

Philippians Chapter 2 v 1 - 11

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Date: 09 June 2019

Preacher: Gareth Crossley

[0 : 00] Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves. Not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[1 : 29] Amen. We've just been reminded how difficult it is to be a Christian in some countries.

There's a lot of persecution at present time against those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. But there are many different kinds of persecution, aren't there?

Because when people are in work and they seek to follow the Lord in integrity and truth and honesty and find themselves persecuted then for it, not promoted, as others might be, or spurned when work is to be done, and of honours granted.

There are many different ways. Being a Christian isn't easy. And we mustn't give the impression that it's easy to be a Christian.

We don't want people turning and seeking the Lord, thinking that everything is going to be absolutely wonderful, plain sailing.

[2 : 48] It's tough. And it can be tough in the church. Please don't be offended, but I've said this many times in the churches where I've been pastor, we're a motley bunch.

And really, we have to admit that there are quite a lot of us who wouldn't have anything to do with each other if it wasn't for the Lord Jesus.

He's the only thing that we have in common. But it's precious. And it's special. And it makes our relationship special.

And we come together with sharp corners. And none of us are perfect. And most of us have a knack of irritating one another.

It's tough. It's tough. It's tough following the Lord Jesus in the church of the Lord Jesus.

[3 : 55] And Paul, as he's guided by the Holy Spirit, has this particularly in mind as he writes the second chapter of the letter to the Philippians.

We can so easily move into considering the beautiful things that it says about the Lord Jesus that we forget the context. Paul is going to bring up the Lord Jesus as an example of how Christians have got to behave with other Christians.

And we have to face it. It's not always easy. You can't go into a church setting and get your own way. Not even if you're an elder. But unless somebody's found a secret here in Whitby.

We have to consider one another. We have to try and work out combined understanding and agreement. And it can be tough, painful, humbling.

And it's this kind of relationship that God is dealing with through his servant Paul here in this second chapter. Of not pushing ourselves forward and keeping our own opinions and our own views as though they're the most important thing in the world and everybody else has got to agree with me.

[5 : 23] In fact, God says something quite different. He says, respect your brothers and sisters, especially those who have a different opinion than you have on things.

Respect them. Love them. Esteem them highly. Consider them. Treat their opinions with respect. And be prepared to give up your own rights when it's necessary for the good of the whole and the glory of God.

And that's how Paul then goes on to use our Savior as a most wonderful example of somebody who had a most remarkable right.

The right to be known and acknowledged as God like the Father. That was his by right. He's the eternal, only begotten of God.

[6 : 37] God like the Father. As John expresses it, the Word was with God and the Word was God. God with God. But in this passage we're told that for the good of his people he forwent that right.

gave up that right to be recognized and acknowledged as God. And prepared because of the work that the Father had given him.

And because of the salvation of his people was prepared to become a human being and to be thought by most people to be only a human being.

One of the biggest problems he faced was that people just could not grasp that the Son of God, God like the Father, had become a man.

It was too incredible for them. And our Lord Jesus gave up the right to be recognized by everyone as God like God.

[8 : 02] There was no pre-Raphaelite circle over his head as he went around the streets, that little round circle that was painted on to signify special, saintly.

No appearance in his face or sound in his voice to let the people know this is God.

You could pass him in the street and according to the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 53 there was no form or comeliness that we should desire him and no beauty that we should look upon him.

He would be a man among men and in a crowd he wouldn't be noticed. He became a real human being and dwelt among us.

And yet at the same time this passage shows us some of the most beautiful truth about him. It bears thought and consideration and study over and over and over again.

[9 : 15] Let this mind be in you. Think this way. Like Jesus who was in the form of God in the nature of God the very nature of God and took the nature the very nature the form of a servant.

Not just the form of a man the form of a servant. It's staggering and it's to his glory. It's magnificent. Magnificent. So let's see first of all this statement of deity. He was in the form of God or in the very likeness and the very nature of God.

The original word means the being the real inner being of a person. Morphe.

we have an English we use some of it in English the word in some of our English words. It means the essence of a person or a creature.

[10 : 33] He being existing already in the nature of God. There is no way of getting away from the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

it isn't a very slight doctrine that slips in here and there. It's there often in the pages of scripture.

Not blatant at times but very definitely there so often in the form in the very nature of God existing. his true deity. There are two words that are used in this passage. Forgive me for a little bit of Greek just to distinguish.

I'm aware of two conflicting things. John Wesley said it was helpful to quote Greek occasionally. An odd word here and there but Charles Haddon Spurgeon has some very strong words to say.

