



PHILIPPIANS: DOWN IS UP

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Scripture Reference: Philippians 2:1-11

Hey, I'm Jamie and today we're going to be reading scripture together. If you have your Bible near, please go ahead and grab it. Today we're reading Philippians 2:1 through 11. So if you are able, please stand in your homes for the reading of God's word.

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God, a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Hello family. This passage may be one of my favorite passages in all of scripture. It's one that I committed to memory very early on in my faith journey and theologians called this particular section in this letter, the hub of the wheel. It's like if you could imagine a bike wheel, this passage is at the center and all the other verses are either coming out of it or going into it. That's how important it is. It holds the whole thing together. In fact, I would say it holds in some ways all of scripture together in terms of the centrifugal force that Jesus has. So I want to just stop and ask God to lead us, speak to us as we go through this text together.

Father, we are thankful for your word. We're thankful, especially for the word made flesh, Jesus Christ. We pray that your Spirit would enlighten our hearts and bring conviction and great assurance of faith. And if we don't yet have faith, Lord, I pray that during this time you might grant people the faith to believe in Jesus. We pray this in his name. Amen.

So Paul just called them to live a life that's worthy of the gospel, a life that displays that we believe it, that we've been changed by it, that it has the power of God to transform our lives. And Tim talked about how we live that life in a manner that's worthy of the gospel. When we think about external attacks or suffering that we're going through and how we're called to be united and collaboratively working together with great courage, being consistent in our walk with the help of the Spirit.

In this text today, Paul is now turning it inward and saying, we've got to live that kind of life with each other and the way that we treat one another and the way that we fight for unity, the way that we humble and submit to one another.

So I want to just process through this passage, but I want you to hear this. This passage in a lot of ways carries the secret to everyone having a great relationship, and you're going to see it when we get there. In terms of great friendships, great teams, great relationships with coworkers and your boss, great relationship within your marriage, and parents with your kids. It's going to reveal what is necessary for those kinds of relationships to really thrive.

Now, there's one primary command here that Paul gives us, it's in verse 2. He says this, Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Now everything else that we heard connects to that, describes how we do that. And I want you to think about this, Paul is in chains. He's suffering in prison 24/7 chained to a guard. And what he's saying is, The way that you complete my joy, the way that you really helped me rejoice in Christ is by being committed to unity, being committed to have one mind. And why is that so important to Paul?

Because he knows that any division in the church undermines the very message of the gospel we preach, which is all about reconciliation with God and therefore with one another. And so division fundamentally undermines what we say we believe. But the other side of it is our unity shows the power of the gospel to bring us together, to take people that would normally not be one and show that Jesus Christ through what he's done makes us one people across all the diversity of race, social economic standing, background, you name it.

And so he knows the world is watching and they need to not just hear the gospel but see the implications of the gospel in real time. So he wants them to be united with that purpose, knowing that it's worth fighting for unity because the gospel, good news is at stake. That the world is watching, the ramifications are eternal.

It's interesting what happens when people pull together with the same yoke, how it brings a unity and a real significant power, actually.

I've been watching *The Last Dance*, the series about the Bulls and Michael Jordan on ESPN and there's a particular episode where Dennis Rodman is just kind of feeling like he's not in anymore. He kind of lost his passion for the game, he's not that excited about playing, it's creating division on the team. And they get beat really bad and he knows it's his fault. And he knocks on Jordan's door at the hotel and Jordan opens the door and he says, Let's have a cigar together. And that was his way of saying, I know it, I blew it. It's on me. I'll take ownership. And from that point on they started pulling together in the same direction again and they experienced a winning streak.

Now family, that's the key to our unity is that we pull together in humility. That we're pulling together for the sake of the gospel and we're not about ourselves ultimately, but about Jesus's glory. And so this whole passage is going to be about humility.

How do we do this? Well, first of all, we remember what we've received. Then we regard others as more significant. And then lastly, in order to do that, we'll have to reflect on the mind of Christ.

First, remember what we've received. Paul says it this way, So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from his love, any participation -- that's that word *koinonia* that we talked about a few weeks ago, partnership or ownership in the Spirit, any affection or tenderness is another way of saying that, any sympathy or compassion.

It's like Paul is saying, Stop. Do you have any of that? Do you know what you've received? Stop and just take a moment and ask yourself, have I forgotten what I've received because of Jesus Christ and all that he's done and given me.

I want you to do that right now. I want you to just stop for a moment and reflect. What have you received from God through Jesus Christ?

