

**Word notes Sunday 10/06/2012 Tony Hodge**  
**Philippians 2 - Humility**

**Summary** (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

**Key Text: Philippians 2:1-18**

Some people have very strong ambition or “drive” while others are more content to let life take them where it will. There is no doubt that Paul had ambition (eg Acts 20:24 & 1 Cor. 9:24) yet he had learned humility too (see Philippians 1) and his ambition was for the gospel to the glory of Christ not for Paul’s glory.

Paul focuses on “selfish ambition” as the thing to avoid – the promotion of self rather than of anything else and NB that this is contrary to the Spirit (Gal. 5:17-25). Those who preached the gospel to spite Paul (Phil. 1:15-17) is the example he gives – though how can it spite the man who is totally sold out for Jesus if the gospel is preached? Instead Paul rejoices. The opposite is where the Spirit leads us – unity. In humility we should consider others better than ourselves and look to needs of others as well as our own and our model in this is Christ himself (vv5-11) whose route to receiving the name above all other names was to humble himself, setting aside the godly nature for human likeness and service to the point of a cruel death. That is how far our Christ-like, spirit empowered humility should go. When Paul says that Jesus did not see equality with God as something to be “grasped” he’s using the same words as theft or coveting – the KJV translates as “thought it not robbery to be equal with God”. Being in the nature of God he had all he needed in the unity of the Godhead just as being in Jesus we have all that we need (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Our recognition of our true humility before God begins at salvation when we recognise Jesus as LORD and come under his Kingship, ceding all authority to him and being obedient to His commands (Jn. 14:15) then we are taken into his family as co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Humility is also the way into receiving the Lord’s guidance and protection (Psalms 25:8,9; 147:6 & Prov. 22:4) and brings wisdom and honour (Prov. 1:2; 15:33; & 18:12,13)

Jesus himself knew the results of factions, dissent and disunity – when accused of casting out demons in the name of Beelzebub he pointed out that any kingdom divided against itself must fail (Lk. 11:17) whereas his desire was for unity among all believers who would believe through the preaching of the gospel (Jn. 17:20-23).

Finally humility leads us to “work out” our salvation. This is not about gaining salvation by works but rather through humility and obedience allowing our new saved nature to flow out from within. Matthew Henry’s commentary puts it this way: *“The working of God’s grace in us, is to quicken and engage our endeavours”*. What should our Christ-like ambition be – to drink the cup that Jesus drank and to be baptised with the baptism Jesus received – in other words to take on all the sufferings of Christ – to take up our cross and follow him. This is the challenge Jesus set James and John the sons of Zebedee when they asked to be elevated to a place of honour with him (Mark 10:35-40).

**Application** (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

What ambitions did you have when you were young? Are they achieved, remain goals or put aside?

What would you see as “selfish ambitions” and how are these contrary to the Spirit?

How does Paul avoid selfish ambition –

- i) in his overall attitude?
- ii) in his attitude to others?

How would you apply the teachings in Prov. 18:12 & 13 and Mk. 9:35 to your life, what specifically do these scriptures say to you about how you act, what you do and what your ambitions are both in the world and in the kingdom?

**Witness** (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Please pray for this Friday’s first “energize” meeting at NCC for 11-14 year olds. Pray specifically for those who came last Tuesday and Thursday to come along again.