

Christ Our Mind

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[0 : 00] Today we continue our study of Philippians, beginning in chapter 2, as we look at Christ's example of humility. Please follow along in your bulletin as we read. The Apostle Paul writes this, 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 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 in the name that is above every name, so that in 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 work for his good pleasure.

[1 : 43] 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 labor in vain.

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

This is the reading of God's word. My name is Alistair. If I haven't met you before, I'm one of the pastors here at Watermark, so I'd like to welcome you here if you're new.

Last week we looked at the first chapter of the book of Philippians, and now we're on the second chapter. And as Aldrin said, Eric, who spoke last week, talked about that famous line of Paul's, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

And for those of you who were here last week, you'll remember that we each got a sheet of paper as well, where the words Christ and die were blanked out.

[3 : 03] So we had to think about what it was that we lived for and what it was that we sought after that we felt would give our lives gain.

And so I thought about that during the week. And for me, I think the answer would be something like this. To live is success.

And approval is gain. I think that might be the case for many people. But for me, certainly, that was the case.

And I didn't even realize this was the case until quite recently. Because in ministry, as you're serving as a pastor, this is a trap that they say that many pastors can fall into.

But of course, nobody thinks it will happen to them. And yet, as you're pastoring, as you're doing ministry, you think of ministry success as something that is the most important thing to you.

[4 : 11] And then when you achieve it, then that's really living. And, yeah, it's like you can't see yourself until you see kind of the...

Well, until you fall. And then you see what happens. Or you see kind of your inner being is uncovered. We're going to be looking today at the chapter 2 of Philippians, which talks a lot about

what it means to live in Christ.

And Paul is challenging his readers, the Philippians, to actually live out that life in Christ in community amongst each other. And so he appeals to them based on whether they have encouragement in Christ, any love, if they've known this life in Christ.

And if they have, then they should express that. They should express that in love for one another. And so that's why he says in verse 2, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

He wants them to be of one mind together. And that mind that he wants them to have together in their community is none other than the mind of Christ.

[5 : 41] We'll get to that in a second. But what that looks like, he tells us in verses 3 and 4, if you've got it in front of you. He says, 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. See, Paul calls for unity, a spiritual oneness amongst the church that's there, suggesting perhaps that there was some tension or disagreement there.

But he also says that humility is the key to unity. A call to unity is a call to humility. And what does humility look like?

Well, Paul defines humility as counting others as more significant than yourselves. In Australia, for quite a long time, probably maybe nearly a decade, one of the biggest banks ran a commercial with this line, for the most important person in the world, you.

And this was run through the kind of the 90s and past that as well. And it's encapsulated the feel of, I guess, a people, a nation. Yes, that's right.

[7 : 04] The most important person in the world is me. And so everything, including the banks, should be there to serve me. And this kind of tagline continued unquestioned for all this time because it just spoke to where people were at and what people were thinking in their inner being.

To look to the interests of others and not to the interests of yourselves requires that you think of others as more important than you rather than yourself as the most important person in the room or in your family or in your world.

The problem is that often we are only interested in our own interests. And we are only interested then in other people as far as they can further our own interests.

How often have you heard the complaint, why aren't you interested in what I'm talking about? This is the complaint of a world full of people who are only interested in themselves and in their own good.

A famous writer has said, most people do not listen with the intent to understand. They listen with the intent to reply. I don't know if you've ever done that where you're listening to somebody or you're in an argument with somebody and you're not actually listening to them to hear what they're saying.

[8 : 37] You're actually listening to them and at the same time formulating something in your head so that you can reply back to them. Actually listening to someone, giving them your full attention means to consider their words to be important.

It means to really listen. But for many of us, we like to talk. I like to talk. And sometimes I find myself talking in several conversations all at once. Some online and some in real life and so on.

And I just wonder whether I and you have ever given the impression to somebody or to the person in front of you that they're just a distraction from the more important thing that you are doing.

You know, Jesus never multitasked people. He never gave people... He always gave people his full attention.

Whenever he was speaking to somebody, he was engaged with them. And they were never, for him, a means to some other end.

[9 : 53] As he spoke to them, he ministered to them, he loved them, and he wasn't busy doing something else. What it means to look to the interests of others, not just our own interests, means to...

Well, superficially, it means, firstly, paying attention in a conversation and not being, say, on a smartphone while you're talking and listening to somebody. And I'm as guilty as this as anyone. But more deeply, it means to stop seeing people as a means to your self-fulfillment. This applies to many areas of life, not least to spouses or the marriage relationship.

