

TO BE LIKE JESUS

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Scripture: Philippians 2:1-13

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Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Paul's exhortation to the church at Philippi! He's talking to the whole church and saying that these are things that I want you to be aware of. I like the way the Contemporary English Version puts this whole passage. As we unpack it, I'm going to look at it through the lens of the CEV.

It starts by saying: *Christ encourages you and His love comforts you.* When I was preparing this and I read that line, I thought that this is so full of meaning, that there is encouragement from Christ, and Christ encourages you and me.

I don't know what your week has been like. Maybe it's been a trying week; maybe it's been difficult, maybe you've poured yourself out and there's been no appreciation of your work. Maybe you're just dejected, despondent, whatever. But it's so good to know that Christ will encourage you. Maybe just turn to Him and say, "Lord, I just need encouragement from You. I need You to draw near to me and put Your arm around me and say, 'You've done well.'" And maybe today, just listen to Him, take wherever you are, whatever is going on in your life to Him and say, "Lord, would You encourage me? I need that word of encouragement from You."

Then he says, *His love comforts you.* Do you need comfort today, or these days? Are there things going on in your life that are just so difficult; lost a loved one, or maybe somebody is sick in hospital, maybe a relationship is going sour, not working out? And you're saying: I need to be comforted today. Paul starts by saying that these two traits of Jesus, who is yours and He lives within you. Paul says that He can encourage you and His love will comfort you.

Then he moves on and says: *God's Spirit unites you, and you are concerned for others.* To be in unity with everybody and to be able to be concerned for one another. To be able to think about what is going on in somebody else's life. I know that these days, things are happening to us. We are all going through extraordinary situations and circumstances and sometimes, it's difficult to look at what's going on with others too. But maybe, we can do that today. Maybe Paul's words can stir something

in us, making us say: Today, I'm just going to de-focus from myself and think about others. Lord, would You, through Your Spirit, point me in the direction of somebody who I need to be focusing on today, that I need to be concerned about?

Then he goes on in v. 2 *Now make me completely happy! Live in harmony by showing love for each other. Be united in what you think, as if you were only one person.*

And this is Paul, writing as a beloved father to all of them, and saying, "Make me happy. Let me hear of the harmony that exists amongst you all. Be united in the way that you think as if you were only one person." How do we do that, Paul? would be the question. And he goes on to unpack it. He gives us five points as we think about what it means to think of the other person.

TO BE UNITED:

- **Don't be jealous**

Don't look at somebody else and say: this person has got this, that person has become this, that's what I want – and be jealous of that person.

- **Don't be proud**

Are you proud of your own self, of what you have, what you've achieved, and maybe who you are? Don't let pride creep in, because pride and jealousy can take away from unity.

- **Be humble**

I've had the wonderful privilege of being with extraordinarily humble people, people who have touched my life, who have done immense things. And yet, they are so humble. I've come to realize that one of the qualities of humility is always to be able to look at whoever you're talking to, and want to listen to them, to ask questions, to still continue to learn and think that anybody that they come in contact with, they can learn from. What's going on in your life? How do you see all this panning out? What do you think could be happening in this area in five years? These are questions that I've heard from people who have these answers better than I know, and yet, they have sat and asked these questions. Humility, he says, have humility.

- **Consider others more important than yourselves**

- **Care about them as much as you care about yourselves**

How often have you been in a situation where you've been the recipient of goodness from somebody? And when you've called to say thank you, that person just responds, "Oh, we were going to do it, and we thought about you." That's such a blessing! That's what Paul is saying: Just as you think about yourself and you care about yourself, care about other people as well. and then think the same way that Christ Jesus thought.

And of course, he talks about this great what we call the 'kenosis' passage – the Greek 'of emptying oneself', how Jesus emptied Himself of everything. And so he goes on. He says in v. 6: *Christ was truly God. But He did not try to remain equal with God. Instead He gave up everything and became a slave, when He became like one of us.*

When we look at that, we're immediately thinking about this kingdom principle that we've been talking about and Jesus epitomizes it right there – rights and responsibilities. Remember, we looked at that a couple of weeks back. We said that there are kingdom principles that we as citizens of God's kingdom must live by. One was in Matthew 17 where there are rights and responsibilities,

responsibilities outweigh the rights. And then we talked about forgiveness – that forgiveness for a citizen of the kingdom is not an option; it's an obligation on our part. And Jesus just epitomizes this. There is the right to be God and stay where He was in heaven, and not have to come down into our world and go through all that He went through. And yet, the responsibility for creation weighed more, and He emptied Himself of everything in that celestial realm and came down to earth, became a slave when He became like one of us and gave it up for a greater purpose.

Then Christ was humble. He obeyed God and even died on a cross. This is what Paul is talking about being humble. Jesus showed what humility is all about as He came down to earth and embraced the cross for you and me, giving up all the power that He had, all the majesty that He had just for you and for me.

