

AM Philippians 2:1-18 How's your service?

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[0 : 00] to Paul's letter to the Philippians, Paul's letter to the Philippians and chapter 2. We're continuing our study on in this book of Paul, this letter to the church at Philippi and we've come to chapter 2 and we're going to think about Christ's service this morning and then at evening service we're going to think about Christ's exaltation.

But we're going to read from Philippians chapter 2 and I'm reading from the English Standard Version and there is a title which is not inspired which says Christ's example of humility and that's what we're going to be thinking of this morning.

But we're going to read down to verse 18 of Paul's letter. So Paul is writing to this church and he says, 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.

[1 : 58] But he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. Being born in the likeness of man 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.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ, I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labour in vain.

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

[3 : 43] Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me. Amen.

Come by your Holy Spirit and help us to understand it and open our hearts to receive it. We thank you for this opportunity to open your word and we pray that you will come now by your Holy Spirit and speak to us through your word.

Father, what we pray for this time, we pray for those who preach your word up and down the country. So come with us by your Holy Spirit and speak to us, for we ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. I've entitled the message this morning, and there's a sporting theme obviously coming through, How's your service?

How's your service? Those of you who follow tennis will know that those who serve best generally win the match.

[5 : 18] And in the Christian life, the great calling of the Christian life is to serve us, is to serve God and other people.

The great commandment was to love God with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves. It's important as Christians that we serve.

It's also important the way in which we serve. The mindset or the attitude that we serve with is vitally important.

Christian service is to be done with humility. And Philippians 2 and the opening verses that we're going to look at this morning are all about service.

Serving others. And the opening verses really focus on the person of the Lord Jesus. But if we want to look at this passage down to verse 8 this morning, and if you're taking notes, let me give you the heading so that you'll know where I'm going with this.

[6 : 33] In verses 1 to 4, we have the ordering of humility. The ordering of humility. And then in verse 5, we have the originator of humility.

Now look at that. And then in verses 6 to 8, we have the outshining of humility in the person and life and work of the Lord Jesus.

And then for those of you who can come back this evening, we're going to look in verses 9 to 11 this evening of the outcome of humility.

The year is AD 62. The apostle Paul is under house arrest in Rome. Paul writes this letter to the church at Philippi.

This was a church that he had founded about 20 years before. And you could read of that in Acts 16. Paul was under arrest in Rome.

[7 : 43] His trial was imminent. He might be acquitted. He might be beheaded. But despite the uncertainty and danger to his life, he was still able to rejoice and serve God in the gospel.

At the end of chapter 1, and in chapter 1 verse 27, Paul's desire for this group of Philippian believers that he's writing to is that whether they see him again, whether he sees them again, or not, he wants them to know, he wants to hear that they are continuing in a united way as a church, striving together in gospel service.

Listen to what he says. He says, Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come, he's not sure, and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side, serving for the faith of the gospel.

That was Paul's longing. And so as we come to chapter 2, in verses 1 to 4, we have this ordering of humility.

He carries the theme on from chapter 1 into chapter 2 and verse 2 to 4. Look at what he says in verses 2 to 4. Paul says, Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind.

[9 : 39] Do nothing, he says. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, he says, count others.

We were speaking to the children about that. Count others more significant and important than yourself. He orders this oneness of mind, this unity, this humility, because all isn't well at the church at Philippi.

There's been trouble. If you were to read forward into the epistle, you'd find that there were two women who were at loggerheads.

They're called Euodia and Syntyche. You'd read about them in chapter 4 and verse 2. He calls them out by name and he says, I beseech, I implore, Euodia and Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

The New American Standard Version says that he wants them to live in harmony in the church because they've fallen out and it was affecting the gospel and it was affecting the church and it was affecting the witness at Philippi.

[11 : 07] And he urges that the discord and the strife and the trouble cease and harmony he wants to return. His call is for them both together to conduct themselves in a way that is consistent with the gospel.

