

A Life Worthy of the Gospel: Part II

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 March 2016

Preacher: Vijay Henderson

[0 : 0 0] Thanks guys for reading and let me add my welcome to Alex and Mark. It's really great to see you here tonight. And if you keep your Bibles open, that would really help me as we work through this book. We don't normally do this here at church, but I'd just like to speak to Dazza and Baza. Dazza and Baza, they're sitting in the back rows over there.

Great that we're all here to listen, but I'd just like to speak to Dazza and Baza. Dazza and Baza, they were leaders at their respective university CUs. They came here to Holy Trinity and they lead Bible study groups on Wednesday nights here at Trinity Young Adults. And now Baza and Dazza are considering taking the coveted positions of Mark Chu's personal assistants next year. But most of you will know that Baza and Dazza haven't spoken to each other for six months. And if you weren't aware, for those of you who came to the 10.30 service weekend away last weekend at Phillip Island, you'll know that Baza and Dazza came to blows.

If you're new with us, just so you know, Baza and Dazza are not real people. I saw a load of you looking to the back rows to see who's Baza and who's Dazza. They're not real people.

If your names are Baza or Dazza, I'm really sorry that they're your names. It's a creeper, that one's a creeper. But I promise you that this talk is not specifically for you. Well, maybe it is. You see, more accurately, Baza and Dazza's names are Euodia and Syntyche.

You see, Paul would have read this book, Philippians, out in church in public, just as we are now. And in chapter four, he gets to Euodia and Syntyche. And he says to them, he says, help these women who used to labor by my side. You see, they've had a falling out too, and they haven't spoken for six months either. Now, I'm not aware of a full-blown Euodia or Syntyche type falling out here at HTD. But you will know real examples of real Christians who've had a similar breakdown in their relationship. Even in this room, there's probably rivalries and tensions.

[2 : 3 2] Perhaps it's with other people at your university Christian union or with other Christians you work with. See, chapter two of Philippians is all about training the church for unity in the gospel.

And it's to train us so as we do our job of spreading the gospel, we will be a strong Christian partnership. Now, the trouble with church, I find sometimes, is that it's full of Christians.

And so, can't we do this job alone? Why does the church need to be united? Why do you have to be united to me? Can't we just do it alone? And the answer is no. And that's because the world hates Jesus. And the world hates Jesus' work. It doesn't want it to continue. And on our own, as lone ranger Christians, we would be thrown off course or we'd be dumbed down, Christianly speaking. That is, on our own, we wouldn't be able to continue Jesus' work, our jobs. See, we need to be in partnership with one another. We need to be united because our unity protects us and it encourages us if we're to go on spreading the gospel. Or in other words, chapter two of Philippians helps us to form a shield wall. Do you know what a shield wall is? Have you ever seen the movie Gladiator? Or perhaps 300 or Braveheart or Troy or any one of those sorts of movies? You know when they get together and they're in the Colosseum and they form that sort of shield structure-like thing? I've got a picture of one on the overhead. There. You know in those movies when they form up one of those things? And you can notice it's sort of 360-degree protection. They're really protecting one another. But it's really important to note that a shield wall like that only works if they're united and if they stand firm. So thanks, you can take that down. And so unity is what we're about tonight. And you see, the trouble is everyone in the world thinks unity is a good idea. So in schools you have inclusive policies. In workplaces you have gender and sexual equality. The government with their multicultural policies, everyone thinks unity is a great thing. And so my aim this evening is to figure out what is the Christian version of unity? And then to that end, how far should Christians go to being united? I've put that question at the top of your handouts. And given we're at the halfway point of Philippians, I thought just for the benefit of people who've missed the first two weeks, just to do a quick one-minute recap, just one minute. This will involve a tiny bit of flicking, but only to verses we've already seen in Philippians. So Paul started the Philippian church in the city of Philippi, which is the capital of Macedonia, part of the Roman Empire. And the Philippians, they're a relatively young but awesome church, just like us. In chapter one, Paul was overjoyed because of their partnership in the gospel with him. That is, in the work of telling people the good news about Jesus. But however, while they're awesome, cracks are starting to appear in their partnership, in their shield wall. In chapter one,

Paul talks about people who are trying to outdo him in the preaching game, just to be his rivals. Tonight, we've got grumbling and arguing. And then there was our friends, Euodia and Syntyche in chapter four. Cracks are appearing in the shield wall. There's internal, I guess, infighting. There's also external pressure causing cracks, which we'll see next week. There's religious leaders who are trying to get the Christians to abandon trusting in Jesus. So we'll see that next week. But you see, to be a Christian is to give your whole life to Jesus and also to his work of making other Christians.

