

# Philippians 2:1-11

## Humble Joy

Introduction: Hindu to Christian struggle  
because of suffering

Key Question: How could God show his love to real people in a real world of suffering?

I. God Enters the World of People's Pain (vv. 6-7)

II. God Saves People with His Pain (v. 8)

III. God Delivers His People to a Better World (vv. 9-11)

A. By Exalting Jesus (v. 9a)

B. By Crowning Jesus (v. 9b-10)

C. By Glorifying Us with Jesus (v. 11)

IV. God Calls Us to Reflect His Love (vv. 1-5)

A. Having the Mind of Christ (attitude - vv. 1-2)

B. Considering the Needs of Others (action - vv. 3-5)

Conclusion: Considering the Needs of Others Here!

Scripture intro: Paul has just reminded those at Philippi that a life united to Christ will require two things: a life that includes suffering, and the side-by-side support of fellow-believers to face the inevitable suffering. That side-by-side support across generations and ethnicities, despite differences and antipathies is a call to unity. What will motivate that unity? Understanding Christ's humility – his giving up his rights and privileges for us, is our motivation for considering others' interests above our own so that Christ's love will be honored as it flows through us. But how can broken people really support one another in a broken world. Paul answers: [read vv. 1-11].

Sermon Intro: "I was raised in a *Hindu* home," writes *Christian* author, Mitali Perkins, "where Dad taught that God was a divine spirit of love.... I believed in this good God until high school, when a friend was killed in a car accident, involving a drunk driver. [My friend's] death opened my adolescent eyes to a world of suffering. What kind of God would allow this and, then, according to Hinduism, reincarnate us back into a painful world? I grieved for my friend and put my questions – and God – aside for the rest of high school.

During midwinter break [of my junior year of college], a few students invited me to join them in Russia [to study art history], [believing] I would [gain] some [objective] perspective on [Western religion] in the famously atheistic country. The Russian tour led us through prisons, cemeteries, and churches with histories of massacres and torture, where ancient icons displayed Crucifixion. I felt overwhelmed by evil. How could God – if God existed – leave humanity to suffer so much.

One afternoon we headed to the Hermitage, the world-renowned museum in St. Petersburg....Again many of the paintings depicted Jesus' life, death and resurrection. I stood on the edge of our group, questions racing through my mind.

As our group was about to leave, the museum official pulled me aside. "What are you thinking about so deeply?" he asked in a low voice. I was surprised into telling the truth: "A loving God. Human suffering. How can both exist?"

"You are at the intersection of choice," he said. "Either you decide that Jesus is the Son of God, or you turn your back on him....You must choose."

But how can you choose a God who says that it has been "granted to you not only to believe in him but also to suffer for his sake" (v. 29)? AND how do you

The answers are not easy for someone coming to faith, or a faithful person who is going through suffering. But the God's spokesmen do shy away from the hard questions or the honest answers:

Why does God allow suffering to continue? Jesus answers in his Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Matt. 13:24-30). There Jesus says that when sin entered this world, it could be compared to an evil person sowing dandelion seeds in a good field of wheat. Once the seeds of the wheat and weeds have germinated, it certainly is possible for the farmer to pull up the dandelions. But to pull up the weeds will require uprooting the wheat. So the farmer waits until the time of harvest to gather the wheat and destroy the weeds.

So also God allows suffering until he knows this world is ready for an eternal harvest of souls. Though it's easy for us to ask, "Why doesn't God just remove all the evil that causes suffering?" the reality is that if God were suddenly to erase all evil then not only would most of our helping and protecting professions vanish, all of us sinners would disappear. So until Christ returns to complete his harvest of souls, we experience the suffering that drives us to lean on him.

Longing for a present world without suffering is a little like questioning, "Why didn't God give me a different set of parents?" If you had a different set of parents, you wouldn't be you. But the fact that you are you, means that God did not cut off your roots. In fact the continuance of your world in which suffering exists until the time God says, "No more," is a statement of your enduring value to him, and his undying love for you. If he did not love you, and have a plan for the impact of your life, then your life would simply be done – whether wheat or weeds he would pull you up.