He says effectively to these two women and to the Philippians, he says, you believe the same thing, he says, you believe the same gospel that I brought to you, he says, now work and serve in humility together in the gospel.

And that, these words, the same mind and one mind and same spirit continually crop up as you go through this epistle. He's not, when he speaks to these two women, he's not addressing doctrinal differences.

They both agree. They both share the same faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But what he is ordering is how are they going to live that out when the rubber meets the road as we say.

He's conscious about the disagreements and rivalries and disputes that can arise in a church where envy and jealousy and personality differences creep in and ruin the life and the unity and the oneness of the fellowship.

[12:46] I don't know about your experience in churches but churches quite often have various splits because people fall out with each other, don't they?

we hold our hands up to that. But most splits in churches I submit to you occur not because of doctrinal differences, they may start there, but generally it's when factions arise and personalities take over and people don't get their way and sides get formed that the fellowship and the unity gets disturbed and even destroyed.

And Paul here is trying to guard against that. He wants them to be in unity in oneness striving together for the gospel.

What's the cause of the problem? Well he tells us in verse 2, look at verse 2, he says there are two things that have come in, there are selfish ambition and there's empty conceit.

Look at chapter 2 and verse 3 sorry, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility he says count others, others more significant than you.

[14:14] Selfish ambition is the first thing that he addresses. People are literally what it means is they're literally thrusting themselves forward to the front.

You know there are always people who want their way aren't there? They want to be heard they want the preeminence in the church who want prime place who want to be the greatest and in charge.

And later on Paul talks about a man in the New Testament a man called Diotrefes and it says who loved the preeminence who loved the top place.

But then he talks also doesn't he in verse 3 of conceit or empty or vain glory. He says I've heard there are people who want to get the adulation who strive after popularity who want the glory who love being the greatest and pride is at the heart of it all.

And so Paul orders the Philippians don't be like that. Do nothing he says like that. Whatever you do he says have a different mindset.

[16:12] Look at verse 3 have a different attitude but with humility of mind or lowliness of mind let each count others more significant than ourselves.

He orders them in other words and I know I'm stressing this he orders them not to think only about themselves but to put others first.

Instead of promoting and pushing and being ambitious for self he calls for a focus on other people. Instead of pride instead of wanting to be the top person the head honcho as we say he says have a lowly mindset.

You see this is counter cultural isn't it? It's counter cultural to the workplace in which I work in because to get to the top you've got to step on people all the way up so often.

It's not having a lowly mindset. It's fuelled by pride so often and selfish ambition and it can come into the church.

[17:28] You see the definition of humility is not to say everyone is better than yourself. That's false modesty isn't it?

The definition of humility is not to say oh I'm nothing I've got nothing to offer I'm a nobody I've got no gifts I'm hopeless I'm useless I'm nothing that is not what biblical humility is.

Let me submit to you that humility is not thinking less of yourself it is thinking about yourself less.

Can I repeat that? Humility is not thinking less of yourself it is thinking about yourself less.

The essence of humility humility is to put others first. It is to serve others. And so that's why the apostle Paul says in verse 4 he says let each of you look not only to his own interests he's not saying you've not to look out for yourself but he says don't just be completely self focused be others focused be on the lookout for others be interested in others help others serve others I wonder do you and I go out of our way to be interested in other people do we look out for others in our fellowship do we pray for others or if you're like me so often and we're selfish by nature we look after ourselves don't we do you know one of the themes that runs through the book of

[19:34] Philippians is the theme of joy j-o-y and a way to experience Christian joy according to the apostle Paul is to put Jesus Christ first others second and yourself at the end Jesus Christ first others second and yourself at the end and so he orders them to humility to look out for others and not to be self interested but then in verse five secondly we have the originator of humility Paul

immediately moves on from this ordering of humility to show us the supreme model of this mindset of service and humility humility I don't know if you're like me but always getting an example of something is always better it helps you to understand something show me what that looks like as an expression what does it look like what does good look like what does humility look like well here is the originator of humility it's seen in the

