

Unity

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. Would you turn to Philippians chapter 1? Please pray with me.

Our Father in heaven, we ask that you would show us the greatness of your Son. And we ask that you would give us grace to make him our deepest treasure.

In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. Why does he always leave his dishes at the sink?

If Mum knew how bad these vegetables tasted, she would not be forcing them down my throat. I really want that last slice of pizza.

Oh, no, no, no, you have it, I'm full. If only she knew how great I am, then she would go out with me. Dad just wants the money for himself.

[1 : 16] That's why he's not buying me that phone. Can't she see how good it would be to own that car? Why on earth did she spend money on flowers again?

She uses the heater way more than me. It's not fair that we split the bill 50-50. Why can't she just try and sleep when I put her to bed?

Why on earth would the coach let Dave start on the field and I have to sit on the bench? Why do they always mow the lawns on Saturday morning?

Can't he see that I'm hurt? Why is he pretending like he's the one hurt? How can they believe that the Bible allows evolution to be possible?

I've got great ideas for how the church can do evangelism better, but no one asks me. Isn't it obvious that those type of songs don't worship God?

[2 : 34] Wouldn't life be so much better if people just agreed with the way we were thinking? Wouldn't it be better?

Imagine it. You would have the house and the finances set up the best way. Your sporting team would have the best chance of winning.

You would be able to have the stuff you need. Your work would always be satisfying, not too stressful. Your kids would always do what you say. Your parents would always do what you say. You'd get on wonderfully with your neighbours, never having to speak to them. Bible studies would be 10 minutes, not an hour.

You'd always resolve disagreements within seconds. You would have the best strategies for ministries and evangelism as a church. Life would be so much better if you would just think the way I think.

[3 : 39] In fact, God says we need to be united. I reckon we would be way more united if you just thought the way I think. This morning, do you know what God's going to say to us through our passage in Philippians?

Here's what you're not expecting. God is saying that we ought to think the same way. But not how we might expect. Something way better.

The reputation of Jesus himself. The reputation of the gospel is at stake. We heard last week, if Christ himself is our deepest treasure of our hearts, then we will count death as gain.

And we'll count living for him as what it means to truly live. So how do we live for Christ? What does that even look like? Here we come to verse 27.

Paul gives the Philippians and he gives us one single instruction. Only. For everyone who God has saved by his grace, he makes this call on your life.

[4 : 58] Only. Only. Only. Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. You believe the message that you deserve God's just punishment for your sinful attitude to God and your sinful behavior.

But you also believe that Jesus took that punishment for you. All of it. He took it for you. And he gave you his eternal life with God. The gospel is great, isn't it?

Hearing it and believing it has saved your life. Now, how do we respond? And remember at this point, God is at work in us to produce this response.

Conduct every aspect of your life, every aspect of your life to show the greatness of Christ. Here, Paul uses a word for live.

Usually he uses a word that means something more like walk. But here he uses a different word, something more like live as citizens of a country. The Philippians, they would have been proud Roman citizens.

[6 : 16] And they would feel tremendous pressure to live worthy of being called Roman. But now that Christ has saved them, now that Christ has saved us, we need to think of ourselves under a different citizenship, a citizenship in heaven.

You are living under the law of the gospel of grace. So act according to grace. From watching TV, to choosing bananas, to having sex, to playing footy, to crying, to feeling anxious.

Let your thinking and values and choices be governed by God's grace to you in Jesus. It's a big call, isn't it?

God is at work in us to produce this. And our passage is going to help us do this. Live in a way that makes Christ and his gospel look as great as he is.

But what makes Christ look great? What shows that he is our treasure? What shows the people around us the priceless value of the gospel message?

[7 : 29] Well, the rest of the letter and the rest of the Bible addresses lots of areas that we need to hear. And that's why we need to saturate in God's word all the time.

But the first thing that Paul addresses appears to be the primary way to live to make Christ look great. It is what he spends the majority of the letter talking about.

And it's what he devotes the most beautiful poem of the New Testament to help us do. This is what it is. Live in a way that shows the greatness of Christ by remaining united.

Not united around superficial things. Not even things like evangelism. We make Christ look great in our unity when we share in Jesus' humble way of thinking.

So for the rest of this morning, we'll hear four aspects of how to live to show the greatness of Christ. The first one, when we remain united while under attack, this is a clear sign of the truth of the gospel.

