



Sermon – June 30, 2019
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Verses Covered
Philippians 2:1 - 8

Amen. It is always such a joy and a blessing to get to fill in when Pastor Chris is out. And he'll be back next week. You can be in prayer, he and Peggy will be travelling back from the mountains over the next couple days. He will be back here next week. They will leave, heard they've been having super cool weather in the 30's. If only. If only. This week my, Dana Hord, one of my interns from this past year, we have a college staff text, a team text. She texted an article from the Babylon Bee. And many of you, if you listen to Pastor Chris, this is his favorite news site. It's not a real news site, it's a satirical site that makes light of issues inside of the Christian faith and things that happen in church culture. Also, I tell you that to say, what I'm about to read you is not a true story. But it is designed to target what happens often. And so she sent us this article. The title of the article, again, an article as if it was real, the title of the article says, "Why Doesn't Are Church Have More Programs?" Asks family that never volunteers for anything. And one of the quotes from the article from this fake husband said, "Someone should really step up and take our young men on the camping trip. They need to learn what it means to be a real man. Not me, of course. Lord, here I am. Send someone else." Now we laugh and we get a kick out of that. But we laugh at that and such satire exists because that's really the state of many of our hearts. There are many things that go, spots, volunteers that are needed inside of a church that go empty because, "Ah, no, we're too busy." Or, no, for various reasons. At the end of the day, the sad reality is, our church culture has been deeply influenced by the consumerism that runs out country. At the heart of that consumerism is a mind that says it is about me, myself, and I. My needs. My dreams. My aspirations. My schedule. My convenience. And it is this attitude so prevalent in America today that the Holy Spirit through Paul is going to attack sharply in our passage.

So if you've got your Bibles, we're going to be in Philippians chapter 2. Philippians chapter 2. And as you turn there, let me just set the context for you. Paul is writing to the church in Philippi. A church that is overall a good and healthy church. There's a few people having some squabbles that you find out about later in the book. But overall, this is a good, healthy church. A church that is active. A church that loves the Lord. A church that is actively engaged in living on mission for the glory of God and the gospel of Christ. But even in a church that is healthy and good, there is always a danger that our self-centered personal ambition can rise up and cause problems and dis-

unify the church and Paul's concerned about this. So he writes and he says this. Verse 1, chapter 2.

¹Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ

That is, if you are in Christ and you hear the implorement of Christ to follow Him fully.

if there is any consolation, or comfort of the love of God, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit

Meaning if you participate in the Holy Spirit and you know the fellowship that comes from Him.

if there is any affection, deep longing, and compassion,

Compassion being a heart that sees those suffering, sees those hurting, and is moved to act to alleviate their pain. Paul says, if these things are there, not if these things are there as if they're not, but more rhetorical. Since these four realities exist, since there is an encouragement in Christ that calls us to follow Him, since God's love comforts us, since we mutually participate in the Holy Spirit, and any fellowship we have comes from Him. And specifically for them, since Paul writes as he's in prison and says, "Since you have affection and compassion for me, for us today since hopefully we have affection and compassion for each other here, but even if not since affection and compassion is God's heart towards us. Since these realities are true, make my joy complete.

²make my joy complete, by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, or literally one soul, intent on one purpose. ³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard yourself, reckon one another as more important than yourself. ⁴Not merely looking out for your own personal interest, but also for the interests of others.

Paul comes right off the bat and he says two things. He says, one, he says, these things are true. I want you to be unified. To be unified. And he described what unity is. It means I want you to think the same. I want you to think God's things in God's way. He says, I want you to love each other. And that word love there's *agape*. That's the love of God. I want you to love each other God's way. I want you to be one soul; driven by one thing, living life God's way. And literally, intent thinking upon the One, being focused on the one thing, God and God's call. This is what it means to be unified and this is what he calls them to. I want you to be unified. Because Paul knows a church that is divided will not go forth with the mission of the gospel in this world. The church that is divided will stop short, will be opposed, will fall in the face of opposition. The opposition they're facing very real in Philippi. And ultimately a church that is divided is a poor and a failed reflection of a God who is Trinity; three in one. And they are always in perfect unity. He writes, he says, be unified. Now we need to understand, unity doesn't happen when you get your act together. Unity happens when I get my act together. Unity happens when I as an individual gets before the Lord and I begin to walk by the Spirit, in the Spirit. Ephesians is very clear that unity does not come from us. Unity comes from the Holy Spirit. So if we want to be unified, we must walk by the Spirit. And so when we walk in the flesh and we allow self-

centeredness to creep in, it will prevent unity from ever existing and flourishing. And we will stand as a poor reflection of our Savior. So he calls them to be unified. But he understands very clearly, you and I will not be unified if we are not the second thing: humble. Look at the text. Look what he says. Verse 2, or verse 3.