Tim Keller, who is a pastor in New York, writes, a marriage based not on self-denial but on self-fulfillment will require a no-maintenance partner who meets your needs while making almost no claims on you.

Simply put, today, people are asking far too much in search for the marriage partner. And for years now, marriage researchers have been saying and arguing that a strong network of friends is the best way to keep a marriage strong.

[11 : 09] They say, today we put much more emphasis or we expect more intimacy and support from our partners than in the past, but much less from everybody else. And this puts a huge strain on the institution of marriage.

Often the marriage buckles under the weight of partners' expectations that they will fill every one of each other's needs. Using others in the quest for our own self-fulfillment will ruin any relationship. And that applies for co-workers or bosses or friends, siblings, your pastor, one another in the church. You see, this is the path of selfish ambition, what Paul talks about there in verses 3 and 4. And selfish ambition means to take your interests, to place them as your highest priority, and then to turn others into tools or means in order to achieve that highest priority that you have.

It is the opposite of what Paul describes as humility. It is to only think about and look out for yourself. Selfish ambition would never put anyone's thoughts or needs above itself.

[12 : 28] Selfish ambition would do or say whatever was necessary in order to make him or herself look better in front of others in order to advance their own cause.

By contrast, to put other people's interests ahead of your own means to put your own interests on hold. This is what children find so hard to do.

How they can't have what they want and have it now. My four-year-old niece is a firstborn and, like many four-year-olds, considers herself to be the center of her world.

And she has this kind of habit that when she feels like she's being ignored by the important adults in her life, she will repeat what she wants to say louder and louder and louder until she's yelling at the top of her voice.

And we say to her that that's not right. She needs to wait. That it's rude to interrupt and yell. And she can't have everything she wants straight away.

[13 : 42] Unless, say, it's an emergency, like, Mommy, I need to go to the toilet right now. Then, yes, okay, we stop everything and help her out. But, see, what she needs to learn is that she's not the center of her family or her world, of the world.

And yet, sadly, it seems that even adults have grown up or some adults have grown up not understanding this reality. And we see that self-centeredness is the biggest obstacle to unity, harmony, to good relationship in our lives.

And even secular researchers have caught on to this. There's a researcher in Australia called Hugh Mackay and he's spent the last 40 years researching, asking questions about people's lives, their loves, their hopes, their ambitions, their fears and their passions, measuring people's happiness levels.

And what he's discovered in that time is that the quest for personal happiness and fulfillment actually doesn't make people happy at all. Rather, true happiness, he says, or he's found, is found in losing oneself in service to another.

And so, after 40 years of this research, he actually wrote a book about it called *The Good Life*. And in it, as it says, he asks the ultimate question, what makes a life worth living?

[15 : 11] His conclusion, drawn from his research, is this. A good life is not measured by security, wealth, status, achievement, or levels of happiness.

A good life is determined by our capacity for selflessness and our willingness to connect with those around us in a meaningful and useful way. Hugh looks at the numerous ways we get distracted from this purpose.

He examines what he calls the utopian complex, which describes our dangerous desire for perfection and the false expectation that life will unfold according to our carefully laid plans.

He highlights the things that lead us along paths to pain and confusion, particularly our willingness to sacrifice others on the altar of our own personal desires and ambitions.

There it is, selfish ambition. And what he says, of course, is that it is the life that is lived for others that is the one that is worth living.

[16 : 15] And to argue his point, Hugh draws heavily on the golden rule that is to do unto others as you would have them do to you that Jesus spoke about.

But at the same time, he doesn't want to have any kind of picture of God in his world view. And so, is it possible then for society to live by the golden rule when it's been cut off from the person who taught it?

Well, I would say the answer would be no. And in fact, the very reason this book is written, as Mackay himself says, is because he sees that more and more in our society, people are living for themselves.

The early Christians were known for their care for others, for one another, their love for one another, and their care for the poor, the weak, the marginalized, the despised.

And you know, there was only one reason they lived that way. They believed that the one who was crucified and rose again called them into that life.

[17 : 29] You see, when Paul calls for the Philippians to live not for themselves but for others, on what basis does he do so? Is he saying that it's just like a self-evident ethic?

No. The self-evident ethic to most of us, actually, is to live in selfish ambition. In seeking to put ourselves ahead of others. No.