And Paul says this is a hostile and difficult world where there's infighting and external pressures. And so if we're to be a part of Jesus' work, if we're to go on together in gospel unity, we must form a shield wall. And a shield wall needs two things. It needs unity and it needs standing firm.

[6 : 59] Unity chapter two, standing firm next week, chapter three. You can imagine Russell Crowe as gladiator, as the chariots are whizzing by his ear and they form up, you know, the shield wall structure. And the guy next to him says, you know what, Russell, I don't really like you anymore. I'm not happy with my position in the shield wall. I think I should be the leader. And so he breaks unity and he steps out, doesn't stand firm. The first thing that's going to happen is that guy is going to get killed because there's no sort of 360 degree protection for him. So he's gone. But then poor old Maximus, he gets a spear in the side as well, doesn't he? Because this guy has just left a gaping hole in the shield wall. The shield wall will only work if they're all united, if they're all standing firm.

And so chapter two is our unity chapter. You can see unity words. Have a look at chapter two, verse one with me. So there's words like common sharing, tenderness, compassion, like-minded, same love, being in one spirit of one mind, doing nothing selfish, nor vain, nor conceited.

And there's humility as well, which is a big part of last week. See, chapter two will train the church in unity and show us how far do we have to go? What is the cost that we should pay for our unity?

Please note also, Paul is not talking about, I guess, general unity amongst just the wider world, not talking about unity between governments or between religious divides. He's talking about unity within Christian partners, within the church. And so there's a handout I've got for you.

Do follow along and that way you can see where I'm at if the heat gets you and your brain dies halfway through. So point number one. You see, to be a split-proof shield wall, you need to be selfless, don't you? You need to do chapter two, verse three. You need to, in humility, value others above yourself. You need to look to the interest of others. Because see, the Bible doesn't tell us why Euodia and Syntyche had a fallout. It doesn't tell us why Baza and Daza had a fallout either.

[9 : 15] You know, maybe Euodia was totally in the right, maybe Syntyche was totally in the wrong. But the Bible does tell us the only way for these two women to be reunited is if there is a change in mindset. And if they consider the other one more valuable than themselves, as if they do the early chapter two things. And where do you get a mindset like that?

You get it from Jesus. Because Christians, you all belong to a king who, although he was equal with God, obediently gave up this right and died for you to reunite you with the Father. He thought you more valuable than himself. He looked to your interests more than his own. That is the gospel.

That is verses five to nine or five to eight from last week. And so how hard do you have to try? What is the cost you should pay? How selfless should you be for Christian unity?

Jesus thinks even if it kills you, even if it means becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because that's what I did, Jesus says, who died to unite us back to God.

Now you see, I'm fairly, I don't know if you don't know me that well, but I'm fairly selfless. I'll just let you know I'm fairly obedient. And I mean, I can say sorry with the best of them. I've got a too sorry policy. So if we ever get into a fight, wait for the second apology.

[10 : 57] I'll always give you two. Which actually, in the world's eyes, in Melbourne's eyes, Melbourne says, two apologies is more than enough. Actually, why don't you just stand your ground instead?

But you see, Jesus is the supreme expert who obeyed his father selflessly, who valued others more than himself, way beyond two apologies, even to his death.

Which is why if you odia and syndicate, if Baza and Daza, if you and the other person in the church who are having a falling out, if you are to be reunited, you don't need my mind.

You don't need to be like Vijay. You need Jesus' mind. You don't need to be obedient like Vijay, who does the bare minimum. You need to be obedient like Jesus, who was obedient even to his death.

You see, it takes two people to get into a fight, doesn't it? But if they're proclaiming Christ also, and as much as it depends on you, until you are dying, just like Jesus.

[12 : 03] See, that is what it is to have, as chapter 2 verse 5 says, the same mindset as Christ Jesus. But this is really important.

Remember, the road Jesus walked was obedient suffering and death for the sake of the gospel. And it will end with verse 9 to 11 from chapter 2.

