Philippians 1:5-11

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[0:00] So we're looking in the book of Philippians, we've been going through Paul's letter to the Christians! In this city in Macedonia, slightly north of Greece, major Roman city of the day.

! And we're looking at chapter 2, which is on page 1180. And I'm going to read from verse 1 through to verse 11.
I'm actually going to talk about the passage, the section that begins in verse 5, but I'll read from verse 1 to give a bit of context.
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.
[1:21] And 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.

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.
Autonomy. There is probably a book somewhere that gives advice to preachers, which tells you never to start a talk with a word of more than three syllables.
So why ignore such good advice if it exists? I'm ignoring it because I think autonomy probably sums up the mindset of our world.
[3:01] Certainly in the West, maybe not so much in the East. Autonomy is the basis for most of our ethics. It's the mindset which says that patient choice should govern provision in the NHS.

It's the mindset that says that I should be given the right to decide whether I stay alive or whether I die. It is the mindset that lies behind our human rights legislation.
It is reflected in the American Declaration of Independence. It tells a woman not only that she can, but almost that she has a moral obligation to assert her right to choose whether a life which has begun within her body should continue through to conception.
It says I have a right to indulge my sexual preferences, however weak or strong or whatever they might be. With some exceptions, it will draw the line obviously, for example, with children.
And you could argue that we went to war over it. Mrs. Thatcher talked about the principle of self-determination, didn't she?
[4:24] When she was arguing that we should go to war against Argentina over the Falklands. It is the spirit of the age.

We absorb it almost as we breathe. It is assumed as a given by most people we meet. Perfectly nice, decent, respectable people.
Often better people than we are. Autonomy began life in the Garden of Eden. You don't need to turn to it, but in Genesis chapter 3, we read that the serpent said to the woman, Eve, you will not surely die.
For God knows that when you eat of the fruit, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.
Don't let God push you around just because he created you and created everything there is, says Satan. Decide for yourself what you should eat.
[5:34] Doesn't sound so unreasonable, does it? It's very similar to advice that you will get in all sorts of situations today. But when we come to our passage today, we come to the mind, the

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mindset, the attitude of mind, which Paul says, verse 5, is ours in Christ Jesus.

If you were here last week, you will remember Graham explaining that Paul says that we are citizens of heaven. We're citizens of another place.
Not this world. We belong, ultimately, somewhere else. And we, as citizens of that place, owe allegiance to the ruler of that place.
We owe allegiance to King Jesus. And we must live in a way that befits citizens of that place.
And so we should share this mindset, which Paul says, actually is already ours, in Christ Jesus.
And what does it say about him in verse 6?
[6:51] It says that he was in the form of God, but he did not count equality with God. A thing to be grasped. So he seems to have taken the opposite view, doesn't he?

To the view that Adam and Eve took. And the view that so many of the people we know and love take. And the view that almost every media outlet takes.
Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, and do not count equality with God. A thing to be grasped.
Well, none of you would actually say, I'm equal with God. Apologies. But in practice, we often behave as though that was true.
When Paul uses these words, he is intentionally taking us back to the scene of Adam's first disobedience. He is putting before us the career of the man Jesus, and comparing it with the career, career, career, career, career not calling, career of the first man, Adam.
[8:09] And to adopt the mindset of Jesus requires a radical reorientation. So in his letter to the Christians at Rome, Paul tells us not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds, so that we may discern what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

So having this mindset involves living differently from those around us. Thinking differently, and living differently. Having a different understanding of how we make decisions, of why we make decisions.
It's not so much a question of being moral, as against people being immoral. It's a question of having different glasses through which to look at the world. We are urged to allow God to change our thinking.
And please note that this is something that Paul says we should have among ourselves. In verse 5. It's collective.
It's not individual. You're not going to do this by yourself. We need encouragement.
[9:32] We need reminding. We find it in the Scriptures, but we need teaching. We need help.

We need to be held accountable to do what we know the Scriptures teach us to do. We cannot do it by ourselves. Look at verse 6.
Look what it says about Jesus in verse 6. It uses the word form twice. It talks about him being in the form of God.
And then in verse 7 it talks about him taking the form of a servant. Well now we know that in relation to God, God is spirit.
God doesn't have a form. He doesn't have edges. So we know that in relation to God, the word form isn't to be taken literally.
[10:33] But it is to be taken literally when it comes to the servant. It's a double meaning here.