What Paul argues on, on the basis of, is the humility, the humiliation of God. So in verses 5 to 11, we have this, some call it a poem or hymn to Christ.

And it's the ultimate example of humility. humility. See, the ultimate example of humility is God himself. Which sounds strange until you think about what he did in Christ.

And so Paul says, we should have this mind amongst ourselves, this mind of Christ. And what he means by that is that we should apply what we think about Christ to our lives together.

[18 : 41] we should think about Jesus and what he did and our relationship with him. And we should live that out amongst one another in our community.

So when Paul says, have this mind, he means adopt it, take it on, internalize it within yourself, among yourselves, in your community. and he says, Jesus, who is in the form of God, didn't consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing or emptied himself. What does it mean to say that Jesus is in the form of God? Is it just saying that Jesus looked like God, but was just, like an external appearance?

Well, in the Old Testament, the form of God manifested itself as the glory of God. You might remember in the book of Exodus, Moses is shown the form of God and he sees all his glory pass him by.

Here we are told that Jesus has the very form of God. And the form of God in classical Greek refers to the characteristic attributes of God.

[20 : 00] That is, who God is inside of him, that is who Jesus is. And in the very same verse, the form of God is equated with being equal with God.

That's the way that Paul sees it, that Jesus is equated with God. And yet, being somebody who was equal in divinity with God, he refused to use his divinity selfishly.

he didn't say, I'm going to look after the most important person in the world, me. Even though he had the power to do so.

He had the right to do so. See, Jesus didn't stay safe in heaven or grasp for equality with God.

you could say that he didn't exert his rights or assert his rights. And the language of rights was originally used to protect the weak and the powerless, to say that all humans have an equality here on earth so that we shouldn't mistreat anyone.

[21 : 13] But we've turned the language of rights today into a selfish plea to say, give me my rights. we want to assert our own rights. But Jesus emptied himself and humbled himself.

He didn't remain in perfect communion with his Father in heaven, but instead emptied himself of his glory and became flesh, a human.

And he humbled himself, not coming as a prince or an emperor, but an ordinary man, walking a path that led to death. Why?

It wasn't for the fun of it. It wasn't fun, not the dying part anyway. Jesus came and he died and he became nothing so that we could become something.

Romans 5 verse 8 tells us that God showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. So Paul is reminding his readers here that it is only through the death of Christ, that they are here at all, able to be in relationship with one another, to be in relationship with God.

[22 : 35] And one of the things about selfishness is that it fails to see the bigger picture. Your world shrinks down to just you and your concerns.

And particularly when we have arguments and fights and we're trying to prevail over another, our concerns seem to engulf us and become our world.

I don't know if you've ever experienced that. I have. But Paul is saying there's something bigger than your fights and your disputes, your grumbling and your selfish ambition.

And that something, that someone bigger, came and died for you. and to bring home just how much bigger that is, Paul then talks about God's future plans for his son.

That Jesus will be given the name above every name. And that at that name, every knee shall bow and tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. I didn't realize it before this week, but that verse is actually a quote from the Old Testament, from Isaiah chapter 45.

[23 : 54] Isaiah chapter 45 verses 22 and 23 say this, Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, for my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return.

To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance. To whom shall the knee bow and the tongue confess that is Lord?

It's God himself. As he says, I am God, there is no other. And so we see here early, early on in the New Testament the idea that Jesus is God, equal with God, and yet there is only one God, is already placed here in these early times in the New Testament.

It's where we get the doctrine of the Trinity, that there is only one God that we follow, but that Jesus is fully God, as well as fully human, as we also saw.

So think about that for a second, that this is our God. This is the one whom we Christians profess to follow. If the character of God is one of humility, then surely the character of the Christian church should also be one of humility.

[25 : 19] It makes sense. And so we, if we are followers of Jesus, ought to display the character of Jesus. For a Christian to act selfishly, with pride, is simply not being true to our Lord, who acted with humility.

humility. This is what Paul means when he says, have this mind amongst yourselves. He's saying, adopt this frame of mind in your community.

Don't be grumbling and complaining, filled with selfish ambition and conceit. Have that same mind of Christ in your interactions with one another. Well, what does it mean then to have the same mind of Christ?

Christ? Well, it means as we think of one another, of our relationships with one another, apply that thinking of Christ to one another.

And how would things change if we applied the mind of Christ to our life together in community?

