

Joyful Paradigm

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] So, Philippians chapter 2, reading from the beginning. Let us hear the Word of God. 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 rivalry 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 made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Then in verse 19, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you, for I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare, for they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

[1 : 41] But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, for he has been longing for you all, and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.

Indeed he was ill, near to death, but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

I am the more eager to send him, therefore that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honour such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

And so on, may the Lord bless that reading of his own holy word. If we could just look at this passage that we've been reading this evening.

[3 : 01] Now the Bible often describes the Christian life by using contrasts, because we're told that we must die to self in order to live for Christ.

We have to declare spiritual bankruptcy if we're going to be rich. We're told that we need to mourn if we are going to be blessed. We're told that we need to hunger and thirst if we're going to be satisfied.

We're told to lose our life if we're to save it. Because if we save our life, we will lose it. The Bible often describes the Christian life by using contrasts.

And this evening we're considering one of the greatest contrasts, that we must humble ourselves if we are to be exalted. We must humble ourselves if we are to be exalted.

And you know, it may seem like a contradiction, but in fact Paul's teaching on humility, it's a complete paradigm shift away from the desires of our heart. Because our natural sinful desire, it is to exalt ourselves.

[4 : 12] It's to promote ourselves, to ensure that we're the best, we're the priority, we're first, we're seen, we're acknowledged, we're praised, we're given position. But what Paul teaches to the Philippians, what he gives to them is a joyful paradigm.

And he gives to them this joyful paradigm, chained to a Roman soldier. And it's a paradigm shift far away from our natural desires. Because Paul says that the only way to be truly exalted is to humble yourself.

And when Paul presents this great paradigm shift, he does so by giving to us an example. He gives an example of exaltation by humiliation.

And the example that Paul gives is of course as we read, the example of Jesus. Because Jesus received exaltation by humiliation.

And what Paul is saying is that the only way you're going to know through joy in your Christian life, the only way we're going to know through joy, he says, is by learning this paradigm.

[5 : 21] Because through joy is experienced when we receive exaltation by humiliation. And so in this passage, Paul gives the Philippians, and he gives to us three things.

He gives an exhortation, then he gives an example, and then an encouragement. An exhortation, an example, and an encouragement.

So if we look first of all at the exhortation, look again at verse 1. Paul says, Paul 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 rivalry 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.

So Paul begins this teaching on humility by exhorting the Philippians to remember what they are in Christ. And as we said, Paul's teaching on humility, it was a complete paradigm shift away from the desires of our own heart.

[6 : 40] In fact, you could say that Paul's teaching was a complete paradigm shift away from Greek and Roman thought. Because if you remember, Philippi was located in the northeast of Greece.

But Philippi was a very Roman place. Philippi was part of the Roman Empire. It modeled itself on Rome and had all the architecture of Rome.

And it even had the nickname, Little Rome. And so for the locals of Philippi, humility was not part of their psyche. They didn't consider humility to be a good thing or something to be sought after.

In fact, humility was such an alien concept to the Greeks that they didn't even have a word for it.

You could say that it wasn't even part of their vocabulary. It was a foreign concept to them.

And anyone who was humble was considered to be worthless. And so for the Greeks, humility was an alien concept. But for the Romans, humility was something to be despised.

[7 : 45] Being humble was a sign of weakness. And the Romans, well, they hated weakness. They were Romans. They were part of the Roman Empire. They were taking over the world. They were proud people.

And so you can see why Paul's teaching on humility, it's a complete paradigm shift for the Philippians. It was something they'd never heard before. It was something they'd never seen before.

And some have even suggested that humility was such a new concept to the ancient world that Paul had to invent a word for it. He had to invent the word humility.

And the word humility, it literally means lowliness of mind. Lowliness, lowliness of mind. Meaning that humility is not only about your actions.

It's also about your heart and your mind. Because, you know, we can all act humbly. We can all do what we need to do in order to be seen and portray to others that we're humble.

[8 : 49] But if we're not humble in our heart, and if we're not humble in our mind, then all we have is false humility. Therefore, to have true humility, Paul says that, Paul says that to have true humility is to be humble in our heart, our mind, and in our actions.

And Paul says here that for a Christian, humility is foundational. Because if Jesus Christ is to fill our lives, then we must empty ourselves. If Jesus Christ is to increase in our lives, then we must decrease.

You know, this is why Paul begins his teaching on humility by exhorting the Philippians to remember what they are in Christ. He says, If there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy.

If you're using the authorized version, you'll see that the word if is repeated four times in this opening section. And that's how it's written in the original language.

Paul is saying, Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and sympathy.

[10:07] And Paul repeats the word if for emphasis. But it's not an if of uncertainty or doubt. Paul isn't questioning whether or not there is encouragement in Christ.