It will end with God exalting him to the highest place and having a name above every name. You see, Jesus' road is like the Nike swoosh, which I've put on your handouts. And the sharp bit of that Nike symbol, that's the obedience and suffering and death for the gospel.

But then way, way, way, way, way, way up, every knee bowing, every tongue confessing that Jesus is Lord. That is the path for the Christian.

And given that that is the road Jesus walked to unite sinful people back to God, how should Christians respond? Well, the answer is our second point.

[13 : 06] Have a look at it with me. It says, You see, that's the imagery of chapter 2.

Soldiers in a shield wall together. Not Roman soldiers like Maximus with their swords, but heavenly citizen soldiers who strive together using words of love about Jesus.

And the key to today's talk is verse 12. Have a look at it with me. Verse 12. Therefore, my dear friends, as you've always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

If you want to understand today's passage and see what I've been doing with my week, it is verse 12. We need to figure out what it means to work out our salvation. And this is what I think you can come up to me later if you disagree.

But I think Paul is talking about obedience. Let's pull this verse apart. Paul says, continue to work, sorry, continue to work out your salvation, which means they were already doing it.

[14 : 16] What were they already doing? Obeying. As you've always obeyed, continue to obey. As you've always done this, continue to do this.

It makes sense of the words he uses. As you've always obeyed, continue to work out your salvation. And so the working out of salvation, I think, is an act of obedience.

So it's not if we feel like it, but if we obey Jesus. Notice also that our passage, verse 12, begins with, therefore. And that means our whole passage today is basically the application of everything we saw last week.

Paul tells us that Jesus worked himself to death, literally, so we could have salvation and be united to God. And that is the only context and frame that makes sense of this curious phrase, work out your salvation.

Therefore, be obedient, just as Jesus was obedient, in verses 6 to 11. If you're not a Christian here today, it's great that you've joined us.

[15 : 28] We're really grateful that you're here amongst us. You're really welcome. But there's something you need to note as well. Please note that a Christian never needs to work for their salvation. Christians only work out their salvation.

Jesus is the one who worked for their salvation in the previous verses, verses 5 to 11. You see, every other religion, every other worldview says, this is how you work for or earn your way to heaven or ultimate spiritual reality, whatever that may be.

But you see, that's a fool's errand, isn't it? Because no one can do that. No one is perfect enough to earn their way. See, the Christian need only hold on to the salvation which Jesus won for us in verses 5 to 11.

And the way they hold on is through obedience. I'm not obedient to rules and regulations and all those sorts of things, but obedience to a person, to Jesus. See, obedience shows that I follow Jesus.

Obedience to him shows that I belong to him. And the whole New Testament of the Bible, the whole New Testament is about how we can obey Jesus, how we can be obedient in every area of our lives.

[16 : 47] And here in chapter 2 of Philippians, it focuses particularly on the area of unity with other Christians. Verse 12, Therefore, my dear friends, as you've always obeyed, continue to obey or work out your salvation.

You see, obedience saves. Or in other words, obedience grabs onto. It keeps us following Jesus on his road. It keeps us holding on to the salvation that his death achieved for us.

And even if it takes you the most costly sacrifice of your pride and your time and your money, even if it means giving up what you know is the right position in the argument, even if you know for a fact that you are right, even if it kills you all the way to death to unite back with fellow Christians, that is you walking Jesus' obedience road to death.

Because that is what it would feel like to sacrifice your pride and your time and your money and your right position in the argument. How hard does all that sound?

See, this is why I love the Bible because it anticipates the very next question because the first thing I want to do is that is impossible. And so that's one of those Christian things that I'll just store away and just rely on Jesus' forgiveness.

[18 : 06] And the Bible anticipates that question and so Paul writes verse 13. for or because it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

See, how can we do this impossible sacrificial obedience? Paul says because God works in us to will and to act. He enables us to sacrifice our pride and time and money and right position.

The verse tells us that when we do that, that actually fulfills God's good purpose for our lives. And I think given that God works in us, given that it's his purpose that we should have this costly unity, that should drive us to prayer.

And I wrote a little prayer and I think this is one way we can apply these verses. Here's my prayer. Father, because your power is at work in me, will you help me to reunite with Dazza and Baza according to your good purposes in my life?

