

Guest Preacher Rev. R J Campbell

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Preacher: Rev. RJ Campbell

[0 : 00] Let us now return to the portion of Scripture that we read together in the New Testament and seeking the Lord's help and blessing to return to chapter 2.

And we can read again from verse 5. Having 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.

The Apostle Paul here is continuing the same theme as he began in chapter 1 and at verse 27.

There we read, It is appealing here to the oneness and togetherness of the body of Christ.

One spirit, one mind, striving together. What Paul here is concerned about for the church at Philippi is not doctrinal error.

[2 : 04] It is not false teaching. What he is concerned about are the divisions that can so easily rise among them.

Paul in chapter 4 makes known that he is fully aware that there exists already some tension in the church at Philippi, especially between two women.

This appeal for unity and togetherness. It is not something that was invented by Paul or the apostles.

It is something to which we are directed towards by Jesus himself. Remember in his prayer as recorded for us in the Gospel of John and chapter 17.

And there he says, And there he says, That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

[3 : 14] What I believe that Jesus there intends is he wants a visible unity, a unity among believers that can be seen, a unity that others can see, and on the basis of which people can come to believe in Jesus Christ.

There is nothing so destructive to Christian witness than divisions. But how does this matter of Christian unity stand with me and yourself?

How we have any hard feelings against Christians who may have offended us in the past? Paul here teaches that the incentive or the motive for unity arises in the fact or in the reality of us being united.

To Christ. Being together in Christ. In the one body of Christ. Remember how Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, reminded them that each member of the physical body is useful and needed. But that is also true of the body of Christ. That each member of the physical body must work in harmony for the body to function properly.

[4 : 54] And that is also true of the body of Christ. Each member of the body must work in harmony, must be united in their cause and in their aims.

And that is also true regarding the body of Christ. Because we are together in Christ. We are united to Christ.

Therefore, there should be this oneness and togetherness with each other. We should be pulling together in the same direction.

What is the one thing that should pull us in the same direction? Surely it is this. Christ.

Our union with Christ. The love of Christ. The spirit of Christ should be the one thing that unites and binds us as believers together.

[6 : 00] In verse 3 and 4, he says, 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. That can also be translated in this way.

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. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. In other words, do not have this deep-seated desire for personal preeminence.

To gather attention to yourself. Paul here warns the Christians at the church at Philippi that in serving Christ, that they are not to be driven by self-centered motives.

[7 : 14] And there's a challenge here for every one of us. Why do I do the things that I do in service to God? Or in my home?

Or in my workplace? Is it in order to be noticed? Is it in order that I can get applause? The applause that I feel I so deserve?

Do I feel resentment when my work is ignored? When my service is ignored? And when perhaps my ideas are not followed through?

Many of the divisions and disharmony in churches are caused by people being self-centered. And Paul must have been aware that the church at Philippi was in danger of conflict and disunity because of selfish ambition and conceit.

Well, what must replace selfish ambition and conceit? What must replace this rivalry that he's speaking of here at the beginning of this chapter?

[8 : 35] What must replace selfish ambition and conceit? Well, he goes on and he says, Now, humility is not that easy to define.

What is humility? Humility. Sometimes we see people going round with an unrealistic, dure face and always speaking in extremely negative terms.

They have negative thoughts about themselves, perhaps almost obsessed with such thoughts. And, you know, they mistake that for humility.

Humility. The truth is that that can be very self-centered and can easily be understood as selfish ambition and conceit.

Humility here for Paul is a readiness to forget self and to exalt others.

[9 : 59] That we care for others and honor others as we instinctively do so for ourselves. Paul always emphasizes that believers should love one another, should bear one another's burdens, should build up one another, should bear with one another, should forgive one another, should be kind and compassionate towards one another.

Paul is concerned that divisions could arise among believers due to self-ambition and conceit. People trying to draw attention to themselves and exert themselves into positions just to be seen and praised.