Do nothing from selfishness

Selfish ambition. It's the idea, it's the picture of pursuing a political office by unfair means. It's the idea of an ambition that sees no room for service of others. It is only about power and position. He says, do nothing from selfishness. Do nothing from empty conceit, another way you could phrase it, vain glory. Vain glory. The idea that you have an inflated picture of yourself that doesn't quite correspond with reality. It's the person who is conceited without reason who is ambitious for their own reputation who challenges others to rivalry, who is jealous, and who is willing to fight to prove his idea is right. He says, these attitudes can have no place in your life. Instead, in humility of mind, regard one another. What is humility? Well humility, very simply, is the idea that you and I see ourselves correctly in view of God. Which means far from me being perfect. I am a sinner in view of God. Far from the world revolving around me. The world actually revolves around God. At the same time, far from being nothing, I am of supreme value to God for He sent His Son. And as a believer, as a son by adoption by the grace of God, not only am I valued by God, but I have a position in Christ. Do I rightly know? See we tend to go humility is thinking negatively of oneself. Humility has nothing to do with ourselves. It's thinking of ourselves correctly, not negatively. Humility is what drives us before God to be as Isaiah and when we see our sinfulness in view of a holy God, we cry out, "Woe is me." But it's also what drives us when we have touched and saved by the grace of God to cry out as Isaiah, "Lord, here am I. Send me." This is what humility is. And he says, in humility of mind. You think humbly and out of your humility of mind you regard, you regard, and this is an interesting word because the picture of this word is for you and I to lead our thoughts somewhere. Not to fill our way into thinking something, but I am to actively lead my thoughts to a certain place. And where am I supposed to? So in humility of mind being humble, I am to lead my thoughts where I regard others and the language of the text is not just as kind of more important, but as far surpassing in value than myself. Which drives what he says. We don't look out merely for our own interests, but for those of others. Do we value others in this way? Do we value each other in this room in this way? Do we live when we go out into the world, out into the mission field, do we live valuing other people as greater than ourselves? This is Paul's command; to be humble, to be unified. But unity won't happen if we're not humble. He comes right off the bat and lays it out. Well how do we, how do we live this out? How do we do this? Very simply. One. You and I have to know Christ. You cannot be humble if you do not know Jesus Christ. You can't. If you do not know Christ, if you're not in this place saved by grace through faith. If that has not taken place in your life, you will be working in vain to try to live this out. You must know Christ. But in addition to knowing Christ, for those of us who know Him, we must see Him correctly. If I have a view of God where it is a god full of self-centeredness and lacking any heart and compassion, well I should not be surprised if I live that way. Maybe many of us should wonder how do our lives reflect our view of God. Maybe we can acknowledge God as certain things but in reality we actually think other things based on how we live. Not only that, but my view, is my view of Christ correct? Is my view of who I am in Christ correct? Christ has talked as we walked through Ephesians about our position in Christ. You and I by our own flesh and ability, cannot walk humbly. But as a believer, I am filled, indwelt by

the Holy Spirit who empowers me and enables me to do what God has called me to do. Which means by the power of the Spirit, I can do this. I can take my thoughts captive. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I can take my thoughts and lead them to a place where I declare to my thoughts, it is not about me and everyone else in this room is of surpassing value. I can take my thoughts to this place. I think often we miss this. We think and we look for, “Well I need to feel humble.” This is what drove me one time to tell my dad back in high school, I said, “Dad I really, I am praying for humility.” And I was shocked when dad looked back at me and without missing a beat said, “Don’t pray that. That’s unbiblical.” I said, “It’s unbiblical to pray for humility?” He said, “Yes. Go find somewhere in scripture you’re taught to pray for humility.” He said, “You’re never told to pray for humility. You’re told to humble yourself.” Because often I think we think humility is a feeling. God is not concerned here that we get to a place where we feel humble. He is concerned here that we get to a place where we think humble. Because what we think will ultimately determine what we feel. There are going to be times people annoy you or annoy me. There are going to be people who we don’t quite jive with. And my emotions may not be there. But I can lead my thoughts to value them as greater than myself because I know who I am in front of Christ. Which means I know who God is. We see this all over the place today. This comes out in many ways. We view the people that we work with as working for us to better our career. Do we view our role as serving them? Do we view our teammates, students, or whatever your team you may be, are they there to advance your ambitions for winning? Or are you there to serve them? We see this in a church setting. Is your life group, you’re leading a life group, your life group is growing, and then leadership comes and says, “We would love to see your life group so we can see this continue to happen.” And you say, “No.” Because how dare you split up my large life group. Or when the nursery says, “We need you to step in and volunteer in the nursery.” Or, “It’s your Sunday to work in the nursery.” And I say, “No. No. Sorry. Taking care of the little children is not as important as me getting what I want out of today.” Fighting over praise style. I didn’t like those songs today. Fighting over the sermon. I thought that sermon was terrible and it wasn’t for me today. Missing the point that maybe it was for the person right next to you whom God absolutely picked up and breathed life into. It is not about you and I. Walking in unity and with God and walking in humility with each other will mean that church and people will likely inconveniently interrupt our scheduled plans, our dreams, and our aspirations. But the question is, will we walk in humility?