Lord Jesus Christ himself he's the originator of humility look at what he says in verse five Paul says have this mind amongst yourself have this mindset have this attitude as a Christian which was also in Christ Jesus in other words he's saying to the Philippines and he's saying to us if you want to see what humility looks like if you want to see what service to the church looks like if you want to see the model mindset look at Christ look at Christ because the humility of the Lord Jesus is seen in his humiliation as we'll see in a moment and the following verses record his service by tracing his descent from heaven down into this world his love for others his service for others and in obedience to his father's will so the originator is the

Lord Jesus but look at the outshining of humility in verses 5 through to 9 the outshining of humility the descent of our Lord Jesus from heaven to this world from eternity into time was a deliberate act of service motivated by love for others for people like you and I look at what he says in verse 6 the apostle Paul the Lord Jesus started at the highest place the highest place he is truly the greatest because he is God and he says in verse 6 who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped now these verses are full of theology and we can't go into them in any real depth this morning but this verse speaks to us firstly of the pre-existence of Christ as God who being in the form of God in eternity past long before the baby was born at Bethlehem that we'll think of as we come to Christmas in a couple of weeks before the creation of the world he shared eternal glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit he was in the form of God that was his being that was his essence I spoke to a man in Dumfries this morning a man called Alan and Tom and my car was just parked up and they came across and he looked at my red Audi and he put a thumbs up and then he started to speak to me about German the window and I got into a conversation with him and he said of course I said to him have you ever been round to the free church in

Dumfries no no he hadn't but the other guy had had some church connection but the point of the story was at one point I was speaking to him about the Lord Jesus and I said you should go round there you'll hear a message I wasn't encouraging them to come this morning to hear me but go round to the church because you'll hear the truth there and we got into a conversation and one of the first things that he said to me was well I don't believe that Jesus was the Son of God and I said well we would have to disagree about that but that's what this verse says that the Son of God the Lord Jesus was very God who being in very nature God the NIV says he was equal with God you remember in John 1 and in John 17 in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God the same was in the beginning with God and everything was made by him you see his equality the

[25 : 26] Lord Jesus coming from eternity past coming from his heaven he was equal with God it was his position by right it was his essentially it was his natively who being in the form of God and you can't start any higher than that but amazingly the apostle Paul says he didn't hold on to that position he says for his own good or selfish advantage but he used his God head to serve others he did not hold on to or grasp onto those privileges because he travelled from the highest place to the lowest place look at what he says in verse 7 he says but he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant and being born in the likeness of men he made himself nothing he poured himself out in love for people like you and

I the one who was in the form of God took the form of a servant and Paul is referring to the time when the Lord Jesus was born into this world the incarnation as we call it at Bethlehem he started at the highest place equal with God with all the privileges and all the rights belonging to God but he voluntarily gave up those rights and privileges and the question has been asked the theological question has been asked what did he empty himself of well some say he emptied himself of his attributes of deity but that cannot be right for that would mean that he would cease to be God and the thought is rather that he poured himself he poured out himself for us the thought is not that Christ emptied himself of his divine essence or of his nature or of his attributes but rather that by coming into the form of a servant he put himself totally at the disposal of people he emptied himself look at the word by taking on the form of a slave he took a new lower status and so actually he adds

humanity to deity he actually adds the divine to the divine nature by taking the human nature but look he came from the highest place he travelled to the lowest place he became a servant look at what it says the first step downward was to take the nature of a servant or a slave you know slave was somebody who had no rights in his life and

Christ stripped himself of all his rights and the security of eternity and he was the one who in love for sinners like you and I came in obedience to his father's will and he was the one who would say not my will but thine be done he was the perfect servant of Jehovah he was the one who was though he was rich the apostle Paul says elsewhere he says though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor he took a lowest place a slave's place he laid aside his garments of glory and eternity and he came and ultimately he washed the disciples feet didn't on the night in which he was betrayed how low and it was to

