# Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 9-17-2023 How Low Can You Go?

A few years ago, there was a television show that was rather popular called *Undercover Boss*. It was one of those ‘reality tv’ shows. Have any of you heard of it?

In this show, the CEO of a company would leave his or her position to temporarily serve in an entry level position within their company for a time. This boss would experience the joys and challenges that come from seeing their company from a much different perspective.

Going undercover in this way, even for a short time, would take a measure of humility from the boss. It took releasing a large degree of control. Instead of being in charge, they temporarily submit to the authority of one of their employees.

By the end of the show, several people gain a different perspective. The boss learns about some of the strengths and weaknesses of their company. The boss also often has a deeper appreciation for their employees. Some may find themselves being promoted and others demoted or even let go by the way that they treated their undercover boss.

The employees are also blessed with by these experiences as well, assuming that they did not mistreat their boss. They learned that the CEO showed a measure of humility to temporarily leave their high-ranking position and take a low position within the company. He or she had modeled a good example for them to follow.

And if their boss was willing to lower themselves in this way, perhaps they would be more relatable and approachable as well.

Finally, at the end of each episode, the CEO reveals their identity and as you can guess the people are typically shocked. Some people are joyful about the way that they interacted with their boss and others are ashamed and embarrassed. And the boss places great importance on how their employees related to him or her while they were in their humble position.

In fact, if you would like to watch a good movie that follows a similar undercover boss type theme, my family enjoyed watching a 2019 film called Lumber Baron. In it, the boss becomes one of the new wood choppers for a short time in order to see what had gone wrong with the company.

But anyway, shows like *Undercover Boss* or movies like Lumber Baronare faint echoes of the true story of God’s interaction with people. In fact, the Bible itself is in some ways the story of an undercover Boss.

We see this in many places throughout Scripture. But perhaps no place more clearly than today. As we continue our journey through Paul’s beautiful letter to the Philippians, let us turn to this account of our undercover Boss.

From Philippians 2:1-18 - Paul writes: Philippians 2:1-18 New International Version (NIV)

**1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,** **2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.** **3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,** **4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**

**5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:**

**6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;** **7 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!**

**9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,** **10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,** **11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

**12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,** **13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.**

**14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing,** **15 so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky** **16 as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.** **17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.** **18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.**

So, what all is Paul saying here? He is actually saying quite a lot.

First, Paul describes the extreme extent of humility the undercover boss, Jesus Christ, underwent.

We see this in His incarnation. Jesus, who is described in Scripture as being the Word or agent of God, was willing to become silent. Jesus, who eternally preexisted as God along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, suddenly, at the moment of His incarnation, leaves Heaven and becomes a fertilized egg.

That’s humility.

Even though Jesus never ceases to be God, He also doesn’t try to cling to His divinity in such a way that prevents Him from being fully human.

Jesus became human. As human as you and I are. In fact, He remains fully human and of course, also fully God.

In His humanity, Jesus chose to make Himself nothing, Paul writes. This means that Jesus, in His humble nature, lived like a common peasant. He did not look remarkable, Scripture says. Jesus did not look physically superior or special.

And the whole circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus led many people to believe that He was an illegitimate child. There would have been a stigma around Him and His family. The people of Nazareth would have thought that Jesus would have been conceived before Joseph and Mary were married. And while He was conceived, it was not through fornication or adultery, but through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Jesus’ humility, He bears this stigma of being mislabeled. And nowhere in the gospels do we see Jesus trying to set the record straight.

Now, of course, every child is equally precious to God, no matter the circumstances of their coming into this world might be. But there would have been gossip and slander towards not only Jesus, but also Mary and Joseph. Again, think of the humility of Christ, as He fulfilled prophecy at the expense of His own reputation.

And He lived as a servant. And the Greek word, doulos, could also be translated as a slave. But either way, Jesus came to serve. Although He was God, He humbled Himself greatly in all of these things.

But I also believe that Jesus was simply being who He is. Jesus is by His very nature, humble. While these actions taken in His incarnation and life were truly humble, I believe that Jesus has always been humble and that even in His exalted glory today, He remains a humble God. That’s just who He is.

But the extent of humility does not end there. Paul writes that Jesus humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death. Let us pause for a second to process this. Jesus has always existed as one of the Persons of God. Jesus made the world and everything in it.

And here, not only did Jesus come to the world and live as a servant, live as a slave, but Jesus was also willing to die. Jesus was willing to experience the true experience of weakness and pain that characterizes physical death.

But again, this was not the extent of Jesus’ humility. Jesus’ death was far more painful than a typical death. Jesus was crucified. Crucifixion was considered the slaves punishment. It was understood as being too painful for Roman citizens to endure. And Jesus willingly endured this. Not only was this physically excruciating (which is a word that is actually derived from the word crucifixion), but He also suffered emotionally as well.

Carrying the weight of human sin on Himself, feeling separated and forsaken by Father God, no death was as weighty as Christ’s was.

As verse one of a great hymn of the Christian faith proclaims:

… And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior's blood  
Died He for me, who caused His pain  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, should die for me?  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, should die for me?

Verses 9-11 testify that the story does not end with the death of Christ. For Christ was not only raised from death, but has also been exalted to God the Father’s right hand in glory. Such an amazing truth.

And as humble as Jesus is, it is His Name that is now raised up as the name above every name. Jesus is the true emperor of the world. Jesus is Lord.

One day every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord of all, as Paul writes. It is Jesus who is sovereign over all creation.

Truly amazing. But why does Paul include this word to the church in Philippi? The real reason is from verse 5. Paul instructs them to have the same mind set as Christ Jesus.