Now it’s an interesting passage because normally we would normally unpack a lot of truth and then come to the application. But here we are, ten minutes in and we’ve already unpacked the application. Why? Why does Paul put all this on the front? Why does he put all this on the front? Because look with me back at verse 5. Paul’s going to summarize what he just says in this command.

⁵Have this attitude. Think this way. Choose to think this way in yourselves which is also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although, He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself by taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of man. ⁸Being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, death on a cross.

The ultimate command, if you’re a note-taker and you wonder what is the point of the whole sermon today? It is to think like Christ. That is the command. It’s a present tense meaning it

should dominate every moment of my life. It's in the active voice meaning it's something I must choose and I can choose because of the Holy Spirit within me. And it is an imperative because it is a command, not a suggestion. I am called to take up the mind of Christ. And what is the mind of Christ? It says that He existed in the form of God meaning this, that Jesus has always been God. There's never been a moment where Jesus has not existed because there's never been a moment where God has not existed. And there has never been a moment in His existence where Jesus has not been one hundred percent fully God. He did not become God. He is not a created being by God. Jesus is God. It's what the text says. The word form meaning the outward expression of something that reflects accurately who someone really is. So because Jesus really is God, He appears as God. So Jesus who has always existed as God, what does it say? He did not consider it a thing to be grasped. This interesting word that means to violently take something that is rightfully yours. It's used in this sense. Jesus did not come in His incarnation when He stepped down from heaven into this earth. He did not come down and see the fact that He is God as something to be lorded over us as mankind. As something to be used for His personal pleasure and advantage. As something to be used for His power. Isn't it interesting? I mean think about it for just a second. Jesus never, when they come to arrest Jesus and they say, "Are You the One?" He says, "I." And they all fall back. One of the only times you see people really scared in a group by Christ. The disciples have a few moments to be sure, but you don't see Jesus going, "Everyone I am God! Cut it out!" Jesus doesn't do that. He doesn't lord over. He comes and specifically how, it says, He emptied Himself. What does it mean to empty Himself? It doesn't mean that He ceased being God. Because the language actually there is He emptied Himself by doing something. What did He do? He did not use His divinity, but when He came and took on full humanity, He came in the form of a slave, of a servant. My Bible translates that word, bond-servant. It's literally the word though, slave. A slave is someone who's owned by someone else who has no rights or privileges to their own life. They exist to serve another. Now we obviously associate that with horrible things that have come through our country, but here do not miss what it's saying about Christ. That God, Himself, when He took on humanity, did not come and say, "I am God." He did not come and say, "Well I'm going to be born to the wealthiest, nicest family with the nicest house." He came and He was born to a carpenter who wasn't even in their home city. He was born, and we have a nice picture of a manger, this cute little stable with really nice smiling cows that look like something from Sesame Street. He was born in what would have been a dugout cave with smelly animals. And He was laid in a feeding trough for there was no cradle. He was chased out of His home country, His parents left for fear of His life at King Herod. He came back and He grew up in a carpenter, I guarantee you Joseph was not Chip and Joanna Gaines. Jesus took on the form of a servant. What does Jesus say? He said, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. He was found in the likeness of men, not meaning that He was not fully human, but it's an interesting little word to mean He was fully human. If He would hit His thumb with a hammer, His thumb would hurt. And no, He didn't then when He would slice His skin from working in the shop go, "Well, I'm God. No one's looking. Let Me just rub that out." He has humanity just like you and I. But there's a distinct difference in that you and I are born into a broken humanity and Christ was born with a perfect humanity that He never lost because He never sinned. So that's what that word means. It's why it says likeness; meaning He does have a real humanity, but it's slightly different than ours. Praise the Lord. It says He was found in appearance as a man. He humbled Himself. There's that word humble Himself. To make oneself low. And I want you to just see. We need to all see. That is a choice. It's an active verb. Jesus chose to humble Himself. And how did He humble Himself? By being