Or if there is comfort in the love of Christ. Or if there's fellowship through the Spirit of Christ. Or if there is affection and compassion because of Christ.

Paul isn't casting doubt on any of these great and precious promises. No, he's affirming to the Philippians that this is what they already have in Christ. That when they heard the gospel and received Christ as their Savior, this is what they now enjoy as followers of Jesus Christ.

And it's because of this that Paul 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. Paul exhorts the Philippians to ensure that their love for one another is demonstrated by their unity and their humility.

[11:17] Because both unity and humility, they are an outworking of love. If we love Jesus and if we love one another like Jesus loves us, then we will seek unity instead of division.

We will walk humbly instead of exalting ourselves. If we love other Christians as we ought to, then it will prevent fallouts or divisions or rivalry.

Because we will walk humbly and we'll seek to put them first and desire the oneness and the unity that Paul is speaking of here. And notice how Paul emphasizes the importance of our mindset.

Because he repeats the emphasis, he emphasizes the mind. 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.

Paul emphasizes that our mindset must be unity and humility. And as we said, the word humility, it literally means lowliness of mind.

[12:28] Meaning that humility, it's not only about the actions, it's also about our heart and it's about our mind. So humility should encompass our whole life.

In fact, Paul stresses the need for love, unity and humility when he says that we need to be of one accord. We need to be one-souled, he said.

We need to possess such love, unity and humility that we are knit together with mutual love for Christ and that we live in harmony with one another and that we live with one focus.

And our one focus, he says, should be to exalt the name of Christ in our lives. And it's following on then from this positive exhortation for love, unity and humility that Paul then gives two negative instructions.

He says in verse 3, do nothing from rivalry 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.

[13:38] And in these verses, Paul emphasizes that humility is all about counting and considering. Humility is all about counting and considering.

Because we're to count one another more significant than ourselves. So, in other words, just like Jesus must increase and we must decrease, Paul says, so too.

Others must increase and we must decrease. We have to count one another as more significant than ourselves. But then he says more than that, we have to consider others and the interests of others and their needs before our own.

And you know, what Paul is saying is that because we know we have come to experience, as he says in verse 1, encouragement in Christ, comfort of love in Christ, fellowship of the Spirit through Christ and affection and compassion because of Christ.

It's because of all that he says that we must humbly count and consider the needs of others as more significant than our own because that's what Jesus did for us.

[14:54] And that's his point. Paul is emphasizing that humility is all about our mindset. Humility is all about how we view Christ and how we view Christ will enable us to view the Christian and how we view the Christian will enable us to view ourselves.

And Paul says that true humility comes from having a mindset just like Jesus. That's why he goes on to say in verse 5, have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus.

He says have the mind of Jesus. And you know Paul's exhortation on humility to a church living in a proud and arrogant city it was a complete paradigm shift from the norm.

And you know with such a paradigm shift a paradigm is needed. A model is needed. An example is needed. And what better example to give them the example of Jesus Christ.

And that's what I'd like us to see secondly. So we've seen Paul's exhortation. He's given an exhortation. But then secondly he gives an example. An example.

[16:11] Look at verse 5. He says 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 made himself nothing taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

And so in these verses verses 5 to 11 Paul gives to us an example of exaltation by humiliation. But you know what we have to remember in reading these verses is that for Paul this is a joyful paradigm because Paul as we've said before Paul is calling the church to be joyful.

He's calling the church to count it all joy to be a Christian because he says there's no room for pride in the church. There's no room for selfish ambition. There's no room for promoting self and praising self and exalting self.

[17:32] And so he says here that we need to have this humble attitude and a heart of service that joyfully serves the Lord out of a love for Jesus and a love for others.

And in order for us to understand what he's talking about Paul he just points us to Jesus. And he says that whatever we face as a church or as a community or as homes or as individuals he says our focus needs to be Jesus.

Whatever trials or temptations or heartaches or sorrows or experiences of suffering that we encounter in this life Paul says we need to look to Jesus. In order to count it all joy we need to look to Jesus because as Paul says here he is our example.

he's the one we ought to model our lives upon. He's the one we ought to imitate. And so in verses 6 to 8 Paul describes Jesus' example of humiliation.

And Paul says that in the humiliation of Jesus he went down down down down. Jesus went from the crown to the cradle to the cross.

[18:40] Jesus went from glory to Golgotha to the grave. And with this example Paul is saying to us look where Jesus was. Look where Jesus was.

He says he was in the form of God. And that doesn't mean he was something like God. It means that when you looked at Jesus you saw God. If you have seen me said Jesus you have seen the Father.

Jesus was in the form of God. He possessed the image of God the likeness of God the glory of God the honour of God the majesty of God everything that made God God Jesus possessed.

Which means that Jesus he is infinite eternal and unchangeable as the catechism describes. He is infinite eternal and unchangeable in his being wisdom power holiness justice goodness and truth.