[11 : 38] He said he who quotes Greek from the lectern makes himself a foot taller measured by a foolometer. So let me be a Wesleyan just for one moment.

There are two words morphe and schema. And morphe is the essence the being. Schema is what we call scheme the fashion.

It's sometimes translated fashion or figure outward appearance. We have a difference in our English language between someone who is deformed and someone who is disfigured.

Disfigured is something to do with the surface of things. Deformed is something to do more serious more deep in the very nature of the person.

And these two words are used. He was in the very nature of God and he took the nature of a human being.

[12:48] The writer says God emptied himself. The son of God emptied himself. When I was in theological college just starting out to learn things I came across a lecturer who told us all about the kenosis theory and it's based on this emptying and it was the idea that the son of God let go of his deity emptied himself of deity and became a human being.

That is heresy. That is wrong. When it says he emptied himself it does not mean that he emptied himself of his deity.

He was as much deity as that man Jesus as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. the emptying he did is quite clear when you think carefully about it.

Bible scholars have struggled to explain it for us. He emptied himself of his glory. Had he come in his glory he would have had such brightness because God is light and in him is no darkness at all. There would be so much brightness that we would be blinded. Those who saw him at the time 2000 years ago would have been blinded permanently had he come in his glory.

[14:33] And there is a time in the high priestly prayer, the prayer in the upper room not long before our Saviour's death, where he prayed to the Father that he might have that glory that he had with him before he came into the world.

So he had a glory, he has a glory, he has it now. But in order to do his work here on earth, in order to become a real and true man, he gave up his heavenly glory.

He gave up his heavenly riches. You know that wonderful passage about he who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich.

It's spiritual depth, expressing something of what it cost him to empty himself of that position as so rich.

He became poor. He chose to become a servant, to serve. More than once he said, I've not come to be served, I've come to serve.

[15:50] He emptied himself of his relationship with the law, because he with the father was lawgiver.

He had never, ever obeyed a law in the whole of his existence, that never beginning existence. He'd never obeyed a law because he was the lawgiver, perfect and excellent with the father and the holy spirit.

And when he became a human being, he put himself as a human being under the law of God. And as the writer to the Hebrews expresses it, Jesus learned obedience, and he learned it particularly in the things that he suffered.

He learned what it was to obey from the inside. experiencing it. It cost him. He also emptied himself of the independent exercise of authority.

He devoted himself throughout his whole life to doing the will of the father, never questioning it, willing to do the will of the father, submitting himself in a relationship that just did not exist in heaven.

[17:20] There is no boss in heaven. There's father, son, and holy spirit in a mysterious and remarkable relationship.

A deep love and a deep respect, but they think alike. Their actions are different, their responsibilities are different.

One is the father, and he's always the father. One is the son, and he's always the son. The son is never the father, the father's never the son. They have their own tasks and responsibilities, but there is between them a beautiful relationship which the church is expected to try to emulate, to try to imitate different tasks, one in mind and heart.

These are the things that he gave up, emptied himself in order to come and save his people, to become a human being.

And he took to himself the form of a servant. In Psalm 40 it is prophesied, and in Hebrews 10 it is quoted, that Christ when he came into the world said, a body you have prepared for me.

[18:52] Lo, I come, behold, I come, to do your will, O God. God had prepared him a body.

The Holy Spirit touching the body of Mary, that godly woman, that godly saved sinner woman, touched and a miracle performed.

A life started supernaturally. it had been predicted in Isaiah 714, and God by the Spirit brought it to being.

And from that moment everything developed as normal human development. He was a real human being.

He had the form of a servant man. man. And that form of a servant man meant that he looked like a man.

[20 : 03] Being found in fashion, being found in appearance as a man. He had the schema, he had the figure, he had the fashion, the appearance of a man. But he wasn't just the appearance, he had the nature, the form.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself. an experience that he never had in heaven. He humbled himself and became obedient to death.

And I can't help thinking that Paul, when he's writing this or dictating it to one of his friends, that he would pause it there.

And there might even have been a tear trickling down his cheek. Obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

For Paul was a Roman citizen by birth. He could never, ever be executed on a cross. It was against the Roman law.

[21 : 23] Whatever he did, no matter how heinous his crime, no matter how vile, he could not be executed by the cross. That was reserved for slaves and foreigners and Christians.

us. And our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.

And Paul writing those words or dictating those words, I sure he'd have a lump in his throat, a tear down his cheek, even, because it would grip him.

How deep the love of Jesus really is, even death on the cross. So we have the real deity set out in this passage.

We have the real humanity. And as a human being, he's a marvellous example to us. He's often used in the scriptures, often used by the writers, the historians of the Bible.