And so he exhorts believers, count others more significant than yourselves. Look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

And then he clarifies for us or defines for us the kind of mindset that he is searching under to practice in their relations one with another.

He says, It is generally agreed by commentators that this verse 5 forms the link between the two sections of verse 1 to 4 and verses 6 to 11.

[11 : 57] It is the transition, as it were, from an exhortation, which we have in the first four verses, to an illustration or an example or a motive, which we have from verse 6 onwards.

And it begins with Christ's pre-existence, followed by his incarnation, including his death on the cross, in verses 6 to 8.

And then he concludes with his return to heaven as the exalted Lord of heaven and earth, in verses 9 to 11. However, this morning, we are going to reflect upon verses 5 to 8, where we read, Taking the form of a servant, been born in the likeness of men and been found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

In these words, Jesus is not only merely an example for us, he is a motive for us to humbleness, to be like him.

It is a reminder to us that Jesus came not only to save us, but to make us to be like him. And that should be the desire of every Christian, not only to be saved by Jesus, but to be like Jesus.

[14 : 00] Isn't that the apex of our redemption, the apex of our salvation? Isn't that what John reminds us, that the day is coming when we shall see him as he is and we shall be like him.

And our desire implanted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit in the day of our regeneration is to be like Christ, to be like Christ.

Well, Paul is writing here because he's very concerned about the threats to Christian unity that can arise through strife and self-ambition and vain glory.

and he's seeking to give them a new way of looking at the challenges that threaten to frustrate and prevent their efforts to stand fast with one mind and one spirit in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.

He's attempting to reinforce the instructions that he has urged upon them in Christian living by appealing to the humble descent and glorious ascent of Jesus Christ.

[15 : 20] It's a reminder to us that we cannot divorce doctrine from ethics. The Philippians are in Christ and because they are united to Christ by faith, because they are in union with Christ, they are to live out that union from day to day, from hour to hour.

They are to live that union out in the midst of being found in what he here terms as a perverse and twisted generation.

Paul here is presenting Jesus' humble mindset as an example and as a motive. to believers.

The humble mindset that was evident in Jesus must be seen in those who follow Jesus. Paul writes this to us and he tells us that we are to have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus.

have this mindset among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus. In other words, this mindset is yours.

[16 : 44] It's ours as followers of Jesus Christ, as those who are in Christ so that as you think about each other, let your perspective be formed by your shared identity in Christ.

We are in Christ through the Holy Spirit. We are given the mindset of Christ. When Christ condescended from heaven to earth, his purpose was not only to rescue us from our sins, though it was that, it was not only to set us an example, though it was that, but it was also to transform the inclinations of our heart so that his mindset becomes our mindset.

Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus. You are in Christ. The Spirit of Christ is in you.

Now follow that out in your Christian living. That's really what Paul is saying here. He's giving us the example, he is giving us the motive, and he is saying now that you are in Christ and that the Spirit of Christ indwells in you, live that out in your Christian living.

Well, following this instruction or command to live out the mindset of Christ that has been given to us by the Holy Spirit, he begins by drawing our attention to Christ's pre-incarnate state, his original state.

[18 : 34] That is, the state or circumstances of being that was his. Before he took upon himself our humanity, before he became a man, man.

We are told here in verse six, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing or emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Well, what does Paul mean when he speaks of the form of God? The form of God. Well, much has been written and much has been discussed and debated about what is meant by these words, the form of God.

Before we look at that question in more detail, I would like to digress a wee bit and for us to focus on two questions that we have in our shorter catechism, which is in itself a body of divinity.

I'm sure that those around my own age and beyond that will remember the shorter catechism.

Unfortunately, it is not so much taught in our day school, and I understand that it is not even taught in some of our Sunday school to our children, and yet the shorter catechism is a body of divinity.

[20 : 21] And the first question I want to draw your attention to is the question, are there more gods than one? And the answer, there is but one only, the living and true God.