I think that's how we apply these verses. God works in us. It's his plan for us that we would have this costly unity. Please note, when I say things like sacrifice and even up to your life, I'm not talking about going out onto Doncaster Road and throwing yourself under a bus.

[19 : 34] Nor am I talking about obviously blowing yourself up and hurting people. Obviously not. What we're talking about is selfless sacrifice of ourselves in all things, time, money, all those things I named before, even right up until your life, if needs be, for the sake of unity with other Christians.

not just sort of throwing your life away for no reason as perhaps a suicide bomber might. And don't you see, don't you see, that is the difference between Christian unity and the world's unity.

Everyone wants unity. Everyone says give peace a chance. We've been saying it for however long. There is not a government on this planet that has ever achieved any permanent peace or unity between people of different countries.

But Jesus, in one act, bridged a much bigger gap between evil, sinful Christians like me and his righteous and holy father.

And all he wants is for those who follow him to be prepared to make the same sacrifice, if needs be, for gospel unity. Paul goes on to say what this would look like.

[20 : 45] He talks about, verse 14, do everything without grumbling or arguing. I don't know about you, but I am a professional grumbler. That is grumbler, not gambler.

Just to clear that up. I'm well classed at it. I've got a black belt in grumbling. It's even on my CV under personal interests right at the back. It goes movie, sport, grumbling. I didn't tell Andrew Price or Mark Chew when they asked me if I would, I think I asked them if I could be the Ridley student, whichever way.

I never told them that I was, you know, I had a PhD in grumbling. And this is how my grumbling goes. My old church does it that way. Your church does it this way.

I wish I was at my old church. Isn't that shocking? Isn't that disgusting? See, maybe you're a professional arguer.

God's word to us this evening is obediently stop my grumbling. Obediently stop your arguing. work out your salvation.

[21 : 49] Stay on Jesus' salvation road. A road which, verse 15 tells us, keeps us blameless and pure. Which will lead to us being God's children.

Isn't that incredible? You won't find anything like that anywhere in the universe. See, my grumbling and your arguing is putting us on a dangerous road. One, which, verse 15 says, is warped and crooked like this generation.

And just to ram this home, Paul uses a bit of Old Testament genius. And he does that to put a question to us here tonight. He says, what kind of church do you want Holy Trinity Doncaster to be?

And so he shows us a picture of two churches from the Old Testament. There's one in verse 14, which is Israel in the desert. And there's one in verse 15, which is Jesus' church at the end of time, which was our first reading.

So the first church, Israel. See, Israel were even better than me at grumbling and complaining. They were already saved people. It's important to note, they were already saved people.

[22 : 58] They were now in the desert on their way to their future salvation land, the future promised land. And they decided, you know what, we don't trust you, God. We're not going to obey.

We're going to grumble and argue against you and against Moses, your man. And that whole generation never made it to the future salvation land. Grumbling is deadly.

Do you want HTD to be a church like that? The other church is in verse 15, where Paul talks about shining like stars. And that is the church in Daniel 12, which was, as we said, our first reading.

And that is, which says that Christians who are obedient and trusting God, while they get about their work of holding out the gospel, will shine like stars.

That's the imagery. Shine like stars. Let me ask you, have you ever been in the countryside and looked up at the night sky away from city lights?

[24 : 02] What did you see? Stars. Loads of stars, stars, which is an odd response actually, given when you look at the night sky, there's so much more black space than stars.

But you see, the stars shine so much, there's such a contrast between a little shining star and the black darkness around them, that all we notice is the shining star, because they dazzle, don't they?

That is what Paul is saying here. And here is how it works. See, if we are the people who are united, who obediently live Jesus-minded lives, who are secure enough to value others ahead of ourselves, who, with God working in us, are able to walk the obedience road even to death if needs be, because we're confident about our resurrection to come, then we will dazzle, and we will be different to the dark world around us.

Nothing in us, we're not special, all we've done is steal the mind of Christ. But we will dazzle. And as we do that, we can hold out the word of life, which is the most important thing of all time.

That is what it means to be a Christian. See, the shield illustration, that's a bit violent, so here's a nicer illustration. How about a shiny star saying, would you like some life?

[25 : 29] That is what it is to speak to someone about the gospel of Jesus. Would you like some life? Would you like truth and justice and righteousness? Would you like to be forgiven of your sins? Would you like to have a home with God as your father forever?