And we might expect him to say that having taken the form, not counting, although he's been in the form of God, we might expect him to say taking the form of a man.
But he doesn't. He says, taking the form of a servant. Having first made himself nothing. And only after taking the form of a servant do we get to being born in the likeness of men.
Any Jewish person or anyone familiar with the Old Testament reading these words would immediately go to the book of Isaiah.
And they would remember that the whole of the second half of Isaiah from chapter 14 through to chapter 66 focuses on the servant, capital S, of the Lord.
[11:43] The one who is to come. There are four separate passages which talk about him. They're known as the servant songs. The most famous of these is the one that we're going to spend just a short time thinking about.

Comes in Isaiah 52 and 53. We'll go there in a minute but it's just a sort of warning. He is the one upon who the spirit rests.

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He is the one who goes as a lamb to the slaughter and by whose stripes we are healed. He is the one who executes or will execute the judgment of God on the sin of the world.
And when we read about him we find that he is both humbled and exalted. There is much debate among the rabbis as to whether these songs refer to one person or more than one person or perhaps to the nation of Israel.
But those debates as far as I know have never been settled within the Jewish community. So Paul is getting his readers to see by illusion just by a word that in Christ all of these songs find their fulfillment and find their full meaning.
[13:10] But because of the word form I appreciate this might get a bit muddly it's not meant to I promise you it's not muddly in my head which is the words are muddly.

Being found in human form verse 8 we again think of something else because what it seems to be saying isn't it is that Jesus took on the form of a human being.
Well when God made men he made men and women in his image after his likeness.
not in the form of God but like God and yet we've already seen what they did we've already seen what went wrong they completely failed to fulfill the purpose for which they were created they completely failed to live as obedient servants of God.
What is the mindset of Jesus? The mindset of Jesus is that he is born in the likeness of men he has come to fulfill the purpose of man he has come to live as an obedient servant he has come to do what Adam failed to do and it's not surprising that Paul elsewhere describes Jesus as the second Adam because that's exactly what is happening and what Paul is describing here and it says verse 8 he became obedient to the point of death well hopefully we'll all be obedient to the point of death won't we but we're all looking forward to a good death a peaceful death possibly in a hospice somewhere surrounded by friends and family able to make our peace able to prepare ourselves to meet our maker but that isn't what happened that isn't the death that the servant of the
[15:32] Lord was to die that isn't the death that was preserved for the second Adam verse 8 tells us it's even death on a cross it's a cross of shame it's a cross of humiliation it's an absolutely brutal annihilation and looking back 700 or so years to the prophet Isaiah would he he I'm only going to take a very short passage here if you want to find it it's 743 or 742 and this is a small excerpt of a much longer passage which begins at 5213 that is worth reading Isaiah writes about Jesus looking forward 700 years and as it were seen what was to come by oppression and judgment he was taken away and as for his generation who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living stricken for the transgression of my people he was cut off he was cut short he was in his early thirties we think we're pretty sure and verse 10 it was the will of the

Lord to crush him think about that language he is put into grief when his soul makes an offering for sin he shall see his offspring he shall prolong his days Jesus died childless provided you ignore some so called scholars who have tried to marry him off to various of his female followers none fortunately with any success but he died childless his offspring refer to his spiritual children those who trusted him and what he has done for us and you see what you're reading about is not a plan hatched in heaven by God the Father to chuck
God the Son down to earth and then trample all over him that's not what we're reading about is it it's not what Paul is saying Paul is saying that Jesus Christ did this willingly voluntarily one writer says speaking of the passage we just looked at in Isaiah that Isaiah foresaw that only the perfect man could be the perfect substitute and that at the heart of this perfection lay a will delighting to do the will of God the mindset that Paul wants you and I to have is a mind delighting to do the will of God and for Jesus for God himself delighting to do the will of God led him to the cross it led him to this terrible death this shameful death he did not divest himself at any stage of his divine identity he gave up his divine status we have to be very careful with our language here and I'm not sure
I'm not quite sure I've got the language right he surrendered his status he surrendered his equality with God but he never became other than who he was he never ceased to be God but he took on our nature by being born man he was not conceived as we were but he was born exactly the same way we worked unless you had a water birth one of those but sorry but perhaps not with as many wires and hooks and beeping whatever they use to measure what's going on when the child is born very annoying because when at least one of my kids was born the things kept coming undone and so all the noises would stop and you'd suddenly see the heartbeat go and you'd think something was terribly wrong but all that was actually wrong was that the machine had come unplugged or something didn't enjoy that but anyway his birth is the same as ours born in exactly the same way