Then there is another question, how many persons are in the Godhead? And the answer, there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

And I want us to remember these two answers as we look at this phrase, the forum of God. One God, three persons, same in substance, equal in power and glory.

Paul here is speaking of the second person of the Godhead. He is speaking of the Son. And he tells us that the Son, in his original state, in his pre-incarnate state, that he was in the forum of God. He was God within the mystery of the Trinity. Now, I know that the word Trinity is not found in the Bible. However, I believe that the concept of the Trinity is taught both in the Old and also in the New Testaments.

[21 : 43] It is taught by implication in the Old and by direct statement in the New. For instance, the Bible contains numerous clear statements regarding the unity of God.

Deuteronomy 6 tells us that the Lord is one. 1 Corinthians 8 adds that there is no God but one. 1 Timothy chapter 2 explicitly says there is one God. However, the Bible also contains clear statements regarding diversity within that unity.

For instance, in the very first verse of the Bible we are told that in the beginning God. Now the Hebrew word for God is Elohim which is actually a plural form of the word El which is God. It is a word that in other contexts is sometimes translated as gods when it refers to heathen deities. And later on in the same chapter we are one of the most striking statements of diversity in unity.

[22 : 56] We are told there then God said let us make man in our image after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.

Now in that passage that I've just quoted notice the shift in pronouns. Let us in our image. So God created man in his own image.

He created him. from us to he. Why the shift? Surely it tells us and it teaches us the diversity in unity within the God head.

Three persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One God. We sometimes use the term the triune God.

[24 : 12] Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There are many other passages where the three persons are associated together on equal basis.

For instance, at the baptism of Jesus, recorded for us in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 3. There we read, and when Jesus was surprised, immediately he went up from the water and behold the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him and behold a voice from heaven said, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

The three persons, the Son coming out of the water, the Holy Spirit descending upon him in the form of a dove, and the Father's voice. Three persons, there at the baptism we have the Father, we have the Son, and we have the Holy Spirit.

This shows how easily Scripture passes from one person of the Trinity to another person, doing so in a way that assumes their equality of nature while preserving their distinct personhood.

When Paul speaks here of Christ Jesus, as has been in the forum of God, he is telling us or pointing us to the pre-incarnate Christ.

[25 : 36] Jesus has been in the very nature of God. The forum of God does not mean anything less than Godhood.

Essentially, Paul is saying that the Son of God shares fully in the very essence of God. To borrow a phrase from the Nicene Creed, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is very God of very God.

And we have to hold on to that doctrine, that Jesus is fully divine, because Islam considers Jesus to be a prophet, but not divine.

Jehovah witnesses peddle the notion that Jesus is less than fully divine. But the Bible clearly teaches us that Jesus is fully divine.

He is God. He is God that came to be manifest in the flesh. And that is a doctrine that we must hold on to. It is a doctrine that has been attacked by Jehovah witnesses and by Islam.

[26 : 46] It is a doctrine that we must hold on to. He is God, fully God, very God. He is God that came to be manifest in the flesh.

The incarnation did not mean that the Son ceased to be what he eternally was. He was God the Son and remained God the Son.

Can the words of the form of God and the form of a servant have the same meaning as they are. Both cases are a reference to outward appearance.

Because the word that we have here, form, can mean an outward expression of inward reality. It can be defined as outward appearance and shape visible to human observation.

The form of servant or slaves is something that could easily be observed every day in the open markets in Philippi. The outward appearance indicated that they were slaves.

[27 : 55] But the form is defined as an outward appearance and shape which is visible to human observance. How can that be true of God? Because God is immaterial. He is invisible.

I know that in the Old Testament we have God brought before us as having a face and eyes and ears and mouth and arms and fingers and back and so on.

But all these references to the form of God are figurative expressions for our understanding.

Because we are prohibited in the Second Commandment to set up an image to represent God.

God is a spiritual essence and being a spirit he is immaterial and invisible. There are those who connect the form of God this expression the form of God with the glory of God.