[8 : 47] The second aspect is that it's not external opposition that really threatens us. What really has the potential to divide us is our own self-seeking thinking.

Thirdly, we remain united by sharing Jesus' humble way of thinking. And lastly, we believe that Christ is great because of his humility.

When we believe that he is great because of his humility, we will share in his thinking. So let's get into it. Look at verse 28.

Verse 28. So first, remain united while under external attack. The Philippians had been getting the gospel out into their city and no doubt they were already living in ways that showed that their primary loyalty was not to Rome but to Christ.

What do you think that caused? Jesus said, if you were of the world, the world would love you as its own.

[10 : 06] But because you were not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. We are citizens of heaven.

If they persecuted me, says Jesus, they will also persecute you. Opposition to Jesus is par for the course.

The gospel is good news. It is good news, but people will either love it or hate it. When you live in line with the gospel, people will be attracted to it or they'll despise it.

Now, one thing to make clear, if we ourselves are offensive in our manner and people are hostile towards us because we are offensive, don't call that persecution.

You're just offensive. So there's a few guys on Beaumont Street. They just approach people and say, do you know you're going to heaven? Okay, confronting, maybe it's loving.

[11 : 18] And then even when Christians go, yes, I believe in Jesus, I'm going to heaven. They're like, are you sure? And then they just walk away. Now, they're offensive. Don't call that persecution.

But even if you are gentle and considerate and truthful to the gospel, it will bring about opposition because people will either submit to Christ or they will oppose him.

For the Philippians, the opponents are either people coming into the church trying to teach them to, they have to submit to the law of Moses, or maybe the opponents are just the surrounding society, the surrounding authorities.

I think that's more likely because in verse 30, Paul compares their conflict to his current imprisonment and also his original imprisonment in Philippi.

But it could just be any opponent's. The important thing is that the church holds rank. Their chief officer, Paul, is absent.

[12 : 24] But that doesn't matter. For the sake of showing that Christ is great and his gospel is worth believing and sharing, they are to stand firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

It's military language. Roman soldiers would hold their ground by having half their shield covering themselves and half their shield covering the man beside them.

They would move and defend as one unit, as one man. The Philippians are to have the same spirit, the same goal motivating them.

They have the same mind controlling their every movement. Move as one. Whatever the opponents threw at them, don't feel scared.

Feel pity for the opponents and feel assured of your own salvation. Now that's opposite to the way we think.

[13 : 26] How do we think this way? How can we be sure that God approves of us when people are opposing us? Sure doesn't feel like God is approving of us in that moment. Verse 29, have a look.

We're to know and remember that God has not only given you faith in Jesus, but he gives you opportunities to witness to the value of Jesus by giving you sufferings simply for your faith in Jesus. When we remain united, committed to the gospel together, even when under attack, this shows that we really believe.

This shows that we belong to Christ and it shows that our opponents are really opposing Christ. They will be judged on the last day.

Let's feel pity for them. Let's pray for them. When we remain united, we are reassured that we really do belong to Christ. We will be saved.

[14 : 29] We will be vindicated on the last day. Unity, even while being opposed, being willing to suffer, shows the great value and truth of the gospel.

But notice that chapter 2 verse 1 starts with, so, or therefore. Paul is going to show that there's an even bigger threat to our unity.

What actually has the potential to divide us is our own self-seeking way of thinking. Verse 3.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. Conceit means to be full of yourself.

And if you're full of yourself, you don't even realise it because you already have an inflated view of yourself. Now, Australians.

[15 : 42] Australians don't put up with arrogance. We don't like anyone who's arrogant. And so, I think we're in danger of thinking this verse isn't about me.

I'm not arrogant. But, as Australians, just because we don't put up with arrogance doesn't mean that we value humility. Have you noticed the ads for people signing up to the Australian Defence Force? They surprise me. I just, I can barely understand them. I went to the ADF website, and this is one of the main links on the website. Explore all the financial, career, and lifestyle benefits of working for the ADF.

If any job is about serving others, surely laying down your life for your country is. But no, they're selling it by saying, what financial and career and lifestyle benefits do I get out of it?

As Australians, we are a self-seeking country on an individual basis. What about you and me?

[17 : 03] I hope how I started this sermon showed that the way we think is often, often about our own self-seeking desires.

And could it be that our opinions and strongly held convictions can sometimes be the fruit of assuming that we are so clever, that we are so experienced or talented, or we just assume our way of seeing the world is the right way.

