

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE  
**PHILIPPIANS**

DAY  
8 - 14

# DAY 8 - Preferring Others

## Read Philippians 2:1-4

**2:1** 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, **2** then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. **3**

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Paul asks the Philippians to live in a way that sounds incredible. Who wouldn't want to live in a community built on unity and love, where everyone looks out for each other's interests?

This sounds great, but when we realise that part of what that community requires is for me to value others above myself, it can become instantly less appealing!

Self-centredness can creep into our hearts so quickly if we don't work to live a different way.

It is so human to find ourselves acting in a self-centred way, but Paul is confident that we can be freed from this small way of life.

His appeal for them (and us) to live like this together is because of what Jesus has done for us. There is a call here to us as Christians that Paul consistently brings to the Philippians: If you've received Christ, then that should be able to be seen in your togetherness and your selfless love for one another.

Having received Christ, Paul expects a radical transformation to happen within our hearts. The problem is we are all still human and Paul seems to realise that we need encouragement to keep living this way, because it goes against so much of our instincts. He reminds us that this is all possible because of what Christ has done for us, and through the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

Paul will later speak in verse 16 of how, as we follow Jesus, we can 'shine like stars' out into the world around us, but much of that is possible as we live out this kind of love to our Church. He cares deeply how we treat each other in the church, about our unity and togetherness, and about our selfless love for each other. All of this for Paul always results in changes in our hearts, and our actions.

## **Questions**

Where could I prefer others at Church? Could I serve on a serving team?

If I'm honest, do I think first of other people or myself?

Where have I allowed selfish ambition to enter my heart?

## **Actions**

Spend some time in prayer allowing God to remind you of all we have in Christ. You could use the words of verse 1 to help you.

Invite God to speak about whether there are places that you can grow into loving more like we see here. Ask him to help us to be humble.

# DAY 9 - God the Son

## Read Philippians 2:5-11

**5** In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

**6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

**7** rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

**8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

**9** Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

**10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

**11** and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Paul here moves us back to Christ. He said in verses 1-5 that if we have all this in Christ, then we should love each other selflessly. Now he takes us back to Christ. He keeps wanting, as he said in 1:9 for our love to 'abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight'. None of his desires for them are to come from anything other than a greater revelation of who Christ is and his thoughts for us. So here he shows us the incredible reality of who Christ is and what he did for us.

Jesus Christ is God. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Son laid aside his glory to come to live and die as one of us in order to take the punishment for our sin. Having humbly obeyed and died in disgrace, he has now been raised to life and has the name that is above all names and is worthy of the worship of all creation.

Christ acted like that for us. It's impossible for us to fully grasp just how much Christ gave up in order to give us life, but the more we gaze at him, the more our love for others will grow.

## **Actions**

Read the passage a few more times and spend some time simply fixing your eyes on Jesus Christ. You could take a few moments of stillness before our Almighty God.

Spend some time in thanksgiving for what Christ did and praise him for who he is.

# DAY 10 - Jesus the Servant

## Read Philippians 2:5-11

**5** In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

**6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

**7** rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

**8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

**9** Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

**10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

**11** and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We read this same passage yesterday, but it is so important that we will stay with it for another day with more context.

The Prophet Isaiah had spoken God's words hundreds of years before Jesus came to Earth. Many of the words God spoke through Isaiah were directly fulfilled in Christ.

This included prophecies in Isaiah 49-66 onwards where he gives an incredible vision of the future in which a new Jerusalem is restored and God even speaks of a new heaven and a new earth in which Jerusalem is a place without tears and everyone living full lives.

God also here speaks of a servant who will come and bring about this new life, and that this new place can only be the home of those who follow God's 'servant'.

Paul draws on this 'servant' here in Philipians, so let's **read Isaiah 53** to learn more of what God was speaking about Jesus and what he would do to save us, hundreds of years previously.

**1** Who has believed our message  
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

**2** He grew up before him like a tender shoot,  
and like a root out of dry ground.  
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

**3** He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

**4** Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.

**5** But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.

**6** We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

**7** He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.

**8** By oppression and judgement he was taken away.  
Yet who of his generation protested?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
for the transgression of my people he was punished.