You may ask well how can we associate the form of God with the glory of God? Well the glory of God is something that is visible.

[29 : 06] Something that can be seen. There are many references in the Old Testament in Kediah. The glory of God is the outward appearance of the presence and of the majesty of God.

In Exodus 16 we read these words and as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel they looked out the wilderness and behold the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

It was a manifestation of the glory of God a manifestation of God. The glory of God. In Exodus 40 we are told that the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the temple or the tabernacle.

And Psalm 19 that we sung earlier on we are told the heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaim his handiwork. In the vision of Isaiah chapter 6 the seraphims cried into each other and said holy holy holy is the Lord of the whole earth is full of his glory.

The glory of God fills the tabernacle it fills the heavens it fills the whole earth he is manifest. Paul in the New Testament develops the same argument in Romans chapter 1 from this perspective that the glory of God is the outward appearance of God's power and of God's majesty.

[30 : 37] For he says what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them for his invisible attributes namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made so that they are without excuse.

both the Old Testament and the New Testament speaks of the glory of God as the manifestation of God. So that supports the idea of supporting the form of God with the glory of God.

All that we have looked at brings us back to where we began with the shorter catechisms. one God same in substance equal in power and in glory.

In Hebrews chapter 1 we read regarding the Son regarding Jesus who been the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person.

John writes in his gospel no one has ever seen God the only God who is at the Father's side he has made him known. Jesus is Emmanuel he is God with us.

[32 : 03] The form of God here does not mean anything less than Godhood. In John's prologue we read in the beginning was the word and the word was of God and the word was God then in verse 14 and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory the glory is of the only begotten son from the father full of grace and truth.

The form of God is not something different from God or less than God. It is God. It is God. And he says here in verse 6 who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

He was on an equality with God. He was God. This equality is not something he has gained or something that he was going to gain. It was the consequence of his being and continuing to be in the form of God.

Yet the one existing in the form of God and equal is a distinguishable person within the God head.

God the Son who is about to become incarnate possessed the glory of God.

He possessed the likeness of God. He possessed the image of God. He possessed the splendor of God. Indeed everything that makes God God.

[33 : 36] He possessed it all for he was God. He was God the Son. Now all this may seem extremely complicated and it is a mystery but a mystery that is revealed to us in the Bible.

What I want you to hold on today to is that Jesus is God on an equality with God. He is as the Bible says to us he is God manifest in the flesh.

One God three persons the same in substance equal in power and glory. Who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing but made himself nothing nothing or he emptied himself or he made himself of no reputation just depending on which version of the Bible you look at.

He made himself nothing or he emptied himself of what? God this again has caused a lot of discussion. There are some false teachers who take this too far saying that Jesus gave up all or some of his divine attributes when he came to earth when he condescended.

We must be careful not to go beyond what scripture says. Jesus did not empty himself of his divine attributes. It is obvious in the gospel that Jesus possessed the power and wisdom of God.

[35 : 29] Calming the storm is just one display of Jesus' divine power. In his incarnation the Son of God did not cease to be God. He did not become a lesser God.

Whatever this nothing or empty entails Jesus remained fully God. Paul writing to the Colossians says in chapter 2, for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Christ was in the form of God and equal with God but he had rights. He had rights. And when he emptied himself or made himself nothing it means that he did not insist on his rights.

He had the rights of being respected and valued and immune from poverty and pain and humiliation and sorrow but he did not regard those things as something to grasp to lay hold on.

Instead he made himself nothing or he emptied himself or he made himself of no reputation. how?

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 the death on a cross.

[36 : 56] Now particular attention in our text is drawn to the fact of the voluntary action of Christ 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 for he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even the death of the cross.