obedient to the point of death. And not just any death. Death on a cross. I realize most, many in the room today may be familiar. This is simply the gospel message. That God sent His Son, that His Son lived, He came lowly and lived a perfect life. That He went to the cross. And I realize that we know this, but can we just for a moment pause, if you're familiar, and just pause and catch that. We cannot fathom the glory of God and Jesus stepped down out of that glory to the lowest of places. He lived a life for the sole purpose of the cross. All of American life, all the western world today is fighting to find a way to cheat death; to prolong death. Yet God Himself came. He chose not the easiest path, the convenient path, the wealthy path. He chose a hard path. A path of service. A low path. He chose that because that is a reflection of His humble heart. And He came for the purpose to die. This is what Cicero, a Roman philosopher, Roman citizens could not be crucified. This is what he, this was a Roman describing crucifixion. It is a most cruel and disgusting punishment. It is the worst extreme of tortures inflicted upon slaves. To bind a Roman citizen is a crime. To flog him is an abomination. To slay him is almost an act of murder. To crucify him is what? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed. It is why if you and I were living in first century Philippi, for us to utter the word cross, to make the statement that Jesus was obedient to the point of death, death on a cross, you didn't say cross in first century society because it was an obscenity if was so vile. And this is the death that Christ willed Himself to go to. Scripture says, scarcely will a man die for a righteous man, maybe someone would dare to die for a good man, but God demonstrates His own love in this, that while we were sinners, by nature children of wrath and enemies of God, Christ died for us. Which is good news. If you don't know Christ today, this is the hope. Christ has died on your behalf. And He is risen because the passage doesn't stop here. Look what it says. It says,

[For this reason, God has highly, has exalted Him to the highest possible of places and given Him the name which is above every name. That name being the name of God.](#)

Not that Jesus becomes God, but God in looking upon the humility of Christ and Christ's obedience to the point of death, God the Father approves and He shows His approval of this by declaring that Christ is God. So that at the name of Jesus, we're looking to the future here. There's going to come a moment where Jesus' name will be called out and every knee will bow. Those who are in heaven, those on earth, and those under earth. Meaning that all angels, demons, every man, woman, boy, or girl who's ever lived and ever will live will bow. And every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father. Jesus was obedient to the point of death. He rises again on the third day. God has exalted Him supremely because God is a God who honors humility. He says elsewhere, He is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. So again, what does this mean for you and I? It means that for you and I to take any attitude that prizes my convenience and comfort and what I want over someone else, is the height of arrogance because it says that Jesus who is humble was wrong. The context is not that we just live this way with each other. But this is from us in this room to going out in our workplaces, our school places, going out there should be a humility that marks our lives, and specifically in the way that we relate to each other. Because we need to all remember Jesus did not say by the way you love the world they will know you are Mine. He said, "By the way you love each other, they will know you are Mine." Yet how often, how easy is it for me right now to pull up Twitter and find believers who believe the same doctrine who would even dare to worship in the same churches assaulting each other vehemently in the public square simply because they disagree on something secondary. How easy is it for us to walk inside of the church and find people who walk out

complaining about this, complaining about that? Now are there issues that need to be dealt with at times? For sure. This is not dealing with real issues, but with self-centered ambition. Christ reveals God perfectly. He reveals a God who is humble. He reveals a God who exalts and honors and is glorified by humility. The call for you and I today is to walk in unity. We won't walk in unity if we don't walk in humility. So here's the question. Are we more concerned with our own glory? Or are we more concerned with the glory of God? Are we more concerned with the praise of men and the gratification of our own hearts? Or do we value more the praise of God and the gratification of His heart? I pray as I have prepared this week, it has been my deepest prayer that we would be a people here at Central who lives this out well. Paul's writing a good church. We have been blessed here to be a good and healthy church. But let us not think for a second that we are above the personal ambition that can so easily infect the church and dishonor our Lord.

Let's pray.

Father, it is just, I really don't know how to express just the thought. Because I can't fully comprehend it, Jesus, what You stepped down from. And what You chose to do. And Jesus there's nothing You did that is not a perfect reflection of who You are. So I just pray today very clear that we would see who You are and what You've done clearly in this place. God if there is any repentance the needs to take place. Whether that's before You, whether that's before the people, Lord may we repent. May we repent and recognize, Lord, we're sorry for where we have been about ourselves. And Lord we are coming to You to honor You. We are seeing ourselves rightly before You. And we are regarding others as more valuable. Lord, for those in this room, if there are any that who do not know You, may they understand that this is Your heart towards them. This is how You've acted towards them. And may they respond. Today is the day of salvation. Lord, may they hear Your kind call, Holy Spirit, and may they respond. Lord, as we move into a time of invitation as we depart in this place today, Father find obedience in our hearts.