I'm not saying don't hold convictions. I'm saying, have a look. What's behind those? So notice two things in our text. First, Paul is speaking to the whole church.

It's not just a few arrogant people in the congregation. He's speaking to all of us. We can all be proud and self-seeking. Second, look at what the opposite of being driven by self is.

I think we can often think that the opposite of self-seeking is just doing what you need. You just go off the base of what you need, not what you want.

[18 : 17] That's not the opposite of self-seeking. The opposite of self-seeking is in humility. Count others more significant than yourselves.

Wow. Do you find that hard? I do.

This doesn't mean that you think of yourself less valuable. It's not saying have a poor self-esteem. Otherwise, Jesus could not have been humble.

He was the most valuable and still is the most valuable person in the universe. It's not about having a low self-esteem. That's not what this is saying. To be humble is not to think less of yourself.

It's to think of yourself less. It's to intentionally choose to place at the center of your thinking and decision-making others, not self.

[19 : 23] It's to pay close attention to what others need. Humility is an active and intentional choice to consider others.

When you meet a humble person, you won't go away thinking, wow, they were humble. You will go away thinking, wow, they were interested in me. They really cared about me.

That's evidence that you just met a humble person. this kind of thinking is completely opposite to the way the world works and it doesn't come naturally to us.

We need external help and that's exactly what we've got. Look at verse 1. If there is any encouragement in Christ, that if statement is really saying since you have, since you have comfort and encouragement of being saved in Christ, since you've got it, since we share it, since you experience the consolation of Christ's love during hard times and sufferings, since you participate in the Holy Spirit, since you receive God's tender mercies and compassion for you, we share in this together.

What's going to bring joy to Paul because it'll be the Philippians living in a way that worthy of Christ? This is what it is to be united.

[20 : 58] If the local church is deeply united by sharing the same thinking, have the same intentional love, have deep agreement by operating on the same thinking.

So what is this thinking that unites us? Humbling ourselves by counting others more significant, paying close attention to their needs.

Imagine if we were all doing that. Humbling ourselves by counting others more significant, paying close attention to their needs. How do we have this thinking among us, within us?

How do we do it? Do we just really work hard at not thinking about ourselves? Isn't that just thinking about yourself? Don't do that. Please don't do that. This is how we do it.

We focus on the greatness and the beauty of Christ. So let's have a look at the beauty of Christ.

[22 : 11] Verse 5. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

Jesus. What is Jesus' way of thinking? Here we come to a poem about Christ that for good reason some see as the centrepiece of the crown jewel of the New Testament.

If you're still exploring Christianity, can I urge you to pay attention? This poem, it's going to give you a glimpse not only to what we believe as Christians, but it's going to give you a glimpse, a window into Jesus' thinking.

Let's have a look. Verse 6. Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, before being born as a baby, Jesus existed.

I'm hoping our head is blown at each point. It should be. Before he was born, he existed. Not merely existing as one of the first of God's creation, no, he was in the form of God.

[23 : 32] And that phrase in the form of might give the false impression that he was just an imitation of God. That's not what it means. It means that he existed as God. If it looks like a duck, if it thinks like a duck and acts like a duck, it's a duck.

As the Son of God, Jesus shared all God's nature, not just in a similar way, in the same way, the same essence. God's eternity, his knowledge, his power, his wisdom, his unchangeableness, his love, his mercy, his justice, and so on.

Jesus, was the one who put the southern cross in the sky. He's the one upholding the law of gravity right now. He is God in every respect.

He deserves obedience and thanks and worship from everything that exists. Verse 6, though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

God that's the very opposite of Adam in the garden. Equality, equal rights, equal status, equal pay, equal opportunities, equal portions, equal credit.

[24 : 54] We're obsessed with equality. We grasp at it. We think it is worth grasping at. We think it's worth taking possession of and defending no matter what the cost.

but notice here that Jesus was equal with God. He was God. He was equal with God but he didn't count.

He didn't consider. He didn't think being equal with God was something to be protected. Wow.

What did he do? Verse 7, he emptied himself. First, let me clarify what this doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that he gave up his godness.

He didn't give up any characteristic of being God. Before he came to earth, he was fully God. While he was on earth, he was fully God. Ever since and forevermore, he is fully God.

[25 : 58] He is always God. So what does it mean that he emptied himself? The poem tells us he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. Here we have that same idea again, taking the form.

Jesus actually became a servant, a slave. Could you imagine the queen putting on gloves and cleaning the public toilets in London?