He is telling the Christians in Philippi that if Jesus has drawn them into the family of God, then they need to follow Jesus’ example in the way that they live.

A number of weeks ago I mentioned that Philippi was a Roman colony. Philippi was one of the cities that the Romans conquered and tried to rebrand as a mini-Rome so to speak. The town and the Roman culture would have been a huge deal in Philippi.

Additionally, Roman citizenship would have been of great importance there. As Americans we can relate to this a bit, as we think about how highly sought after and valuable American citizenship is perceived to be.

To be a Roman citizen was something that did not come easily. Some people were born as Roman citizens, but others had to purchase their citizenship with large sums of money.

But being a Roman citizen brought with it certain privileges. There would be certain things like the right to vote, having a greater status in society, and legal protections from certain punishments.

So, think of the impact of Paul’s letter to these Christians in Philippi. What was Paul challenging them to do? He was calling them to go low. He was calling them to not try to grasp or cling tightly to their rights as Roman citizens, but instead to live as servants in this world.

There were certain things that only slaves or servants did, like wash the feet of guests. But our Lord did this to His disciples. Paul was telling the Christians in Philippi that they were called to be servants, they were called to be slaves to Jesus. Their life is not meant to be about their status, but about living to reach out to others in Jesus’ Name.

They were also called to humbly partner with God to work out their salvation. This speaks to them recognizing their need to keep growing in their discipleship.

Specifically, Paul mentioned doing everything without grumbling and arguing. Grumbling and arguing usually have at their root, a me-focused perspective. Likewise, they were not to be led by self-ambition, but instead the Christians were to focus on blessing and humbly lifting others up.

Friends, as we think about this passage and its significance for our lives today, what is the main thing to remember? And it is this – we are to follow Christ’s humble example and live as servants in this world. Our lives are not to be about us, our reputation, our rights, our powers, and so on.

Rather, we are to go low. And we need God to help us in this. He is the One that can changes us from the inside out. And He is the One that matures us in our walk with Him.

Paul even says in this passage **it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.**

Jesus is humble by nature. Though He is Lord over all, He is truly humble. As Christians we are part of God’s family. We have been adopted into God’s household. And God wants His people to resemble Him.

And one way that we do this is by walking in genuine humility. Living to serve. Servants and slaves were not meant to grumble and complain.

And although we are adopted sons and daughters of God through faith in Jesus Christ and should see ourselves as such, we are also to live as servants in this world.

Every day is another opportunity to serve and bless and go low. Every day is another opportunity to not live a me-focused life, but a life eager to bless others in the Name of Jesus.

Whether or not we are good at going low in the limbo, we can all succeed in going low through humility, following Jesus’ example and seeking to have His same mind set. And as we do this, like the believers in Philippi, we will shine like stars for Jesus in this world.

Let’s pray.

Resources: [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

# <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hVFOX8C9_0> How did people prove citizenship in Ancient Rome?

<https://www.google.com/search?q=sovereign+grace+music+and+can+it+be+that+i+should+gain+lyrics&sca_esv=566617571&sxsrf=AM9HkKka5PpJfo7bMtHg3Ca-RaVH0yzYfg%3A1695136331555&source=hp&ei=S7oJZaOoH5SZptQPwP6O8As&iflsig=AO6bgOgAAAAAZQnIW09rQBm0t9qHaNzFupcEI8jxI6Vk&gs_ssp=eJzj4tVP1zc0TKqKr8pLyUsxYPRSSMxLUUhOzFPILFFISlUoyUgsUchUKM7IL81JUUhPzMwDAIwZEGQ&oq=and+can+it+be+that+I&gs_lp=Egdnd3Mtd2l6IhRhbmQgY2FuIGl0IGJlIHRoYXQgSSoCCAAyBRAuGIAEMgUQABiABDIFEAAYgAQyBRAAGIAEMgUQABiABDIFEAAYgAQyBRAAGIAEMgUQABiABDIFEAAYgAQyBRAAGIAESLwtUABY3R5wAHgAkAEAmAFhoAHSC6oBAjIwuAEByAEA-AEBwgIEECMYJ8ICBxAjGIoFGCfCAhEQLhiABBixAxiDARjHARjRA8ICCxAAGIAEGLEDGIMBwgILEC4YgAQYxwEY0QPCAgsQLhiKBRixAxiDAcICCBAuGIAEGLEDwgILEC4YgAQYsQMYgwHCAgsQABiKBRixAxiDAQ&sclient=gws-wiz&si=ALGXSlZQj9xSkfc_TBOSHtDqT3c_DqNkaRK0IQ_-d7FjW8c12cMG2tRAGf4p22qopKCPah8daP-yHAOcygbsDCmDtf2tj5pxHmY_PEyI0_XBwzQ8YjxVaSfoG_ruY_Qo_DTd5tdi9WPqqhWSNSh4L1ejT8-JV7WmeMg6XswcLe--exTGetg3zglmT0Fu9j95KYUrQqVGFOLG2eckj4Gamy7SI_VttmjU3kEn9Y2_4zhR__Sl4EkwPOuY2qWfOp_bvYx16qiKeY3lUHDQ1X09OcdVnMgE1bKjiuzdVIdIStOrr2nM367kcDPjkRGoY4HfT3eDrtCSonUMi3_I4rjOySq6gxlyX-is7w%3D%3D&ictx=1&ved=2ahUKEwibrYj7-raBAxWMkYkEHYi9AGAQjukCegQIIxAC> - And Can It Be That I Should Gain