But how would God prove this is all true? How would God show his love to real people in a real world where suffering exists?

- I. *God Enters The World of People's Pain*  
~~He Would Enter Their World of Pain~~ (vv. 6-7)

Grandparent stories get to me now. I like the one about the child clamoring to get out of a crib where he had been confined as punishment for throwing food. Granpa knew that it wasn't going to be good for the child to let him out of the crib too soon. So Granpa climbed into the crib. Kinda humiliating, but it made the point.

The same point that Paul makes in vv. 6-7: Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing, took on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of a man. We know the Christmas story that he got into the crib as baby, but that was not the full price. Listen to the way our Reformation forefathers described his humiliation: "Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time."

He did not have to experience any of that humiliation but he clothed himself in the sufferings of our flesh to show his love to people whose crying in suffering he heard. This is part of the uniqueness of the Christian message: our God clothed himself in our flesh to show his care.

On one of the afternoons of the recent China conference, I was given a tour of the island held in the clutches of folk religions. We went to temples where animals, ancestors and natural objects were worshipped as gods. The driver asked why I was there. My translator explained that I was there to talk about Jesus Christ. The driver responded that he hoped there would be a temple to Jesus one day. My translator responded that the worship of Jesus would not be like any other. He said that all the other gods on the island were material things made into gods, but Jesus was the only God who took on flesh.

In a world of suffering, this is a crucial truth. Only when we point to our God in the flesh on the cross do we have evidence of his care in a world of suffering. Even the great preacher and evangelist John Stott wrote, "I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross. The only God I believe in is the One Nietzsche ridiculed as "God on the cross." In the real world of pain how could one worship a God who was immune to it?"

He could have been immune to it, but he entered our world, entered our pain, and consequently proves his love until the day he makes this world go away. It is not just theory. I remember being picked up from the airport for a conference by a man I have known many years. At that time, his son had recently been imprisoned, his church was in turmoil, Christian leaders whom he had admired had fallen miserably. In light of it all he said, "Bryan, how

can I believe in the love of God.” In words that the Holy Spirit alone gave to my faltering heart I replied, “I you look only at your circumstances, I do not know how you could believe in God’s love, but if you will focus on the cross, you cannot doubt it.”

II. *God Saves People with His Pain*  
~~He Would Save Them from Shame with His Pain~~ (v. 8)

Not only does God prove his love by entering our world of pain, but also by saving us from our shame. Our world’s suffering and our suffering are not simply the result of the blind forces of fate, or of a world poorly planned.

The world, the Bible says was corrupted by the sin of our first parents. When selfishness and self-interest rule, then others are inevitably hurt. We don’t mere need to account of Adam and Eve to make sense of that, we have only to examine how difficult our lives are made by the sin of others – against us, against those we love – including themselves, against society, against the creation itself. And, when we see that the suffering that we most experience is a consequence of our own sin, and the sin of those who are like us at heart, then we may feel deep and abiding shame.

Like the Apostle Paul we may well conclude, “The good that I want to do, I do not do; and, the evil that I do not want to do, that I do” (Rom. 7). And his conclusion, then becomes the cry of our hearts, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?!” His answer is this answer: Thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ that deliverance is mine. Not only did he enter the world of suffering, he took the penalty my sin deserved to take away the shame in my heart [read vv. 8-9].

Matali Perkins continued her personal account of moving from Hinduism to Christianity this way: “When we returned to Vienna, I decided to go to the original source of the story in the New Testament. Soon I was encountering a Jew with olive-colored skin, black hair and dark eyes. This Middle-eastern man healed foreign women, he knew what it was to feel lonely and rejected [he became like me to enter my world and help people like me]. [Then he] enraged religious and political leaders by claiming a divine identity. They killed him. He let them. I was stunned. If he was telling the truth, then this was God submitting to the four enemies of humanity – pain, grief, evil and death – in order to destroy them all.

The cross was where a loving God and the suffering of humanity could be reconciled.... I made my decision. I would follow Jesus.”