The one who by nature is the ruler of everything that exists. The one to whom everything that exists owes its breath.

The one to whom everything that exists should look to him and say, what would you have me do?

He's the one who became a slave. he chose himself.

It wasn't forced on him. He took the nature of a slave upon himself. What is this servant form?

Verse 7 and 8. Becoming in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man, as a human being.

[27 : 22] The creator became a creature. The creator of the God. More than that, the Holy One could not be distinguished by outward looks alone from sinful humanity.

If you had a picture of a random selection of people of Nazareth in the time of Jesus, you could not be sure which one was Jesus, despite all the pictures you've seen.

You could not be sure. He looked exactly like us. The Holy One looked like us. Proud, God-ignoring, promise-breaking people.

He became like us in every respect except sin. He was sinless. He designed the human body, and yet He is the one who experienced hunger and thirst and cried.

He was dependent on sleep. He really and actually became a man. He emptied Himself.

[28 : 33] He became a servant. And incredibly, there's even more to the way Jesus thought. Verse 8, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, death, even death on a cross.

No one forced this humiliation on Him. He humbled Himself. Again, humility is not about counting yourself as less valuable.

Jesus didn't pretend He wasn't God. He didn't pretend He wasn't valuable. He wasn't insecure. How did Jesus show true humility?

He became obedient. Obedient to other people? No, obedient to God the Father. We see this clearly in the Gospels.

He never insisted on His personal autonomy. Quite the opposite. He delighted in speaking the words God gave Him, the Father gave Him to speak. He delighted in doing the works God gave Him to do.

[29 : 51] In the midst of insult, in the midst of every attempt by men to undo Him and even kill Him, He remained obedient to the Father.

Even when He was tempted by Satan to have rule over everything without having to suffer, He remained obedient to the Father. He humbled Himself by delighting in doing what God the Father wanted Him to do.

Even to the point of death. Even to the point of public shame. People looked at Him and saw Him as weak and powerless, saw Him as an enemy of God.

His disciples deserted Him. people looked at Him and thought He's a criminal. He is cursed by God. He deserves to die.

He was even obedient to the point of the Father forsaking Him. He never said enough. I deserve better. I'm stopping.

[31 : 04] I'm stopping. though equal with God, He chose to become a slave.

Becoming in every way like sinful men, except without sin. And He chose to humble Himself to the direction of His Father, serving you, serving me by dying so that I don't have to.

Him. This is Jesus' way of thinking.

Isn't He amazing? God the Father certainly thought so. Look at verse 9.

One very key word. Therefore, 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.

[32 : 28] It's for the very reason that Jesus chose to lower Himself that God has lifted Him up. God exalts the humble. He looks at His Son and says He is the greatest person and He is to be worshipped by everything that exists because He humbled Himself.

He is truly great. He was a slave in service of all, so God exalted Him to rule over all. And Jesus knew this.

He trusted this. He said whoever wants to be great must be the servant of all. He not only chose to lower himself in obedience to God but He trusted in His Father's lifting Him up out of the grave to the highest place.

Selfish ambition and conceit, they are empty and shallow. Do you want to be great? Do you want to be great? Follow the greatest one.

humble yourself. God is unifying everything under Christ.

[33 : 50] Everything that exists will one day acknowledge His greatness. He is Lord and He's great because He chose to lower Himself.

This is the mind of the Son of God. Isn't He beautiful? This is why we worship Him, isn't it?

How do we live worthy of the gospel of Christ? When we are unified in common worship of Jesus, He is great.

When we worship Him for the way He humbled Himself in obedience even to the point of death.

And when we adore Him and cherish Him for this and count Him as the greatest because of this, we too will choose to be humble.

We won't only have the same goal of wanting to show the greatness of Jesus, we will have the same humble way of thinking. thinking, we will be united with the one way of thinking.

[35 : 08] We will even share in the Son of God's way of thinking. We are called to live all of our life worthy of this gospel of Christ.

Christ. How beautiful our families, how beautiful our church will be, how strong we will stand against all opposition, how we will live worthy of the gospel if we count Jesus as great, if we think like our humble Christ.

let me pray. Please pray. Lord Jesus, you are amazing.

Help us treasure you. help us more and more see your greatness that you chose to serve us.

Please help us love you as you deserve to be loved. Father, make us like you. You are amazing.

[36 : 40] In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Jesus is great. Amen.