Then in v. 9 *Then God gave Christ the highest place and honored His name above all others.* And humility beloved, automatically leads to exaltation in God's eyes and in God's scheme of things. In Matthew 23:12, Jesus reminds us that those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted. And God did that for Jesus – exalted Him. *So that at the name of Jesus everyone will bow down, those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.* Consequences of His humility was that God exalted Him to be worshipped and we continue to worship Him as Lord (v.11) *to the glory of God the Father everyone will openly agree, "Jesus Christ is Lord!"*

How does that happen, that when everybody openly says Jesus is Lord, that God is glorified? Well, when we say Jesus Christ is Lord, that means we are listening to Him; every moment we are listening to Him. In Luke ch. 9, at the transfiguration, the heavens opened and a voice came from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him." Beloved, as we continue on every moment of every day listening to Him, we actually are putting Jesus as Lord of our lives. remember that when we invite Jesus into our hearts, He comes in as our Savior, saving us from certain death to life with Him. But the walk that we have is when we have an opportunity to place Him as Lord of our lives every moment of every day. And when we do that, when He is exalted, then our light shines from us and Jesus Himself said, "Let your light so shine, so that people will see your good works and glorify My Father in heaven." So, we listen to Him. And when we listen to Him, our light shines to a world that is so dark in so many ways. When our light shines, God gets the glory and the honor.

So we see that in these 6 verses, from vv. 6-11, Paul says, "Just take a look at Jesus. See what He did. And immediately, you'll see what I'm talking about – about no jealousy, no pride, be humble, consider others more important than yourselves, care about them as much as you care about yourself." He says, "All of this is captured when you think the same way that Christ Jesus thought."

Then he goes on in v. 12. *So then, my dear friends, you always obeyed when I was with you. Now that I am away, you should obey even more. So work with fear and trembling to discover what it really means to be saved.*

He is not saying that you have to work for salvation. We know that salvation is a free gift from God to us. But he is saying that a saved person, as we continue on this life, in this process of keeping Jesus as Lord of our lives, we must work it out with fear and trembling. There must be awe about what Jesus has offered to us, and in and through that awe, we are able to live our lives in such a way.

Then he says, "But listen, it's not as difficult as you think it is because somebody is working on your behalf." And he says in v.13. *God is working in you to make you willing and able to obey Him.* Great news! All that God wants us to do in being obedient to Him, He is willing it from within us. He lives within us now. Paul is talking to the church at Philippi; he is talking to Christians. He said, "You have Jesus in you, the Holy Spirit works in you. You know the will of God and God is within you,

willing you on, trying to change your will as you submit to Him every day, so that our will and God's will are perfectly aligned. And then, helping us to be obedient to Him.

So there's a submission that must take place within us to God, and say, "Lord, I'm going to allow You to work in my life because there are ways in which I don't understand the Lordship of Jesus. In certain areas, maybe, I haven't. But Lord, I want You to have that kind of lordship in my life. Go ahead and work in my life. I give You full reign, full authority. I allow You to do it."

As I say this, I also realize that sometimes, there are areas of our lives that we struggle with to hand over the reins to God. It's like: No, no, this I want to keep. This is my life; this is a personal area. And Paul is saying, "God is at work within you. He's doing a marvelous work. Let Him! Let Him do it."

S. B. Meyer once said, "I can't say I'm willing Lord, but I'm willing to be willing, to be made willing." And that's an acceptable place for us. We may not be willing right now, but I'm saying to You Lord, I'm willing to be made willing. In other words, I'm telling You – I'm okay if you want to make me willing to be willing to let You work.

Maybe that's a position that you are in. maybe, today is about giving full reign to God, of allowing your salvation experience to work itself out in such a way that it honors and brings glory to God. Maybe we never thought about that before – that this is all part of what it means for church to be like a lighthouse to a world around us.

Paul goes on to say in vv.14-15 *Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.*

That's what we need to be – shining lights, and for that to happen, we need to continue every moment, every day to allow God to work His will in our lives, so that our will and His are aligned. And then for God to be able to get us to such a point that we are completely obedient to His every will.

Knowing His will is one thing; following His will is another. And as we do that, then we can look back at what Paul is saying and exhorting us, "This is how you must be as a church. You are united together, that there is harmony amongst each one of you, and that you show love and care for one another, that you're thinking about others as well. When this happens, when the church is different from the world, then we begin to sparkle as lights in a perverse and crooked generation.

I believe that's the call for each one of us today, to be able to examine ourselves and say: I want to be a shining light for God. I want to be that. What is it going to take? Let me look at my life and say, "Are there areas in my life where I don't think in the way that I've just heard? Do I need to think differently?" And then be able to take that to God and say, "Lord, would You do that in me? I'm willing." Then we will shine as lights.

Paul thought the best example was to point to Jesus – to be like Him. I think that should be our closing thought, just to be like Jesus and allow God then to bring those changes to us.

Shall we pray together?

Heavenly Father, we are inspired by Your Son today, the life that He gave up for us. We want to be like Him so that as we live like Him in obedience to Your will, we will shine as You want us to shine in our world. And not only would we be able to bring light in the places that we are in, but that You will also be glorified. So change us, inspire us, motivate us. Hear our prayers of commitment and od

Lord, what You need to do. We give You permission and the authority to bring those changes into our lives. in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
