

Philippians 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Analysis

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves (μηδὲν κατ' ἐριθείαν μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν, ἀλλὰ τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ ἀλλήλους ἡγούμενοι ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν, mēden kat' eritheian mēde kata kenodoxian, alla tē tapeinophrosynē allēlous hēgoumenoi hyperechontas heautōn)—Eritheian ("selfish ambition, rivalry," see 1:16) and kenodoxian ("empty glory, vain conceit"—from kenos, "empty," + doxa, "glory") name unity's enemies: self-promotion and empty honor-seeking.

The antidote: tapeinophrosynē ("humility, lowliness of mind")—compound of tapeinos ("low, humble") + phronēsis ("thinking, mindset"). In Greco-Roman culture, tapeinophrosynē was negative (servility, weakness); Christianity transformed it into virtue. Hēgoumenoi ("considering, regarding") is mental judgment: **esteem other better than themselves** (ἀλλήλους ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν, allēlous hyperechontas heautōn). Hyperechontas ("surpassing, superior") doesn't mean false self-deprecation but recognizing others' worth and prioritizing their good.

Historical Context

Roman society was fiercely hierarchical and honor-obsessed. Citizens competed for status, honor, and public recognition. Tapeinophrosynē (humility) was considered shameful weakness. Paul's call to esteem others as superior reversed cultural

values, grounded in Christ's own humility (vv. 6-8). The Christ-hymn (vv. 5-11) will illustrate this radical ethic.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do 'selfish ambition' and 'vain glory' (eritheia, kenodoxia) manifest in Christian communities today?
2. What's the difference between humility (tapeinophrosynē) and unhealthy self-deprecation or low self-esteem?
3. How can you practically 'esteem others better than yourself' this week without false humility?

Interlinear Text

μηδὲν	κατὰ	ἐριθείαν	ἢ	κενοδοξίαν	ἀλλὰ	τῇ
Let nothing	be done through	strife	or	vainglory	but	G3588
G3367	G2596	G2052	G2228	G2754	G235	
ταπεινοφροσύνη	ἀλλήλους	ἡγούμενοι	ὑπερέχοντας	ἑαυτῶν		
in lowliness of mind	each	esteem	better than	themselves		
G5012	G240	G2233	G5242	G1438		

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:10 (Parallel theme): Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Galatians 5:26 (Glory): Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Ephesians 4:2 (Parallel theme): With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Ephesians 5:21 (Parallel theme): Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

1 Peter 5:5 (Parallel theme): Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Philippians 2:14 (Parallel theme): Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

1 Timothy 6:4 (Parallel theme): He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

Luke 18:14 (Parallel theme): I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Galatians 5:15 (Parallel theme): But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Proverbs 13:10 (Parallel theme): Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.