What Paul's doing and what I hope you're doing is he's getting us to remember that we've received so much. See he's saying, if you've received Christ personally, then you've received God's love and that you haven't just received that love for you, you've received that love so that you can love others with that love. And if you've received comfort from his Spirit, you haven't received it just so you'll be comforted. You've received that so you can comfort others with the comfort you've received.

If you've experienced God's compassion poured out on you, not treating you as you deserve, you'll have compassion for other people who you don't think deserve it. If you experience God's forgiveness in your life, then you'll be able to forgive others who sinned against you as well. So the idea is that you have everything in Christ to do everything you need to do for Christ.

I laugh at times, and parents you're probably gonna be able to agree with me on this. I'll have my kids come to me and say, man, we're bored or we don't, we don't have much to do, or you know, wish we had this, wish we had this. And I'm thinking, man, we've got like cupboards full of games. I've got three different gaming consoles they can play with. I got a hot tub in our backyard, a trampoline back there. Like there's so much they've been given so much. And I want to just say, you have enough to do everything that you ever wanted to do with what you already have.

And that's what Paul is trying to say to us, church. He's saying, God's already given you everything that you never deserved. And he gave it to you, one, so you'll know that he's a good dad, he gives good gifts. But he wants you to remain humble knowing that you didn't come up with yourself, and he wants you to remember that he gave it to you for a reason.

See, God gives so that you and I can give. It's not just so we can receive, but it's so that we can give out of what we've received. I've said this to you guys many times, that whatever God does to us, he intends to also do through us.

And so that's why Paul then calls us to the next thing. Not only remember what we've received, but then regard others as more significant or more important. He says this, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, which is the Greek word, kenodoxas. You'd probably recognize the one word in there, doxa, and doxa is glory, but kenodoxas is vainglory, it's empty glory. It's having the facade of glory but nothing behind it. And so he's saying, do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, empty glory, but in humility, count others more significant than yourself.

See, true glory is finding glory in an other. First and foremost, God. Finding him to be the most glorious and then in one another. The truth is all of us have a kind of glory. We've been created in the image of God and therefore we were created with the ability to display what God is like. That's a kind of glory. It's telling the true nature of what God's liked through our lives. And he's uniquely designed each one of us in a special way to specifically be a glory bearer.

But the problem is when we make our lives intent or ambition primarily about our glory, vainglory, empty glory, then we primarily are displaying a false self.

And if our goal, if our entire existence is self advancement, self glory, we're never going to be a one mind. We will always be kind of competing against one another to get ahead, to be above, to be more impressive. And unfortunately this is never going to lead to having genuine, deep, loving friendships.

When I was young, and I don't remember exactly when, but I started to believe that Jeff was not enough, that I needed to become more than God made me to be. I had to create a false self. It led to a kind of performance and a competition in my life where I started as my counselor tells me, I started to climb the shame ladder. That I was here and I had to be better than me.

And so there was this idea that I had to become more, I had to attain to more, and the problem with that is as you climb a shame ladder, you're always comparing yourself, not just to who God made you to be, but also to everybody else. And so what you end up doing is saying, how am I better than them? Or how did I become worse than them? And it never allows you to have a real true friendship where we're equal with one another. Where we can just be with one another and appreciate the glory of the other instead of needing to out shine the other. I'm sure some of you experienced that in your life.

I know for me, more recently as I've been seeing a counselor, he's helped me just be okay with being Jeff and all of his limitations. And then to learn how to appreciate others. And what I've discovered is I have not been very good at having genuine, deep friendships because I've always been in competition. I've not been able to just be at ease and enjoy the other.

Some of you, if you've ever played games with me, you know what I'm talking about. For me, playing a game was about winning, not just the joy of competing. It was about being better. It was about being above and when I lose, I would then go down the ladder and feel tons of shame.

See, pride is so destructive. The Bible is really clear about this. God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. He says that God will humble the proud, but he will exalt the humble. The key to practicing humility is considering others more significant than yourself.

It's been said that humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. To be clear, this is not being obsessed with negative thoughts about oneself and just kind of beating yourself up. That's just another form of pride because you're still consumed with yourself. No, humility is self forgetfulness. Humility has the ability to be set free from constantly thinking about me so that I can engage in a relationship with you. It's not consumed with me anymore, but in valuing and regarding others, seeing their inherent worth, and regarding their needs as important as my needs.

Paul says it this way in verse 4, Let each of you look, and that could be translated, pay really close attention, each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

See, this is the key to every healthy relationship. Those of you are married, this is a key. Those of you building friendships, this is a key. You're wondering why your teams are not getting along well, it's because you're not considering the interest of others, you're only considering yourself.