He was in existence before the beginning before creation itself because he was without beginning and he is without end. He is from everlasting to everlasting he is the creator of the heavens and the earth.

[19:49] And Paul says look where Jesus was. Look what Jesus had. He was in the form of God and yet he humbled himself for you and me.

This was the mind of Jesus. This was what was on the mind of Jesus. He didn't count equality a thing to be grasped. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God which means that his mind wasn't upon himself.

His thoughts weren't taken up with his own glory or his own honor or his own majesty. No the wonder of what Paul is reminding us here is that even in glory the mind of Jesus Christ was focused upon you and me.

My friend when Jesus was in glory he was thinking about you and me. And you know it's a wonderful thought that when Jesus was in glory you were on his mind.

And my friend this is wonderful and it's something we should never forget. When Jesus was in glory we were on his mind. And yet he humbled himself for us.

[21 : 04] He did it so that we could enjoy the riches of his grace and the greatness of his mercy. He did it so that we could know forgiveness of sins and peace with God.

He did it all so that we could be saved. My friend Jesus did it all because God so loved the world that he gave. And what a gift he gave.

And yet Jesus humbly and willingly left the crown of glory for the cradle in Bethlehem. He went from the crown to the cradle where he made himself as Paul says he made himself nothing.

taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men. The first step of Jesus' humiliation it was the incarnation. His taking upon himself the form of a man.

And of course we know that Jesus he was conceived of the Holy Ghost he was born of the Virgin Mary. But in that act of incarnation Jesus made himself nothing.

[22 : 11] That's what the word humiliation means. It means to come down from the highest rank to a low state. And in the glory of heaven Jesus possessed the highest rank.

He was king of glory. He was the king and yet he made himself nothing. Literally Paul is saying Jesus emptied himself.

He emptied himself. And it seems like a strange statement to make that Jesus emptied himself. And for many years theologians debated over the question if Jesus emptied himself what did he empty himself of?

And many argued that when Jesus became man he emptied himself of his divine power and he emptied himself of his divine attributes and he emptied himself of his divine glory.

But that view of the incarnation it completely misses the glory of who Jesus is. Because Jesus in becoming man was not a lesser form of God. He was as Paul says to the Colossians he is the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

[23 : 20] And that's what Paul is trying to portray to us here. He's presenting to us this great paradox that in the emptying of Christ there was a fullness. In the emptying of Christ there was a fullness.

And you know this is the wonder of the incarnation that Jesus emptied himself by taking. It was what he took to himself that humbled him.

Not what he laid aside. It was what he took to himself. Our nature. That's what humbled him. As one commentator put it the incarnation was subtraction by addition.

addition. The incarnation was subtraction by addition. He became nothing. That's the reputation Jesus took to himself.

He humbled himself to nothing. But why? Why did he do it? Well Paul says that he did it so that he could take the form of a servant. He took the lowest position of a servant.

[24 : 26] A servant who would be obedient in every area of life. and obedient unto death even the death of the cross. And you know when you read these words does it not astonish you the lengths that Jesus went in order to save you?

The lengths Jesus went in order to save you. Does it not amaze you that the extent that Jesus would go in order for your sins to be forgiven and for you to experience eternal life?

That Jesus humbled himself from the crown to the cradle to the cross. He went down, down, down from glory to Golgotha to the grave.

All for you and for me. But as Paul says that's not the end of the story. Because having experienced humiliation Jesus was exalted.

He went down, down, down but he also went up, up, up. He went up from the grave back to glory. Paul says in verse 9, 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.

[25 : 52] Paul says, he talks about the humility of Jesus and in the beginning of because Jesus humbled himself, God highly exalted him.

God didn't just exalt Jesus. He says he highly exalted him. The first step of Jesus' exaltation was when God raised him up from the grave, when he was resurrected from the dead.

But then Jesus you could say he was raised higher when he ascended into heaven and was exalted above the earth and above the angels and he was exalted to the highest place of prominence and power to the right hand of God the Father.

Jesus was exalted to the highest place of authority and honour and Paul says that because Jesus has been exalted he has been given a name above all names and that it's at the exalted name of Jesus that everyone will be humbled every knee he says will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father and you know the point that Paul is making here is that the only way that we're going to bring glory to God the Father is through exaltation by humiliation but our exaltation by humiliation it's achieved by humbling ourselves under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and exalting his name to the glory of God the Father what Paul is saying here is we must deny self we need to take up our cross and follow

Jesus daily we have to have the mind of Christ we must die to self and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and so in this paradigm of humility Paul gives to the Philippians he gives to them an exhortation to be humble then he gives them an example of the person of Jesus but then Paul gives an encouragement he gives an encouragement by speaking about two men whose desire it was to humbly serve the Philippians so an exhortation an example and an encouragement look at verse 19 Paul says I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be cheered by news of you for I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare for they all seek their own interests not those of Jesus Christ but you know Timothy his proven worth how as me in the gospel