[22 : 41] to be an example. If you want an example of suffering and how to cope with suffering and how to live with suffering and what to react and do, you read Peter, 1 Peter.

He's got a lot to say about it. And he uses the example of the Lord Jesus and how he coped with suffering. It's beautiful. But whilst it's beautiful in the expression of what he's doing and what he's coping with, the extent of it begins to grip you.

The extent of his suffering. And he never once retaliated. He never once tried to get back at those who persecuted him.

the Lord Jesus is used as an example of a love for all peoples, all races.

When Paul is thinking of Jews and Gentiles and the people he's seeking to bring to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to tell them the gospel of Jesus, he uses the Lord Jesus Christ.

[23 : 56] He says, imitate me as I imitate Christ. the Lord Jesus Christ has a love for people in the nations. The wonderful promise that was given to Abraham was through Abraham's seed, Jesus the Christ, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Isn't that marvelous? All the nations, all the races, all the peoples, there'll be somebody in the kingdom of God from the nations.

nations. There's not even the slightest hint of racialism. There's going to be a real motley band of us.

One of the privileges I had over recent years once I moved from the pastorate was to travel to China, to Madagascar, to Sri Lanka, India, many, many places.

And I never got used to the impact my first meeting was, the experience of that first meeting with someone there who met me at the airport.

[25 : 21] within seconds, there's a bond, you know. You can almost feel it.

Family. And after a while with them, I felt closer to those people than I am, than I was to my own parents.

and extended family according to the flesh. Not down to my children, I mean. Parental, uncle, aunts. Closer family. And to see that they know and love Jesus and they talk the same language because they're guided by the same spirit through the same book is a joy.

it's a thrill. It's really exciting. Remember how the Apostle John spoke of seeing a vision there in the book of Revelation and he saw a huge multitude that no one could number from every tribe and nation and peoples of the earth.

[26 : 43] That's the promise that God gave to Abraham. Through your seed, meaning Christ, all the families of the earth are going to be raised.

All the nations are going to be people loving Jesus from the nations. We see then his deity and his humanity and as a human being the example he gives us in so many different areas.

But then see how it moves on. God has highly exalted him.

That word highly exalted is just one word in the original language and it's the only place in the whole Bible where that word appears.

And it's composed of two words, one meaning lifted high and the other one super, super lifted high.

[27 : 47] I don't know whether Paul actually made the word up because it isn't anywhere else in the Bible. Because you see, if you read in the Old Testament and the New Testament and think about pride and how God deals with pride, you will find that God often, often will say, he frowns on the proud but he raises the humble.

You know? You get it over and over again. But I can imagine that for this man, Paul, with his understanding of the Bible, the Old Testament, and so much that was available through the testimony of the Apostles of Jesus, that it wasn't satisfactory for him to say, God has exalted him. He had to add this super. He had to say something that would indicate that he's been elevated in the thinking of all creation to a position there, high above anyone else, super exalted, and given a name that's above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, things on earth, things in heaven, things unto the earth.

He's given them a name, a glorious name. What did Peter and John say to the Sanhedrin when they were being challenged, not long after our Lord's death? They said, there's one name, only one name, by which we must be saved.

Its name is Jesus. Jesus. And they were told by those religious leaders not to speak in the name of Jesus, not to say things about this Jesus. They were told to be silent, and their response was, well, we can only say what we know, and this is of God, and if you disagree, then we accept that you've got a different view, but we're going to speak about Jesus.

[30 : 09] that's what it amounted to, their response. We will obey God rather than man. That's not always easy, is it? In daily life, when you're on your own, not easy to obey God at times, rather than human beings, when you know that something you're being asked to do, something you're being asked to say, is against what God has revealed.

It can be very costly. God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus. It doesn't say at the name of Christ, because he's emphasizing, the Spirit of God is emphasizing through Paul the humanity.

It's this Jesus who has been exalted. It's the Son of God as a human being. You see, as the Son of God, he has it by right anyway.

He is in charge of the whole world. In him all things hold together. Because of him we are upheld and we're in life. It's dependent upon the Son of God.

If we withdrew that power, we'd all disintegrate. gone. We're held by the Son of the living God.

[31 : 44] He has that right by nature. But through his life here on this earth, his beautiful, perfect, sinless life, through that obedience, through thick and thin, through the ups and downs, through that obedience then to Calvary, with all that that entailed, the scourging, the mockery, the name calling, the jeering, the pressing of the thorns onto his head, beating it with a reed, nailing him.

When it wasn't quite clear, had he said, I have had enough, they've gone too far, and he could have got up and walked away, he could have got up and gone back to heaven and saying, they're just not worth it, Father.