Well, a community would be marked with forgiveness, selflessness, humility, as we've already talked about, seeking the good of others, not grumbling or complaining and rejoicing.

[26 : 43] It's pretty hard to rejoice if you're grumbling and complaining. And I want to talk a little bit about maybe just a couple of these and what that might look like.

Or maybe just thinking about just how hard that is actually in the Christian life. I don't know if you guys, some of you will have known this, but I've been working as a pastor for five years.

And before I came to Hong Kong, I was working in Sydney. And I said before, didn't I, that my answers to that question, to blank is Christ, was success is to live.

Or to live is success. And so what I was looking for was ministry success and the approval that would come with it. And I didn't even know that at the time.

But what I found when I started in ministry was I would be working in a place and the kind of things that I saw and advice that I gave were not appreciated.

[28 : 05] And particularly those who were in control of the ministries around me just simply pushed me aside and marginalized me and didn't listen to anything I had to say.

And so as a result, I was frustrated because what I wanted to see change and transformation happening in the church, the ministry growing, was frustrated by these leaders who would not do anything about the situation there.

And I'm not saying that the things that I saw were wrong. Even some of the leaders agreed with me in terms of the things that I saw, but they didn't want to rock the boat.

They didn't want to make the hard decisions that would be necessary in order to help and to cause people to grow. And I'm not saying that what I wanted was wrong, but my response to what happened showed that I was actually being driven by selfish ambition. temptation. Because as I was being pushed aside, what it felt like to me was that my very life was being crushed out of me as I was continuing to serve and yet not able to impact people in the way that I'd hoped.

[29 : 35] And so instead of loving others and seeking the best of others, I grumbled and complained a lot to people. And I found it hard to forgive others as well.

And if you've ever been in a situation where somebody has hurt you, you will know that it is hard to forgive others, isn't it? And yet, if we're going to be people of Christ, people who are forgiven, that's something we must do, isn't it?

I consider that my own life and soul were being crushed by the people that I was with, but in a much more real way, I had crushed the life of Christ by my own sin.

And yet, Jesus would turn and say to even those who are crucifying him, or to say to God, about those who are crucifying him, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they're doing.

That's what Jesus says about us too. Father, forgive them, you, me, because we didn't know what we were doing. And so we too need to turn and forgive others.

[31 : 00] But who can do this? Who has the strength to be able to turn and to forgive? To live in such a way as to actually place other people's priorities above their own?

To think of others as more significant or more important than them? I said before that that guy who wrote that book wanted to see all this change happening in society, but actually wasn't seeing anything of the sort.

In fact, he was seeing the reverse. who can provide the inner moorings for us to be able to live in this way?

Only God. In the last part of our passage, we see that we are told to work out our salvation and yet that the power and the motivation come from God.

we are to work out our salvation, but it is God who works in us. What does that mean? Let me read it out.

[32 : 15] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Okay, just stop there for a second.

What Paul means by that is, as I've already said, to take what is of the mind of Christ and to live it out amongst us, to take the salvation that we've received, the fact that we know that Christ has died for us, and to live it out amongst our community.

Work out your own salvation, the your there is plural. But it is then God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

You see, the power and the motivation for us come from God. We can't try as we might pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps to make self-improvement the goal of the Christian life.

The only way that we can follow in the way of Christ is if we're actually following Christ. And the use of human effort in this is just what God commands for achieving his saving purpose.

[33 : 33] And we do not will and work on our own, but our wills and our actions are the very areas, the very arenas, where God's power is working in us. When God put it like this, God's working in us is not suspended because we work, nor is our working suspended because God works.

works. So in other words, just because we're working doesn't mean that God is not working in us.

And just because God is working in us doesn't mean that we just stop working. Neither is the relation strictly one of cooperation, but the relation is that because God works, we work.

Because God wills and works within us, that this is what he wants for us, and the way that he uses us to live out this salvation amongst us, because of that, we also work at it.

We work out our own salvation together. So the question is then, do you follow Jesus or not?

If you follow Jesus, then you need to follow in the way of humility. Who do you follow? Because if you're not following Jesus, then you're following something else, or you're prioritizing something else in your life, whether it is your own ambition, your own happiness, your own self-seeking.

[35 : 06] And the final question I want to leave you with is what are we known for? As a church of Christ, Christ, we should be known for what God is known for, or rather, we should actually be reflecting out to the world this God and what He is, who He is.

