

# Philippians 2

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, Philippians chapter 2. A couple of days ago, I got an email that started with the words, you might want to kill me. It was an email from Paul, the pastor, and you'll be glad I didn't want to kill him. But he knew that I had spent quite a while getting a certain document ready, and he'd just found an early draft of that same document that he thought I could have used instead to save me time. In the end, it turned out I couldn't use that document because it wasn't the right format or anything. But I could still get some really useful information from it, so it was good that he sent it to me anyway. But Paul thought for a little while that I'd spent quite a while working on something, and all for nothing. And so the email started, you might want to kill me.

Because nobody likes a wasted journey, do they? Nobody likes wasted effort. And the apostle Paul was no different. In verse 16, he tells us that he is longing to be able to exult on the day of Christ in the fact that he did not run or labour in vain. He wants to see that all the hard slog of ministry produced some fruit, and particularly in this case among the Philippians. And because he is confident that the Philippians want that for him as well, he's telling them in this chapter how that would be achieved, how this fruit would be achieved. It's not that he's worried or doesn't yet see any fruit in them. He's actually really happy with the progress they've made so far. But in verse 2, you'll see he wants them to complete or fulfil his joy that he has in them.

So he says, If you have been at all encouraged by the wonderful news of Jesus Christ, if you have been comforted by God's love in any way, if you have received the Holy Spirit together, and if there's any affection and sympathy between us, complete my joy.

You know when someone says, If you really loved me, you would do this. They mean business, don't they? And so what would complete Paul's joy?

What would assure him that he hasn't run or laboured in vain? In verse 2 again, Be of the same mind. Have the same love.

[ 2 : 34 ] Be in full accord, of one spirit and of one mind. So he's continuing along the theme of his longing for increasing unity here in IPC Philippi.

He wants a real, vibrant, loving unity. It's what the gospel-worthy covenant community looks like. And here he's moving on from discussing unity in the face of opposition to unity in the face of our own personal selfishness. The solution is actually the same here.

It is to be of the same mind. And as I encourage you to do this morning, look around again, and see the people with whom you are caused to agree on these matters, that we have to have a common mind together.

And if we are to be of the same mind, thinking the same thing, what is this one thing that we should think? Well, to answer that question, he's going to use actually the same pattern that he's wanted to teach them in chapter 1, of helping them to grow in love with knowledge and discernment so that they can discern or approve what is excellent or what is best, as we saw this morning.

[ 3 : 54 ] He tells them up front where he wants them to end up in verses 3 and 4. Do you see that? Now, this morning I emphasize the need for us to remember that we are learning and growing together.

It's part of how our love grows and abounds. But this is usually one of the chapters of the Bible where our problem is the opposite. We are more than happy to be aware of the others around me who are listening in on this and who we think need to hear this.

We can think of all the different times in many ways people have not applied this verse for us. And so we get to this, now yeah, it's about time someone started considering me more important than themselves.

Now you may well have good reason to be hurt from past interactions with brothers and sisters here or from a lack of interaction. It may be a while since anyone has come up to you at church and asked you how you're doing or even just to say hello.

And sadly that is the kind of thing that can happen when a group of sinners get together. It's also what happens when a group of people who are under all kinds of pressures and trials come together and we need to be considerate of that when we meet together.

[ 5 : 34 ] But it can be all too easy to say effectively these people don't consider me more important than themselves. And so this church isn't for me or for people like me.

And so we just disengage from the whole thing and give up. And while it is definitely true that those around you should be doing more to welcome and love you what this passage is calling you to do is stop and think not how can others consider me more important but how can I consider others more important than me even if those around me have failed so miserably.

So that's the end goal. So now Paul is going to help us get to this point of unity and harmony. So we're going to follow that same pattern that we followed this morning actually.

So this morning we'll be looking at what we need to know what we need to figure out and then what we need to do. And so we're going to walk through those very same steps together here this evening.

So first of all what do we need to know? And here Paul takes us into the depths of one of the greatest mysteries given to us in the good news of Jesus.

[ 6 : 46 ] He takes us to the unimaginable mystery of eternity past and takes us to reflect on the incarnation. Now you can't really see it from the way it's laid out in the ESV but he's likely quoting a hymn that was sung in the early church and would have been quite familiar for the Philippians and it is packed with deep insights into the incarnation of God the Son.

We could spend weeks and weeks looking at this but I've got to move to Paris in just over a week and we've got to get through the rest of the Philippians next week. So we'll have to settle for covering some of the highlights.

And in this hymn from verses 6 to 11 Paul is particularly focusing here on the Son's mindset with respect to his incarnation.

In verse 6 Christ Jesus from all eternity is God. It's not in the image of God like us but he is the very same form the very same being as God.

He is God. And as God in equality with the Father is his final right. it is not something that he would ever need to reach for to get it.

[ 8 : 02 ] When the triune God in eternity was decreeing to save his chosen people even though the Son had absolutely every right on the basis of his being God to say I'm not doing that I'm God he didn't.

He agreed fully this plan was his plan God's mind was his mind this great cosmic condescension was his freely chosen plan.

And even though he had every right to be born into the richest dynasty in the most splendid palace in the world he came to a poor family and was born in a stable. And even though he deserved not just admiration and worship from everyone around him he got instead persecution from Herod and from his own people and from the authorities and betrayal of his own friends and family.

But as God he was still in full accord and one spirit with this plan and in his new acquired human nature he fully obeyed God down to the smallest detail even being obedient to the point of death even death on the cross that is what God the Son did for us for you.

God of whom we say immortal invisible God only wise in light inaccessible hid from our eyes most blessed most glorious the ancient of days almighty victorious by great name and praise that God in the person of the Son did this for you.