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and so the apostle
John comments in those very familiar words that you probably all know that the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have beheld his glory and I think that it is my job this lunchtime to help you behold his glory in these words that we are considering the glory which he always had and still has and always will have and which belongs to him and him alone which he cannot share with another when John wrote those words I just quoted he was writing about Jesus in human form the servant of the Lord John of course was an eyewitness John saw this first hand John was at the cross and saw Jesus giving up his life he saw pouring Jesus pouring himself out emptying himself humbling himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross and by so doing [22:03] Jesus displayed the glory of God in a way that could not otherwise I think have been done because what he did was he displayed the extraordinary lengths to which the God of love would go to rescue his people who had rebelled against him and he didn't wait for us to be ready he didn't wait for us to be moral he didn't wait for us to be obedient he didn't really even wait to be asked to pay and so we read in the second half of our passage and I'm going to be a bit quicker over the second half that God has therefore highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that 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 God the Father was pleased with every aspect of God the Son nothing about God the Son displeased him and God the Father has shown his pleasure by putting him where he belongs he doesn't belong on a cross he doesn't belong in a grave the grave could not hold him if the father beheld the work of creation which we know from other places Jesus was instrumentally and looked at it and looked at the end of that work and said it was very good which we know that he did one can sort of imagine the Father beholding the work of the Son in our salvation I can't imagine what he might have said the best I can come up with was very very good or even better we can't I think really come up with words to describe the pleasure and the joy and the satisfaction that the
Father takes in the Son and what the Son has done so where is Jesus now he is where he belongs risen from the grave ascended to heaven seated at the right hand of the Father highly exalted we're told here received the name above every other day so that the purpose of God for his world could be finally accomplished and that one day the world will be full of the knowledge of God as Isaiah says again as the waters cover the sea but as a man still with a human body a resurrected body recognisable but different he reigns he is ready waiting as we wait for the appointed time when every knee shall bow before him for the
Philippians this meant that they were to confess allegiance to him we talked earlier on about citizenship in those days the emperor of Rome the most powerful man on earth and Philippi had a special status with the Roman empire he demanded confession that Caesar is lord the early Christians proclaimed Jesus as lord they refused to confess that Caesar was lord thousands of them were killed or imprisoned because they would not swear allegiance to someone who was not their king it's the same today and it's much more for some of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world much more immediately the case for them than it is for us but if we have the mind of Christ we will value obedience to the father more than life submission to the father's will more than freedom and comfort and care for our fellow believers more than personal convenience and we will put up with conflict with this world when it comes as it inevitably will as it must because we cannot the last analysis live and approve what man wants to do with his so called autonomy we cannot approve it we cannot agree with it we want to live in peace we want to worship our God we want to be able to preach tell people the gospel but there will be times when we find ourselves in conflict inevitably those who at the moment we see maiming and torturing and raping people who follow Christ will appear before this king they will bow before him not in worship but in terror as they see him as he is what is now still hidden will be fully revealed and those who follow the principle of autonomy will also appear the people who proclaim and teach us that man is
[27:57] God and is able to decide for himself what he should do and that God is dead or at best of irrelevance or something for us to abuse ourselves with in private they will also have to answer to him the servant of the Lord has suffered and died and risen for us and waits for us as we wait for him we are his offspring we who believe and trust in him are his children adopted into his family as well as subjects of the king it is really not a question of whether you come before God your creator but when you come before him and how you come will you come having confessed allegiance to

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him as Lord now while you come will you come having gladly surrendered your life to him or will you come in terror facing the

God for whatever reason you didn't serve as you knew you should none of us have served him as we know we should that those who have trusted in Christ know that by his sacrifice for us he has purchased our free and full forgiveness in concluding I wonder if you think about God as distant and stern a bit like a Victorian father definitely with a beard perpetually angry against you and needing to be placated I would argue that the career of Jesus Christ if I can use that term shows something quite different it shows that God is for you he's so much for you that he's come to you and he has identified completely with you he could not identify with you more than by becoming like you
I know it was a couple of thousand years ago several thousand miles away but it did happen and it happened in time it had to happen somewhere and it had to happen in some place but it's significance of what happened is for all time in Christ God gave away his life so that we could receive it and we need it he made it possible for us to live as we were created to live and we all need to live in that way to live the life that Christ gave us because only he has lived perfectly as we were created to live and the matter of life begins with this mindset not counting equality with God a thing to be grasped but making ourselves nothing taking the form of servant submitting to the will of our heavenly father
Jesus shows us that God is on the side of the alcoholic and the prostitute and the simple and the outcast and the lost and people like you and me he came for people like us so that people like us could live for him through him and in him may God give us grace to understand his word ending ending ending ending ending ending!
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