in my interests, and not in his own – that he is willing to give up his life – that's what this is saying.

You and I deserve judgment from God, we've seen that recently in our series in the book of Romans. We deserve punishment and death – our pride is just one reason for that.

But Jesus looked out for your interests, he died the death you should have.

He took on your likeness, he came to earth to become one like you, and to stand in your place.

And as a result, all your sin is taken away, all your shame, there is no punishment from God for you – none. Jesus paid it all!

Now if that's not humility – what is?

You are important to Jesus, you are valued by him.

He looks out for your interests, not his own – he wants what's best for you, and is willing to die so that you can have it. There was no price for him which was too high!

That is the perfect example of humility.

And it should cut us to the heart, when we think of how we fight for our rights, our vindication. When we won't take the advice and help of others and instead we keep pushing ourselves forward.

We are those who Christ gave everything for!

When we benefit from such humility, we should think – I want to be like that too – that's the way to live that's the way to do it.

But, it can feel like a risk, being humble.

Let me put it bluntly.

If you start valuing others, and looking out for others, who will look out for you?

That's my concern! That's what holds me back, and makes me want to look out for myself.

--Who's going to look out for me?— But, Christ makes it safe for us to be humble.

Christian, you can value and look out for God first, and then others, above yourself.

Because, God, and specifically Jesus, is looking out for you.

Do you trust that he is?

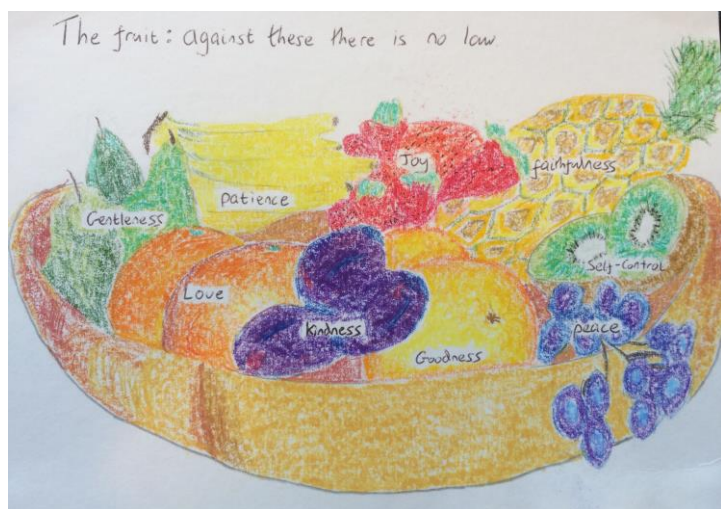
That's what this passage says – he gave everything for you, he looks out for you!

And if you trust that, if you trust in him, well you don't need to look out for you.

You can put God before yourself, others before yourself, you can say "you are important to me" and "I will look out for you"

Because you know God is looking after you.

Now, lastly, Humility helps us to grow.



Have a look at these two pictures, they each try to illustrate Galatians 5:22-23, and one of them is more helpful?

One, I drew myself, and actually I have it up at my desk, it shows a fruit bowl, each fruit representing the things in the verse.

The other shows a tree, with each of the things growing on it.

And actually, one of these is far better mental picture for the verse.

It's the tree! *Aren't I amazingly and fantastically humble?!?!?*

p1172, Galatians 5, says that there is one fruit of the spirit v22, not lots of fruits – just one fruit. Growing on us = the tree.

And this one fruit looks like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.

All coming from the Christian.

The Holy Spirit brings these about in us, he has the power to change us, **and** we are told to change, we have the responsibility.

It's one fruit:

So I can't say, oh I'm good at kindness, but not at faithfulness, that's just how I am. All of these are God's will for me.

You might be different, you might say I'm good at self-control, but not at joy. Well we can't do that – the Holy Spirit wants to work all these things in us. So the tree is the better picture, and here's the thing, if we are the tree, humility is fertiliser which if it's covering and infused into the soil, means the fruit grows well.

Over the next 9 weeks, in our sermons, we're going to work through v22-23 one thing at a time. And before we get started we're thinking about humility, because it's the fertiliser for growing the good fruit. We need humility.

You see, before v22, we have v13

[Christian] do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh;

le, not *for yourself*

rather, serve one another humbly in love.

For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command:

“Love your neighbour as yourself.”

The apostle Paul wrote this, and his logic goes like this: *before* he says we should have love, joy, peace etc. He says: don't look to yourself, look to others!

“Be humble so that you can grow in the fruit”!

Humility should be in place first,

Christian, if you're humble, then you are in good soil, ready for good fruit to grow.

If you are a Christian, I hope you do really want to grow in this fruit!... “love” “patience” “Self-control” they're great right? We want to be more like that?

Our culture doesn't value this fruit as it should, or even as it used to.

Schools don't value teaching these “virtues” we could call them.

Instead they aim for achievement, top grades.

Parents can be more concerned with trophies, certificates and pupils excelling and fulfilling their potential.

When they should be concerned with their children growing in character.

But we should be really concerned about these things!

This is what people should look for in a potential partner; what people should value in a friend; look for in an employee; or in a Christian minister.

Do you want to grow in these things, I really hope you do –

This list in v22+23 *is* God's will for your life. This is what God wants for you.

That you be more loving, more joyful, more peaceful, more patient, more kind, more good, more gentle, more faithful and more self-controlled.

And if you do: start by praying for humility and seeking after it.

Humility is the fertiliser which helps us to grow in character.

So we've said what Humility is: It's valuing and looking out for the interests of others before ourselves. Particularly God first, and other people, before ourselves.

We've seen that Jesus' humble sacrifice at the cross, makes it safe for us, his followers, to be humble.

And we've seen that humility helps us to grow in other ways.

Now let me be really practical, and help you to be more humble.

The key thing we need to know, is God gives us all the good things we have, our skills, the opportunity to use them.

And we shouldn't feel proud about a gift!

Imagine the boy, given a brand new iPhone and sent off to school with it.

All the other kids see it and think – wow.

Is he any better than the other kids? The ones who don't have such a powerful phone?

No – it was a present, it's nothing to do with him.

Should he feel proud – no, it's just that he's been given a gift.

It's the same with us – when God gives us something, we shouldn't feel proud about it! And every good thing we have is a gift from him.

But... sadly, in school – people do think that kids is better than them. Or he might think he's better than other people.

Oops! I guess that's just part of how we get it wrong sometimes.

Thinking about someone's weight can be a touchy subject. But it can be very similar.

God made us different – he gave us different metabolisms and made us different shapes and sizes. Now we need to be careful to look after our bodies, but we shouldn't think we're better than someone, just because we're a better shape than them!

Let me give an example how we should turn our thoughts to repentance and prayer.

So, there I am watching someone struggle with parking... when I start to think: "I'm better than you"

Instead I turn around and say – God I'm sorry, don't let me think that.

Thank you that you've made me as I am, I know that you've given me gifts of spatial awareness, good coordination or whatever – Lord I know you've given me them so I can serve you and look out for others with who I am.

Thank you for my gifts, please forgive me, and help me to use them for other's good, and give me love and care for this person who is struggling.

Do you see.

It's simply saying sorry, and asking for help. And acknowledging who I am, and who God is. He's the one who gets the praise.

So I can't look down on anyone. I should look with love.

We should make it our morning prayer. Lord, let me look first to the interests of others today, first of all you, and then those around me – help me to do that.

Can you see that if we pray that, we start our day off in the right way – being humble.

Why not pray it every day this week?

May God help us – let's pray.