How does that work? How does God allowing his Son to pay the death penalty for my sin satisfy the justice that God’s holiness and my own heart require? Christian defender Ravi Zacharias explains:

If Jesus suffered the consequences for my sin, how is that justice? Say I severely assaulted you, it would hardly make you – as the victim – think that I had been justly dealt with if I pointed out that some other guy who had nothing to do with my assaulting you had been sent to jail for my crime. It’s hard to see how that would be a display of love or justice. Yet, that’s how Christianity is sometime perceived.

But let’s change the scenario. What if I began hitting you, but then, when I went to hit you again, my wife threw herself in the way to try to stop it, and my punch hit her and threw her head against a stone wall, and killed her. And, when I saw the consequences of my actions for one that I love so dearly, I broke down in agony in front of you and pleaded for forgiveness. Would you still think that justice had not been served for my sin against you. I suspect not. Why? Because what could be worse for me than losing the one that I love the most – and at my own hands?

On the cross, God threw himself between us and each person we have ever wronged [including our wrongs against ourselves] in an overflow of love. He took the full impact for our sins. He suffered for our punishment ... we face the consequences of seeing our sins result in the death of our Creator and of the One who loves us the most. It’s when we understand this that we fall to our gGodknees in repentance and ask for forgiveness. And because Jesus is risen ... our repentance is not turned to the agony of seeing a loved one die, but to the pure joy of receiving a loved one back from the dead.

III. ~~He Would Deliver Them to a Better World (vv. 10-11)~~ *God Delivers His People to a Better World (vv. 9-11)*

Christ entering our world and paying the penalty for our sin is not the end of the story. The One who became obedient to death...

A. ~~God Exalted Him~~ *By Exalting Jesus (v. 9a)*

“Highly exalted” = Raising him from the dead, conquered our sin and assured us the penalty is paid.

*By Crowning Jesus*  
B. ~~God Crowned Him~~ = “Gave him a name above every name” (Cf. Eph. 1: 20-21 “[God] raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come (Eph 1:20-21 ESV)

*Title*

*(v. 9b-10)*

The past tense reminds us that Christ now reigns as the ascended Lord. The benefits of the ascension are that our world is not random and believers are not without an advocate or sovereign King. He is even now working all for good and enabling us to live for him by his Spirit.

*By Glorifying Us with Jesus*  
C. ~~God Will Glorify Us with Him~~ (v. 11) *If his NAME is over all - Jesus is over me. Jesus is the banner over me.*

*“No more...”*  
*- pain*  
*- longing*  
*- frustrated longing*  
*- shame*  
*- shattered dreams*  
*- lingering doubt*  
*- crying*  
*- mourning*  
*- despair*

There is a coming day when the wheat will be harvest and his rule will be full. In that day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. This will be to the glory of the Father – his plan, purpose and love will be full revealed.

No longer will the weeds be among the wheat, but the harvest will be taken in. All suffering, death, pain and tears will be gone.

Beautiful image of the combines in the fields with the corn -- out of the husks and weeds -- filling the harvest wagons.

IV. *God Calls Us to Reflect His Love*  
~~He Would Call His People to Show His Love~~ (vv. 1-5)

- a. Having the mind of Christ (*attitude - vv. 1-2*)
- b. Considering the needs of Others (*action - vv. 3-5*)

*10nd: Considering the Needs of Others Here! - Aunt Collyn's Funeral*

In the Rio Olympics we can remember the bad behavior of some swimmers, the Olympic officials charged with scalping tickets, or the Egyptian athlete who refused to shake the hand of an Israeli opponent. But there were stand out moments such as when North and South Korean athletes – though their nations are at war – took a smiling selfie together. But the stand out moment for me was when Nikki Hamblin of New Zealand fell in the 5000 meter run. In her fall she tripped American runner Abbey D’Agostino. The unexpected and accidental trip injured the

American runner, and though the New Zealander could have gone on, she stopped, turned and helped D'Agostino back to her feet and the two continued on together. They had never before met, there was no obligation to help, and no advantage to help, "But said Hamblin later, "That is a moment that you're never going to forget for the rest of your life" as that girl stooped down and shook my shoulder to say, "C'mon, get up."

It is the calling of the church beyond personal advantage or benefit to have have the mind of Christ – who did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing for us.