I want you to pay close attention to what others are interested in, not just yourself, but what others are interested in, what others need. In fact, I want you to take a moment just if you're with somebody, just look around at one another. In your mind's eye, think of your family, your friends, or your coworkers, your neighbors, and just ask yourself, what are they interested in? What do they need?

Just process that a bit. Do you know? Have you thought about that? If you haven't, it's time to shift your attention from just your interest and your needs to others' interest and their needs. And what if you committed as much or more energy to their advancement, their honor, their good as your own.

See, Paul knows that this very question and this very activity is going to lead you to need something far greater than just yourself to do it. He knows it's going to lead you to Jesus. And that's why he says the third thing, that we must reflect on Christ. See, the best way to grow in humility is to reflect on the humility of Christ. Me preaching a sermon is not going to make you humble. The only way you're going to grow in humility and unity is by seeing Jesus Christ humble himself for you. The more that you behold his humility and his glory, and you strive with the help of the Spirit to imitate his life, the more we family will be unified as a church.

He says it this way in verse 5, Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

Now, that's really an interpretation, the actual translation says, Have this mind among yourselves, which is also yours or which was also in Christ Jesus. And I'll come back to this because there's a reason why the ESV translators translated the way they did because they know it is a truth that the mind of Christ is ours. But what Paul wants us to do is take a moment and look at what the mind of Christ looks like in his activity.

Now, this idea of mindfulness is probably something you're familiar with. I remember, I used to see pictures of pet owners and their pets, and the longer they're together, the more that they seem to look alike. And those of you who have good relationships or maybe are married, you've been in this moment where mindfulness happened, where you were thinking the thoughts the other was thinking, you were aligned in kind of a way of thinking together. And that's what Paul is wanting for the church. He's wanting us to be thinking the same kinds of thoughts together. Last week, Tim helped us see that's being one soul together.

Now he doesn't want us just to have that together, but he wants us to have that with Christ, that we'd be mindful with Christ. And he's urging us to have the mind of Christ first of all, by seeing what it does. So he rehearses that and as he does this, starting in verse 6, he's going to state a familiar hymn. Most theologians think that this is an adaptation of a hymn everybody in the church was singing back then. So think of your favorite song and it's almost like in the middle of the message, I just start singing that song to you and it would bring all those thoughts and emotions back to you. And that's what Paul is doing in this moment.

He says, this is how we want to think about Christ. This is, we want to have the mind of Christ. So he says this, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men. Now I want to pause there. Before taking on human form, Jesus was the pre-incarnate eternal Son of God. In the very essence, God. The full radiance of God's glory, the true nature of who God is. That is Jesus pre-incarnate.

And then he's going to take on flesh, but Paul says it this way, he didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Another way of saying that is that he didn't consider it something to exploit for his own purposes or to take advantage of by tapping into what he deserves. Saying, I deserve this and I should have these blessings and these rights, and I should be treated this way. He doesn't take any of that. He's willing to let go of all of that and he then empties himself, which means he poured out his life. Or another translation says he made himself nothing. And how do we see that get worked out?

Paul continues, He emptied himself by taking on the very form of a servant being born in the likeness of men. I want you to think about this, the eternal Son of God dwelling in unimaginable and unapproachable, light, glory of glories, and then he took on humanity, he limited himself in the form of a baby.

AW Tozer says it this way, He veiled his deity, but he did not void his deity. He's still the God man. Another way of saying it is remaining all that he was, he became what he was not. He became a human, became a servant.

Now I want you to just imagine what if the church in Philippi aligned with the very mind of Christ that they were to say, as Christ came to serve us, we will now serve one another in the name of Christ. Imagine if we did that. Imagine if we thought of others more important. We consider them significant. We wanted to honor their the glory God gave them. We want to think of their interest and their needs, not just our interest and our needs.

And then consider the kind of servant Jesus became. Being found in human form, he humbled himself. Now notice this, it doesn't say he was humbled. It doesn't say he was humiliated. It's not like someone else did it to him, he just had to live with it. No, he chose to humble himself. That was his decision.

And he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Two key words there, Humble, Obedience. Jesus humbled himself and he became obedient to the Father, what the Father asked him to do. In his humility and in his obedience, he emptied himself by becoming a human with no advantage, no rights, no privileges. And he didn't just become a human, he became a servant. And he didn't just become a servant, he became a suffering servant. And he did just become a suffering servant, but he suffered to the point of death for you and me. And he didn't just die, but he died on a Roman cross, the most shameful, disgraceful, painful way of dying, known to man in that day. It was so bad, so shameful, so disgraceful that Roman citizens were not allowed to be crucified. And if you were a Jew and you were crucified, you were considered cursed of God.