They're not worth it. But he submitted to it, submitted to all that horror on that cross, obedient unto death, death, death, death on a cross.

Therefore, God has highly exalted him and given him this name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. At the name of Jesus.

Have you got a Bible there? Turn, please, to Isaiah 45. Isaiah chapter 45 and verse 22.

[33 : 28] See, hear what it says, and marvel at the providence of God and the prophecies of God. Psalm Isaiah 45 22.

Look to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other. I have sworn by myself, word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return, that to me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.

To me, God is speaking, and if you're uncertain about whether it's God, look through that passage in Isaiah 45. It's quite a unique passage because there are five or six statements there where you

read, I am God and there is no other.

I am God and there is no other. it's put over time and time and time again and then he says, it's to me every knee shall bow.

And yet here is Paul saying, God has highly exalted this man Jesus. The only way you can reconcile a prophecy of Isaiah 45 and the words of the apostle Paul here in Philippians is to recognize and admit this man is God like the father and can be spoken of as God.

[35 : 05] There are some lovely indications of his deity. In the Hebrews chapter 1, the writer to the Hebrews brings out a number of references from the Old Testament to demonstrate that it's all taught there in the Old Testament, God addressing God.

In verse 6 of the first chapter you've got a lovely thing where it says when the Lord Jesus was born God gave an instruction to the angels in heaven, worship the baby, worship him.

Now it's quite evident from that that the angels didn't know, always know, what God was going to do. and that's proved to us in 1 Peter for example.

In 1 Peter it says of this great salvation the prophets inquired and searched diligently trying to work out when and how it was going to come to pass things into which angels desired to look.

See? They were curious. The holy angels in the presence of God who had access to God, the holy angels weren't in on God's plans.

[36 : 13] For our salvation. And they were observers. They were seeing the amazing grace of God unfolding and how the prophecies were being wonderfully fulfilled.

And one of the things that they seemingly didn't realize was that baby was the son of God. He's become a human being because God had to command them.

Worship the baby. If you look again at worship in the New Testament or in the Old, you'll find that worship is only permitted to God.

God. You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve, said Jesus to the devil in the temptations. Only God.

God is a jealous God. He won't share us with anyone. And yet he gives instruction for that baby to be worshipped because he's God like his father.

[37 : 20] father. And he's making, the father is making the point. That's my son. And that's God with God.

And the prophecies that I made are all coming true in him. God made some wonderful promises. In Ezekiel, he made a promise that he would be the shepherd of his people. He was so offended and really distressed by the way in which the shepherds, the under-shepherds, the leaders of the people of God through the ages had so ruined their work and office, had abused their office, had treated God's people dreadfully.

And there's some strong words in Ezekiel, and there's some strong words in Jeremiah about the leadership in their appalling treatment of the people of God.

And God says there through Ezekiel that he's so, so upset and angry that he's going to come and he's going to sort these men out. And he's going to be the shepherd.

[38 : 42] shepherd. And what do we find? He's answered it in Jesus. That one whom we speak of saying, the Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

We hear him saying, I am the good shepherd and I know my sheep and my sheep know me. God's kept his promise. I'm coming.

And he came in Jesus. So we see in this prophecy of Isaiah 45, verses 22 and verse 23, we see how that relates to the words of Paul and it's confirming to us that Jesus is God like the Father.

But then if we read in Romans chapter 14, for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, for it is written, as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue confess to God, so then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

But elsewhere it is said in the word of God, we shall stand before the seat of Christ. Christ, and the only way they can be harmed is to see this Christ is God, Emmanuel, not in name only, but in nature, Emmanuel, God with us.

[40 : 28] and then Paul has a wonderful way guided by the Spirit to just round it off at verse 11, to the glory of God the Father.

Whenever we think about the excellence of the Lord Jesus and praise God for his son, let's not forget to give glory to God because the whole life of Jesus was devoted to bringing glory to the heavenly Father and his whole life of suffering to the glory of God.

And God exalted him, given him this name, given him the responsibility of sitting on that judgment seat. It's to the glory of God the Father.

don't please ever forget the Father. There's always a danger in the Church in historic phases to emphasize one person of the deity beyond the others.

Our task is to try and keep the balance, the biblical balance, so that we give honor and respect to the Father as the Father, to the Son as the Son, and to the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit.

[41 : 56] There is a wonderful God, a wonderful God who has created us all. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and their relationship is wonderful, their tasks and work is wonderful, and they're devoted for some unaccountable reason.

devoted to our well-being and good. It's humbling. Jesus loved me, said Paul, and gave himself for me.

If you can say that, just meditate on the blessing and privilege that you've been given. while attention to