[28 : 44] I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also so the first humble servant of Christ that Paul speaks about in order to encourage the Philippians the first servant is Timothy and Timothy of course he was with Paul when they planted the church in Philippi and so the Philippians they knew Timothy and they knew Timothy's humble character but what's interesting is that Paul says that Timothy is with him Timothy is with him Timothy wasn't under house arrest like Paul was but Timothy was by Paul's side and he was humbly supporting him and encouraging him in the work of the gospel and you know the way Paul describes Timothy here it's how we ought to be with one another because Timothy humbly supports and encourages Paul and

Paul says about Timothy he says that he's like minded and large hearted he's like minded and large hearted Paul says in verse 20 that there's no one like Timothy Paul had worked with many humble servants of the Lord he had worked with Barnabas and Silas and Luke and John Mark and Titus but out of them all Paul says there was no one like Timothy no one like this son in the faith because Timothy he had the same desires as Paul he was like minded when it came to advancing the gospel but Paul also says that Timothy was large hearted Timothy had a genuine concern for the welfare of the Philippians he had a burden for the Philippians a spiritual burden and desire for their well being and this deep desire to serve them and Paul confirms to the Philippians that they know how hard working and dedicated Timothy is in the work of the gospel he says in verse 22 you know Timothy his proven worth how as a son with a father he I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me Paul says that he's going to send Timothy but you know Timothy's journey to the Philippians it wasn't going to be just into the next village Philippi as we said before it was 800 miles away it was a dangerous journey it was across the sea and Timothy Paul says he's ready and willing to do whatever it takes to advance the gospel my friend that's true humility being ready and willing to do whatever it takes to advance the gospel and you know do you have that do I have that do are we ready and willing to do whatever it takes to advance the gospel is that our priority is that our humble desire but you know then

Paul gives another encouragement he draws attention to another humble servant of Jesus a man called Epaphroditus look at verse 25 he says I thought it necessary to you to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier and your messenger and minister to my need for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill indeed he was ill near to death but God had mercy on him and not only on him but on me also lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow now Epaphroditus was said to be an elder in the church in Philippi and he was one who had made it known to Paul that they were facing difficulties as a congregation a congregation that was living in a wealthy and worldly environment and of course Epaphroditus made this known to Paul by traveling that 800 mile journey to Rome and it was a journey that as

Paul says it nearly cost him his life but now having recovered Paul wants to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi presumably he's going to send him with Timothy and it seems that Epaphroditus he would be the one who would take this letter to the Philippians he would take it to the church in

Philippi but as Paul sends Epaphroditus back to Philippi he does so with this high recommendation he presents Epaphroditus to the Philippians as one who is highly recommended as an example of a humble servant who had the mind of Christ in fact Paul endorses Epaphroditus so highly that as we read he regards him as a brother in Christ a fellow worker and fellow soldier and your messenger and minister to my needs Paul recommends Epaphroditus so highly that he says in verse 28 [33 : 55] I am the more eager to send him therefore that you may rejoice at seeing him again and that I may be less anxious so receive him in the Lord with all joy and honour such men you know with this encouragement of sending both Timothy and Epaphroditus to Philippi Paul is seeking to give to the church in Philippi he wants to give them living examples of what it looks like to humbly put the interests of others above yourself he wants to give them living examples and you know that just leaves us with a question are we living examples of what it looks like to put the interests of others above ourselves are we like Timothy who will do anything to advance the gospel are we like Epaphroditus who would risk even life to advance the gospel and you know it's it's great teaching and it's wonderful to see it but you know it's something completely different trying to apply it in our lives and so in this joyful paradigm of humility

Paul gives the Philippians he gives them an exhortation an example in the person of Jesus and then he gives them an encouragement by sending two humble servants to support them in the work of the gospel and so friends may we learn to have the mind of Christ that we too may experience exaltation by humiliation so may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh Lord our gracious God teach us to be like Jesus teach us Lord to follow in his footsteps that our prayer would be like the psalmist where he said teach me thy way and in thy truth oh Lord then walk will I unite my heart that I thy name may fear continually Lord help us we pray to to follow in the footsteps of Jesus to see his example as the great example to follow that we might be like-minded that we might be like-hearted that we oh Lord would see him and follow after him daily by denying ourselves and taking up our cross

Lord bless us together we pray teach us we ask for we are those who need to be taught and help us Lord to have a teachable spirit not to have a spirit of pride but of a spirit that longs to learn to learn from the good shepherd and to know that he is the one who has our best interest at heart oh Lord guide us then we pray go before us and do us good for Jesus sake amen so at this point in the service we're going to have