



## With Humility of Mind

As we study scripture even passively, we learn that the true believer's life is marked by surrender to God's will and love of others. We see this from the mouth of our Lord in verses like [Matthew 7:21](#) and [John 13:34-35](#), and from the apostles in passages such as [Ephesians 4:32](#), [James 4:7](#), and [1 Peter 4:8](#).

***Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*** [Philippians 2:3-4](#) NASB

For context, the apostle Paul was just exhorting believers to be unified in the faith and under one purpose, encouraged by the fellowship of the Spirit and consolation of love among other Christians (see [Phil 2:1-2](#)). This leads into our passage here, where he reminds the Philippian believers of the critical need to be selfless and humble.

Paul was an unwavering illustration of living a life of self-sacrifice and obedience to God, thus his insistence that we do likewise. Yet it must not be out of mere duty, but instead out of a heart of thanksgiving and gratitude for what the Lord has done for us. Honestly acknowledging the magnitude of our depravity and undeservedness, and the enormity of Christ's love and sacrifice for us, is the first big step in being able to ***live in a manner worthy of our calling*** (cf: [Eph 4:1](#), [Phil 1:27](#), etc). Paul understood this and lived his life accordingly (see [1 Timothy 1:12-16](#)).

We previously learned how these early-church Christians seemed to be doing quite well in their walk. Philippians contains only passive correction and is a very encouraging and positive letter. Therefore, we can surmise that Paul was simply reiterating and reinforcing what those believers in Philippi were already doing. But as we all know, living with a mindset described here is pretty hard. It takes constant reminders of just how important it is to commit ourselves to pushing away selfishness and putting others' needs first.

The English words rendered ***empty conceit*** come from the Greek [kenodoxia](#), and could also be translated as *vain boasting*. We see this boldly displayed in both the unsaved and even in professing Christians. How easy it is to brag, whether of our accomplishments, position, or even our walk with God! But because the text says ***"with humility of mind"*** I tend to think Paul was speaking more of what we might call 'humble bragging', where we perform acts of service to be seen or for the chance to look good and show others how awesome we are, but all the while giving lip service to our seemingly oh-so-humble outward intentions or lowly position.



This inward prideful attitude is something we must be very cautious of, as it is a sin any of us can easily and quickly fall prey to.

Instead of thinking, for whatever reason, we're "all that and a bag of chips," we are to have a heart of humility and treat others ***as more important than ourselves***. In many ways this defines humility. It is not hating or thinking poorly of ourselves, but it is thinking less *about* ourselves. What seems like such a basic tenant of our faith is actually quite challenging to do in everyday life. I am often reminded of my self-centered and prideful heart when I am in a long line at the store or the car in front of me was driving *just* slow enough that I missed the green light. How immediate my sinful nature rears its filthy head when life doesn't put me first! Yet here we are told that we must put others' needs and interests above ours *intentionally* and *internally*.

This brings to mind what Paul said in [Romans 12:2-3](#): ***"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."*** Walking that hard and humble life of faith is a minute-by-minute surrender of our will and what we deem as our best interests, remembering who we really are at the core (sinners saved by grace), and being deliberate in living a life that honors God in everything we do.

As we consider how this strikes our own heart, we can see how Paul's words would have resonated and even cut the Philippians a bit, even if they were already living exemplarily Christian lives. Our sinful flesh tugs at us constantly, yet through the power of God and His Holy Spirit it is possible for our minds to be renewed and over time reflect the example of Christ more effectually. And as we continue reading this chapter of Philippians, we'll see just how deep and incredible Christ's love is, and how He remains our perfect and divine model of true humility and service to others.

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