God the father that he was a servant and a slave he became a slave he became human look at verse 7 being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form now note that it doesn't say simply he came as a man yes the Lord Jesus was a real man but his humanity is not the whole story Christ was and is no mere man he did not cease to be God when he came into flesh at Bethlehem rather his God head was joined to that humanity his God head was veiled what is it the hymn writer says at Christmas or something that we sing at Christmas veiled in flesh the [31 : 13] God head see hail the incarnate deity he was truly God and truly man at the same time two natures in one person and he is however he is distinct from men he's not the exact same as you and I because he was sinless and the person that you saw walking through Galilee was a person who was God manifest in flesh so he came from the highest place he came to the lowest place he became a servant he became human but look he became obedient unto death look at verse 8 it says and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even the death of the cross

Christ became a servant he became a human being and thirdly the apostle Paul says here he became obedient to the point of death he humbled himself it's the same word that we had back up in verse 3 to humble yourself is to make yourself low is to put others before your privileges and position and this verse shows the depths to which his service would take him you see in the local church at Philippi a battle was being fought wasn't there by selfish ambition people were standing on their rights but Jesus' mindset Jesus' service Jesus' attitude on the other hand was characterized by self surrender by sacrificing himself for others and on behalf of others and death the death of the cross was an act of obedience the apostle

Paul says on Christ's part he was obedient unto death to the point of death even the death of a cross it was the climax of his commitment as the servant of God he was obedient to God right on to the point of accepting death and taking the wages of sin upon his shoulders at the cross to save others and the extent of his humiliation is seen in that it was the death of a cross you know many people are willing to serve other people aren't they maybe you're like that maybe I'm like this if it doesn't cost them anything if there's no price to pay if there's no sacrifice needed but if there is a price to pay many people lose interest don't they not prepared for the cost but it wasn't so with Christ it was a shameful death he was made a curse the Bible tells us in Deuteronomy that cursed is every man who hangs upon a tree and when the Lord Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary taking the punishment that was due for people like your sin and my sin he was made a curse by God he was spat upon he was rebuked he was reviled and he was a curse of God for us our sins if we're believers were laid upon him on the cross and he was smitten of God and afflicted what service and what sacrifice for others and Paul says to the Philippians you who follow who say that you're disciples of the

Lord Jesus you who say in Dumfries that you're Christians he says to you this morning and to me he says let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus I wonder is that the mindset that you and I have this morning how good is your service how do you match up to Christ are you prepared to go the second mile the third mile for others putting others before yourself well Paul orders the Philippians and he orders us to service he orders us to humility he points to the originator of humility as the person of the Lord Jesus look at him model your life model your mindset on him and then the outshining of that humility is seen in the servanthood of Christ he's a model for us all to follow his life was selfless his life was a life of self sacrifice and it was focused and given for others we'll see tonight that humility will always lead to exaltation and Christ humiliation took him to the cross and took him to die that cursed death but that's not the end because God highly exalted him and we'll

see that

[37 : 47] God willing tonight may we serve God in humility may we serve each other in humility and may we have the mind of Christ in this world as believers let's pray together father we are reminded of that hymn that says thou who was rich speaking of your son beyond all splendor all for love's sake became poor thrones were sacrificed for a manger sapphire paved courts for a stable and a trough in Bethlehem and then ultimately to a cross at Calvary father we thank you this morning for your son the Lord Jesus the one who was rich but then he became poor for us that we might be made rich enriched and raised up to be in fellowship with you father we confess our sins before you we confess that so often we put ourselves first and think only of others as a last resort so often help us not to have that mindset and help us to humbly serve each other in the church and in the wider community but father we pray that for those who do not know you as their saviour who do not know your son the

Lord Jesus as their Lord father we pray that they might come to know him and as your word says whom to know is life eternal father we ask this just now in Jesus name amen have a welcome have a welcome