[ 9 : 58 ] That was what you need to know. He didn't just deserve to be warmly greeted by others in the community he deserved to be actually worshipped. But at absolutely no point along the way did he say you know what I'm done I'm not putting up with this anymore wine fed up and wine so that he could be your servant so that he could come alongside you as a man so that he could die for you and be raised for you and be your Lord and give you something to sing about forever.

He didn't have to do that but that is what he freely chose to do and that is what you need to know. So what should we figure out from that and that's our second stop what we should figure out and in this case it should be quite straightforward verse 5 have this same mind among yourselves God if

that is what the mindset of Christ was how much more should that be my mindset and our collective mindset what do we discern to be best what we prove as excellent we discern that it is best to think in the same way to think like this not to assert our rights demanding love from others but focusing on how we can love others so as you look around you should see people who are more important than you are to yourself as you look around the rooms tonight yes of course they are to think the same of you but your part is your part for you to focus on if you think that just sounds miserable and think of everyone more important then we haven't quite got it yet or I just haven't explained it properly like Chris the church father who I recruited this morning as well he put it this way if you accept that such and such a person is better than you and persuade yourself of this not only saying it but being fully assured of it you also will happily see him honoured and if you happily give him honour you will not be disturbed to see him honoured by others being happy when others are honoured will mean a lot more happiness in your life that the more miserable path actually is to only be happy when you are honoured now this isn't about belittling yourself he doesn't say consider yourself as less important he says consider others to be more important he's not giving a call to low self-esteem but to high other esteem you are to consider it a privilege to be surrounded by special people and as you look around you it may not necessarily look like it but we do live by faith and not by sight that everyone around you is unbelievably special and as you look at this apparently right type bunch of people believe that you are privileged to get to spend time with them and so figure this out this is what is to be approved as excellent having this same mindset together and so thirdly what should we do what obedience do we owe verse 12 we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling it's kind of a strange phrase isn't it but it's another way of saying what he said in chapter 1 it's living in a manner that is worthy of this gospel live in the light of our salvation in the light of Christ's total exaltation over all things and our participation in it and our joy in it having figured out the mindset that we're supposed to have it is time to act like we think this way work it out let it penetrate let it impact you all the way from your head to your heart to your hands let it unfold in you let this mindset work itself out but how

does it work itself out what's the dynamic involved here Paul's asking is this something that God is going to do in us or is this something we need to cultivate among ourselves and the answer in verse 13 is yes verse 12 we work out our salvation we take the step we make the change verse 13 we do it because God is doing it when we do it in the end we'll realize that it's only because God was at work in us that any of this happened and it was God who made us not only to do it but to want to do it in the first place I think this is one of the most helpful verses for me in thinking about how our Christian growth works this is the dynamic involved in our sanctification we want to do it and we do it because God is at work in us to will and to work for his good pleasure both are at work simultaneously

I don't wait around for change to sort happen inside I change as I do it because God is changing me we hold both those things together and wait until I feel a bit more holy to act afterwards and then from verse 14 we have some examples of what this looks like it looks like doing all things without grumbling or disputing and when church members live like that says Paul they shine like stars they stand out of the bleak darkness of the world I don't think I need to give you any examples of how this world is constantly constantly grumbling and disputing in the times we're living in if you just imagine a church family where nobody grumbles or disputes it will be immediately obvious to you that it will look radically different from the world around us don't it this is how the church shows that she has the light and that the world is all darkness and how do we shine in because we're doing all of that all of what we're doing on the basis of what we know and learn from the word of life verse 16 as we hold the word so we change and we shine and that is the church that Paul will not be ashamed of that is the church when he sees that he'll know he didn't run in vain so that's the key teaching that

Paul is giving us here and then from verse 19 onwards Paul is giving us two examples of men who have this Christ like mindset for us to follow it can seem a bit like it's a side point from Paul it's like he's taking a PS and put it in the middle of the letter updating them with some news of people he wants to send them but he is also setting these men out as examples to be honoured and imitated as I said this morning a key part of growing as a Christian growing in godliness is just copying the godliness of other people just steal their ideas of how to be godly first he speaks!

[18:05] he speaks of Timothy who he hopes to send to them and says he's got no one like him in verse 20 he's got no one like Timothy who embodies this godly christ-like mindset quite like Timothy Paul can think of plenty of people who seek their interests but not Timothy he served with Paul

faithfully and then verse 25 he hopes to send Epaphroditus to them and Epaphroditus had been sent to Paul by the Philippians to carry a gift of some kind to help Paul in his imprisonment remember from this morning he's probably under house arrest and in verse 30 he speaks of Epaphroditus completing what was lacking in their service to him which probably simply means that what was lacking was actually getting the gift to Paul that Philippians had collected this gift and so his Epaphroditus to fill what was lacking in terms of getting the gift to him he did the delivery and he did so at the risk of his life we learn from Paul that he got ill and actually almost died but what was Epaphroditus worried about in all that verse 26 not about the fact that he was ill but about the fact that the

Philippians had heard that he had been ill and would be really worried about him talk about not looking to your own interests such men would certainly be an encouragement to Paul that he didn't labour in vain and people in Philippians people in Philippi actually imitate how they lived but as we close it's important also that we bear in mind that all this is only possible because of the thing that he calls them to know as the basis of their action that thing that they're called to know is actually true it is only because the eternal son of God became the redeemer of God's elect dying for us on the cross rising to eternal life and raising us up with him it's only because of that we have any basis for being one as Paul wants them to be it is only because of the encouragement of the gospel of Christ and the comfort of the love of God and our participation in the Holy Spirit that we have any reason to love and serve in this way and so as we look to do let us first know and be comforted and encouraged by the fact that this good news is true news that makes all this salvation possible which we work out to his glory let's pray together