Would you like life? That is what it is to be a Christian. That is what shining like a star looks like.

But if we're going to walk this Jesus road, we want to be sure that we're going to come out the other side, aren't we? Because in 2016, I don't know about you, but in 2016, to me, selflessness and obedience sounds like it's for losers and for idiots, or for just the really keen people at church.

See, that's what we think about Jesus road. That's what I think about Jesus road sometimes, if I'm to confess. But let me just recap. Jesus walked all the way down the obedience road, even to death, death on a cross, and verse 9, therefore, God exalted him above everything in the universe, which is where he still sits today in 2016.

Think about Paul, who's actually writing this letter from jail, because he stupidly keeps trying to build churches like a loser.

[26 : 53] Do you think Paul's wondering whether it's all worth it? Do you think Paul feels like a loser? Look what he says in verse 16. He says, far from being a loser, he will be boasting on the final day.

He will be a big winner about how his efforts were not in vain. I think he's talking there about how he built up the Philippian church. And the same for Christians.

Just as Jesus came up the nicer end of the Nike swoosh, for obedient Christians, he will save you completely.

He will give you brand new bodies and eternal life, which is the only thing that makes any form of suffering in this life for the gospel worthwhile. I'm disobedient, I complain, I don't want the down bit of the Nike swoosh, I only want the up bit, I want to hold grudges, I want to disassociate myself from irritating Christians at church, I don't want the cost, I only want the glory.

glory. But actually, the way Jesus has organised the universe, suffering now and glory later is the only way to glory.

[28 : 05] When you get to heaven, maybe you can disagree with Jesus about the way he's organised things. I've said a lot so far, so let me just in about 10 seconds put that all into English.

See, Jesus was exalted because he obeyed even unto death to unite us to God. Therefore, if we follow him, we should obey God selflessly, just as he did in the area of costly unity.

He obeys, we obey. It's the same word in the Greek. We'll be afraid, we'll want to quit, we'll want to grumble and argue, we'll want to break out of the shield wall. But if we ask God to help us, because he is working in us, we can stick with it all the way to death, because that is what it will feel like.

And just as God raised and exalted Jesus, he will raise and exalt us. We won't have people bowing down to us, that's specifically just for Jesus, because he died for sins. But God will lift us up also.

And as we finish today, Paul gives two incredible examples of this Jesus mindset, this selflessness. We only have time to look at one of them. They're Timothy and Epaphroditus.

[29 : 10] I'm going to go with Epaphroditus. You can ask me about Timothy a bit later. So point three. Two citizen soldiers who obeyed unto death. See, Epaphroditus, he's a heavenly citizen soldier, striving together in partnership.

Epaphroditus' partnership is an international one. He goes and takes the Philippians' gift in Philippi to Paul in Rome, where he's in jail. And Epaphroditus is a great hero of the faith.

He's a great example. He's not a great Bible teacher. He's not a prophet. He's a really practical guy. Because he thought it would be worthwhile to risk his life to bring Paul this gift, which could be money.

And so what he does is he walks across the Alps with a suitcase full of cash, just to encourage and meet Paul's needs while he's in jail, for the sake of his fellow citizen soldier.

And Paul drives home the points of Christian unity, even if it kills you. Three times we're told about Epaphroditus that he risked his life for the sake of this Philippian partnership.

[30 : 14] Verse 27, Indeed he was ill, he almost died. Verse 30, because he almost died for the work of Christ, he risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give.

And that is Philippian. That is what it is to be a Christian. That is how to work out your salvation by being humbly obedient. That is how to keep yourself in joy.

During the Euodia and Syntyche breakdowns. During the grumbling and arguing that regular Christian partnership brings up. That is how to keep yourself in the mind of Christ on the Jesus road.

And that is how to secure your eternal salvation. Therefore, my dear friends, as you've always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. Let's pray. Father God, we confess that we are grumblers and arguers.

[31 : 31] We confess that we don't want to walk the Jesus road of suffering now. Father, by the power of your spirit that is in us and according to your good purposes for our lives, will you help us to strive for unity, even if it costs us everything, even if it costs us our life.

Would HTD be a church marked out for this incredible selfless unity? And we ask it for your glory. Amen.