**9** He was assigned a grave with the wicked,  
and with the rich in his death,  
though he had done no violence,  
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

**10** Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,  
and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,  
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,  
and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

**11** After he has suffered,  
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,  
and he will bear their iniquities.

**12** Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,  
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,  
because he poured out his life unto death,  
and was numbered with the transgressors.  
For he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.



The Isaiah passage ends with suffering, but now in Christ we see that now, with that scripture fulfilled in Christ, that having endured the most horrendous suffering, he has now been exalted to the highest place, reigning victorious forever. He took our punishment so that we can receive his glorious life.

## **Actions**

Read the passage a few more times if you have time and spend some time simply fixing your eyes on Jesus Christ, thinking about all he endured for us.

Spend some time in thanksgiving for what Christ did and praise him for who he is.

Rejoice that because of Christ we too can live in his glorious life.

# DAY 11 - Because of Christ, we can follow

## Read Philippians 2:12-13

**12** Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, **13** for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.

Having shown us more clearly what Christ has done in loving us, Paul brings it straight back to our response. Because of what Jesus has done, we are to obey and 'work out our salvation'.

This does not mean that we have to earn our own salvation through works (Paul will quite aggressively attack this idea in chapter 3), but that we have responsibility to actually work at outliving it. We are called to grow in the wisdom God has given us in order to live out our salvation in our lives. Paul always expects revelation of Christ to result in transformation within our hearts and actions.

Just to make it even more clear that we are not working to earn our salvation, he immediately says in verse 13 'for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.' All of our work can only come from knowledge of who Christ is, and by his power at work in us. We simply, but importantly, join in that work in our lives and the life of our church community.

What we believe must impact how we live.

## **Questions**

Are there areas that God is encouraging you to 'work out your salvation', to be obedient to God's teaching and call? Are you following His call?

Are there times when you feel like you have to earn your own salvation?

Are we humble enough to recognise that we aren't good enough to earn our salvation, but only Christ could do it?

## **Actions**

Spend some time allowing the Holy Spirit to show you anywhere in your heart where you have believed that you can work your way to God.

Then allow him to convict you of areas of sin where he desires you to be obedient to Him.

Invite God to be at work within you throughout your day. The Holy Spirit is here to give us the power to live as we are called to.

# DAY 12 - Don't Complain!

## Read Philippians 2:14-18

**14** Do everything without grumbling or arguing, **15** so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky **16** as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour in vain. **17** But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. **18** So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

In chapter 2 so far Paul has taken us from what Christ has done, to us having a selfless love for each other, to showing who Jesus Christ was and is and all he did for us, and back to our obedient response to that empowered by God's work in us.

He wonderfully showed us the joy of living in obedience and actually working out our salvation through actions, and the reality that none of that is possible without the saving work of Jesus or the power of God working in us. He also made clear (and will make explicitly clear in chapter 3), that although we are absolutely called to obedience to Christ, this does not earn our salvation: it is all through Christ.

Now he brings us back to something very normal and very human.

Grumbling and arguing!

Paul here draws on an account from the Old Testament. He uses phrases from, and alludes to, the Israelites in the books of Exodus and Numbers. There, having been delivered from slavery in Egypt, the people of God returned again and again to grumbling and arguing with God (see Exodus 15-17 and Numbers 14-17).

This is not the only time Paul uses this generation of Israelites to show us how not to do things! He speaks more explicitly in his first letter to the Corinthians.

### **Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

**1** For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. **2** They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. **3** They all ate the same spiritual food **4** and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. **5** Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

**6** Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. **7** Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." **8** We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. **9** We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes.

**10** And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.

**11** These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. **12** So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! **13** No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

We are invited to learn from the mistakes of that generation. Grumbling takes our eyes off God and can lead us into all sorts of dark places in our minds, hearts, and lives.

Instead of that darkness we are called to shine like stars in the sky within our generation which is lost and broken.

## **Questions**

How often am I grumbling inside my head about others?

Do I find myself arguing my case when God asks me to do something I don't want to, or when he asks me to forgive someone else?

Have I understood, or taken seriously, the privilege it is to be used by God to shine his love to our generation as children of God?

How could I shine in my home, school, university or work?