He made himself nothing he emptied himself he made himself of no reputation he took the form of a servant he humbled himself he was not forced but he voluntarily made himself nothing he veiled his glory and chose to occupy the position of a servant or slave what did he when he emptied his it's not an emptying of deity or an exchange of deity for humanity Jesus never ceased to be God during any part of his earthly ministry and he was well aware of that fact of who he was in the preamble to the washing of the disciples feet that we have recorded for us in the gospel of John 13 there Jesus it is written for us in the preamble Jesus knowing that the father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from

God and was going to God he was never during his earthly minutes unaware of who he was never unaware of who he was but he did veil his heavenly glory and he volunteered to refrain from using his divinity his divine divinity to make the way easier for him he became dependent upon the other persons of the God the father and the holy spirit in taking the form of a servant he became dependent on the other persons of the God the father and the holy spirit Jesus sometimes functioned within the limitations of humanity he was hungry thirsty tired but God never gets hungry thirsty or tired but instead of holding on to his own interrupted glory he chose to veil it and although he is under no obligation to do so he comes into our fallen world and he does that on our behalf so far we have focused on what

Jesus surrendered or gave up but our text also deals with what he took on he took on the form of a servant or the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and been found in human form he humbled himself Jesus adds to his divine nature a human nature as he humbled himself for us he took the human nature with all its limitations of being hungry tired thirsty and so on the writer to the Hebrew puts it like this since therefore the children share in flesh and blood he himself likewise partook of the same thing as form of God points to the reality and fullness of God so the form of a servant points to the reality and the fullness of servanthood it is clear for us that Jesus took not merely the outward appearance of a servant that he looked like a servant so that he was not truly a servant but what we have is the exact opposite

Jesus took on the inner substance and the very nature of what it means to be a servant the highest expression of servitude he may have looked like a servant but there was more to it than that and whom does he serve well in the gospel of john chapter 6 we read that what Jesus said for I have come down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of him we sang there in psalm 40 in sacrifice and offering you have not delighted but you have given me an open ear but offering and sin offering you have not required then I said behold I come and the scroll of the book it is written off me I delight to do your will oh my God your laws within my heart Jesus did not subject himself to the will of man it was to God the father that he assumed this relation of servant and it was to the will of the father that he surrendered himself when he died on the cross in taking the form of a servant he subjected and obligated himself with unreserved commitment to the father's will what did this mean for Jesus the son of God well it says here and been found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross the death of Christ on the cross was an act of obedience it was the grand climax of his commission as servant well I hope that from our reflections we have in some measure understood that Jesus did not give up his deity or any aspect of his deity in becoming fully human he was and is both fully God and fully man as our catechism again tells us in answer to the question who is the redeemer of God's elect the only redeemer of God's elect is the

[43 : 11] Lord Jesus Christ who being the eternal son of God became man and so was and continueth to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever it wasn't a mixture of natures two distinct natures deity and humanity and one person forever I hope that we have been able to understand the heights from which Jesus came and the depths to which he descended in coming as a suffering servant to be obedient unto death even the death of the cross of the cursed cross and he did that for our sins in order to give us sinners salvation from the highest height imaginable to the lowest depth possible in order to bring us salvation time is gone and we shall leave the matter this morning and we shall again look at it again in the evening may the

Lord bless our thoughts we shall conclude this time by singing to the Lord's praise from Psalm 21 Psalm 21 on page 225 the king and thy great strength O Lord shall very joyful be and thy salvation rejoice thou vehemently shall he thou hast bestowed upon him all that his heart would have and thou from him didst not withhold whate'er his lips did crave Psalm 21 verse 1 to 4 the king and thy great strength O Lord shall very joyful be the king and thy great strength O Lord shall many joyful be in thy salvation rejoice have in many shall heal the past bestow it upon him all that his heart would have and help from him his heart with hold whate'er his lips did crave for thou with blessings in revenge of goodness manifold man and love was set upon his head a crown of purest gold when he decided

I life like all he and life to him this game in such talent of days that he forever more should live the grace of our lord jesus christ and the love of god and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all now and forevermore amen to god god to the god god good god god i will do god god god oh god god god god god god god