He did that for you and me, and he didn't just die on a cross, a Roman cross, the most horrific suffering, but he died and became our sin on the cross. He who is without sin, innocent, perfectly obedient to the Father's will, became our sin so that in him we might be declared innocent. What humility. What love. What grace. This is what we've received.

Jesus considered our lives so important, and he was willing to give his. He considered our needs and our interests so much that he was willing to deny his. He did that for you and he didn't become less God to do it. No, instead, he displayed the true nature of God by doing it. He showed God to be so loving to you and to me, he displayed the extent that God's willing to go to rescue us, to show his love for us.

DW Hanson says it this way, The one who could have rightfully claimed the highest position in human history and justly receive supreme honors, deliberately sought the lowest position and submitted himself to extreme humiliation for us.

Jesus did the very thing we needed so that we could do to one another what God is calling us to do, which is acting humility to one another, honor one another, serve one another. He did that for us so we could do it to one another.

Thankfully the hymn doesn't end in the lowest of places. After this, and we're meant to sit in that just a bit just to feel the weight of what Jesus did for us. But after this, Paul begins the upward crescendo and he shows the complete reversal. Christ humbled himself. God exalted Christ. Therefore God has highly or it could be translated, super exalted him. He lifted him to the highest place possible. He vindicated Christ's death on the cross by exalting him to the highest place. God fulfills the very words that Jesus speaks in Matthew 23 that the greatest among you shall be your servant, that whoever exalts him will be humbled. And whoever humbles himself, sorry, whoever exalts himself will be humbled, whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

And then Paul continues, God not only highly exalted him, but he bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

What's that name?

Verse 11 says this, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. That's the name, Lord. That is the Greek translation of the name of God, Yahweh. And what Paul is saying here is, Jesus was exalted to the highest place and given the name that is above every name, he is God, Caesar is not. He is Lord. Caesar is not.

See, back then they would go around to one another and this is the phrase they would say over and over again, Jesus Christ is Lord. And what that really was is a shorthand way of sharing the gospel because Jesus is the word for God saves, Christ is the word for God's anointed one sent to save us from our sins. And Lord is the God who is above all, above Satan, above sin, above death, and above Caesar.

So in other words, it was a way of saying God has sent his Son to save us from our sins and be Lord over all so that we might have the power to live a new life.

Do you believe this? Have you confessed this personally? See, one day everyone's going to. Paul says it this way, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Family, if you believe and confess this now, you will get to forever enjoy a new heaven and a new earth with the glory of Christ and all other believers that love him. Some of you are going to wait till that day. You will at that day confess it. You will get on your knees and bow before the one who's worthy of all your honor, of all your praise, of all your worship. But I would beg you, do it now. It'll be too late if you wait until he comes back. Today is the day of salvation. Respond. Declare Jesus Christ is Lord over my life.

Submit to the one who submitted himself to death for you.

Church, family, followers and believers of Jesus, you have access to the mind of Christ. You can walk in humility toward one another. You can walk in obedience to God. You can honor one another. You can fight for unity. You can consider others more significant. You can walk the way of Jesus. You can. Why? Why do I say that? Because if your faith is in Jesus, you have union with Jesus. You can have his mind. Paul says it this way, the church in Galatia in Galatians 2:20, I've been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

He also told the church in Ephesus that God blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, and to the church in Rome, he said, you are co heirs with Christ. So Paul is saying, I want you to have the same mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus because you actually have access to have it. It's yours. You can live the life that Christ lived by Christ living in and through you.

Family, this can be our story. Right now we need this to be our story. We need to walk in unity. So many are divided, so many are not fighting for one another. The Lord needs to wake us up, if that's the case so that we will fight for one another, we will fight with one another and we will pull together in humility as one body.

Remember, it's all about Jesus, and with him it started and it ended with humility and then the Lord, the Father exalted him to the highest place. Family, the way up for us is down.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your Son. Jesus, thank you for giving your life for us. You who should not have did, but you displayed your humility and the love that you have for us, and you gave us what we don't deserve, your very life. And now I ask that you'd help us to have your mind. That we would access the way you would live, the way you would think, the way you would treat others. Help us, Lord, for your glory and our joy and the good of the people who are watching to see if the gospel really is the power of God for salvation. We pray you would do this in Jesus name. Amen.