## **Actions**

Spend some time in prayer, thanking God that, because of what Christ has done, we can be 'blameless and pure' and 'shine like stars' in this world.

Invite the Holy Spirit to work in your heart to remove self-centredness or grumbling. These things make our life small and dark.

Be honest with someone else about a hidden area of grumbling or arguing there is in your mind. Pray together that that will be transformed by Christ.

# DAY 13 - Timothy the Encourager

## Read Philippians 2:19-23

**19** I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. **20** I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. **21** For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. **22** But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. **23** I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. **24** And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

Here we learn a little about Timothy and (tomorrow) Epaphroditus, who both served with Paul in the work of the gospel. Epaphroditus is the one who carried this letter to Philippi, but first Paul speaks of his desire to send Timothy to them.

Timothy travelled with Paul (this letter to the Philippians is sent from Paul and Timothy), and he was sent by Paul to various places to encourage believers and to correct false teaching. 1 and 2 Timothy are both written to Timothy in Ephesus.

Timothy is celebrated here for his care for the welfare of the Christians in Philippi. Sadly this care and love appears to be hard to find where Paul is. Paul's description of others in verses 21 and 22 is completely the opposite of how he has instructed them to live throughout his letter.

How hard it is for us, even when we have encountered Christ, to look beyond ourselves and genuinely live full of the selfless love we have received in Christ.

Timothy, however, shows us what our lives can look like as he demonstrates all the attributes of a life transformed through the power of the gospel. Timothy is therefore the one to come and encourage them.

We see here in verse 21 that if we follow the instruction to do nothing from selfishness from 2:3, then we are not only preferring others, but actually also looking out for the interests of Jesus Christ himself.

When we live like that we are positioned for the incredible privilege of being used by God to bless and encourage others. Not only does our life get bigger, but so do the lives of others.

### **Questions**

Is God calling you out of a small, self-centred mindset in order for your life to be much bigger, encouraging others as your life is also transformed?

Do you find yourself looking out for your own interests above others?

### **Actions**

Spend some time in prayer asking God to show you where he wants you to encourage others like Timothy did.

Pray and ask God to make you more like himself, free from the chains of self-centeredness and read Philippians 2:5-11 to remind yourself of Christ's selflessness to us.



# DAY 14 - Honest about our pain

## Read Philippians 2:25-30

**25** But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. **26** For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. **27** Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. **28** Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. **29** So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour people like him, **30** because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

Here we meet Epaphroditus, who has been sent to Paul with financial aid from Philippi to help Paul in prison.

We see that he has experienced a serious illness from which he nearly died. It is a joyful thing that he has survived, and Paul is keen to send him back with this letter so that they may be glad that their dear friend is alive and well.

Hidden in verse 27 is something that is also revealing. Paul describes how he has been spared 'sorrow upon sorrow'. Had Epaphroditus died from his illness, this would be yet another sorrow on top of those which Paul has already had to live through.

Suffering was a very real experience for Paul and has been for many throughout the history of the Church.

We will see later in chapter 4 that Paul is content with whatever he has or doesn't have, but he does not pretend that everything is great. He expresses the sometimes painful reality of what following Christ meant for him.

Many Christians today face persecution, and all of us at some level have probably experienced the painful side of being a Christian. When we believe in Christ and choose to live a life following him we can expect some level of hardship, whether that be the snigger or rolled eyes of friends all the way through to the beatings and death faced by some.

Regardless of what form it takes, it is appropriate to acknowledge that it can be painful, frustrating and intimidating to stand up to this. It can hurt us deeply, or as in Paul's case, lead to sorrow.

We are called to stand strong together and not bow down to these pressures or troubles, but neither are we to pretend they aren't there or that they haven't had an impact on us. We can be honest about them, and then bring faith-filled strength to those circumstances.

## **Questions**

Have you faced difficulties because you are a Christian?

Are there certain places or people around whom you shrink from being a follower of Jesus?

Are there some 'sorrows' that you need to be honest about and bring to God and share with someone?

## **Actions**

Pray together with someone or as a family. We need each other and the Holy Spirit to stay strong following Jesus.

Bring any people or circumstances you find intimidating to Jesus in prayer. Ask him to help you be confident in Him.

Remember the words of Jesus from **John 16:33** "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."