

Philippians - August Class

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Well, thank you all for being here. This is our August session for our get-together, and I want to emphasize in the future that this group is open.

It's not a purely church function. It's just a fellowship of believers, and you should all feel free to invite anybody that you think might be interested. And there are no requirements as regards reservations or anything like that.

Just show up, and we enjoy a time of fellowship and a time in the Word, just like we're having this morning. So let's look to the Lord. Accept our thanks, Father, for this new day and for what it holds, because we recognize that you are already there, and you are well aware of what each of us is going to face this day, and you are more than sufficient for it.

Thank you for the meal we've enjoyed, and we look forward now to the content that the Spirit of God provided through the pen of the Apostle Paul 2,000 years ago, and how it has enlightened and enriched innumerable lives ever since.

Thank you again for the power and the comfort of your Word. We commit this time to you with thanksgiving in Christ's name. Amen. Well, I think we can consider chapter 1 having concluded, but if there are any residual questions or issues that anybody would like to bring up, feel free to do so, and we'll just stop and take whatever time is necessary if you have an issue with any of those last few verses of chapter 1.

[1 : 33] Otherwise, we will continue on and ignore the chapter division, because Paul did not write this in chapters broken down as we have it.

So let's just continue right on if we may. By the way, any comments, questions, issues regarding anything in chapter 1 before we put it to bed? Okay.

I'm going to begin with chapter 1. And verse 29, just to establish the flow and the continuity, but I'll reserve comment and we'll go right into chapter 2 then.

Verse 29, For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now here to be in me.

And I would just inject a little word here at the beginning of chapter 2. It isn't here, but this will call it a Wiseman edition. I would suggest so.

[2 : 41] So, if there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, in other words, all of these things that he is listing here, he is suggesting these are benefits.

Do you recognize these? Do you understand these? Taking into consideration all of these things that have been provided in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, if there is any such thing as comfort derived from the love that we have in Christ, if there is any such thing that we enjoy like fellowship of the Spirit, if there are any bowels and mercies, any tender mercies and compassions, or affection and compassion, are your hearts tender and sympathetic at all, then this ought to be the upshot of all that.

Fulfill you my joy. In other words, he is saying, let's all let our lives reflect the benefit and the blessing and the joy of what we have received.

These things are all established so that we might have the proper byproducts of them. And then, turning over to our next page, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

It's a pretty tall order. When people are inclined to their own interests and their own concerns, Paul here is making an appeal for these believers to allow the supernatural that God has provided to be a reality in their life.

[4 : 33] And I want to say something about that because it's a really important concept. And it has to do with the amazing resources that are placed at our disposal just because we are in Christ.

But they are not realized and they are not enjoyed automatically. They are provided provided we implement them.

God does not move in and override our volition and make us have the right attitude and make us be of the right disposition.

But the resources for that are there. The issue is, will we avail ourselves of them? And you know, this is germane to the whole of the Christian life.

I've often thought of it this way. God will not make you be spiritual. He has provided everything you need to be spiritual and to enjoy the benefits and the fruits thereof.

[5 : 36] But He doesn't force spirituality upon any of us. And we are volitional beings. And when we came to believe in Christ, our volition was not somehow removed from us.

Even though we are in Him and under His power and authority, we still have the right and the responsibility of exercising choice.

And I remember a book that was probably published 30 years ago now. And it turned out to be one of the most enjoyable and enlightening books that I ever read.

And I remember I saw it in the Christian bookstore two or three times. And I didn't even pick it up and look through it because I poo-pooed the title. And I thought, what a ridiculous title.

And it was written by a couple of Christian psychiatrists. Minrith, Frank Minrith, remember them?

[6 : 43] And I can't think of the name of the other one now. Meyer, yeah. Paul Meyer. I think it was Paul Meyer. And Frank Minrith. And the title of the book was, anybody remember?

Come on. Happiness is a choice. Happiness is a choice. And I looked at that and I remember at first I thought, these publishers are really getting carried away with these cute titles.

That's a ridiculous title for a book. Happiness is a choice. How stupid. Of course, is there anybody that would not choose to be happy? And just on that basis, I really discounted the book.

And I don't know what it was that caused me to pick it up. Maybe it's because I heard them on the radio one time. But I started thumbing through it and I thought, boy, am I ever embarrassed about my attitude toward this.

You know what? Happiness really is a choice. You can, you really can choose to be about as happy and as well adjusted as you want to be.

[7 : 52] In other words, you're in control. You're in charge. Because God has made provision for you to be in charge of you. That doesn't mean that he is not your Lord.

That doesn't mean that you are a loose cannon. That doesn't mean that you have the right to call the shots. But it does mean that God has endowed you with a volition, which means you have the ability and the responsibility to make the right choice.

And of course, making right choices is always dependent upon having right information. Because we make our choices based on what we know and understand to be true.

That means that information becomes extremely vital. And this is precisely what Paul is talking about here. And then he gives us the key for not only the unity of the Spirit and an appreciation of one another among the brethren, but it is a reflection of our being in Christ.

When he says in verse 3, Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory. And here he's talking about our motivations. Why do we do what we do?

[9 : 06] Because what we do is not the only thing that's important. Why we do it is also very important. And sometimes things can be done through strife or vain glory.

If they are done through strife, it means we do what we do out of a spirit of retaliation or getting even. And that just amplifies the strife.

Or if it is vain glory, that means we do what we do so that we will get the proper recognition and acknowledgement and the accolades of others.

These are all part and parcel of what is involved here. Some of the other renditions, Alfred says, In nothing following self-seeking nor vain glory.

Moffat renders it, Never acting for private ends or from vanity. What is it that determines our agenda? Stop acting from motives of selfish strife or petty ambition.

[10 : 10] And 20th century says, Nothing should be done in a factious spirit or from vanity, but in lowliness of mind, with true humility, with low thoughts of self, let each esteem other better than themselves.

It is a failure to do that, a refusal to do that, that produces more strife and more disharmony in the body of Christ than any other single thing.

It is nothing more than acting out of a self-centered spirit. And I don't know about you. Yes, I do know about you too, because you're no different from me. We're all made from the same bolt of cloth.

And we all have a natural, selfish inclination. It is part of our fallenness. It is part of our humanness. And it is what creates the conflict that we have in our world on a national basis, on a family basis, on a marriage basis, and on an individual basis.

It is because each of us tends to be self-serving and self-seeking. And here, Paul is pointing out the error of that, the harm of that, the damage that that does, by not esteeming other better than themselves.

[11 : 40] And a famous line, and I don't recall who it was that uttered it, but I'm sure it was in jest, and the essence of it was, I wouldn't find any difficulty at all esteeming others better than myself if I could only find someone who was.

And you know, that's kind of the attitude that oozes out of it, isn't it? Let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things.

William, stop looking after your own interests only. But every man also on the things of others. This is nothing more than plain, simple, ordinary consideration, one of another.

I well remember an embarrassing incident that happened with Barb a number of years ago, and I don't even recall what it was that I did, but it was a typical, it was a typical male self-centered thing, and I, like I said, I don't even, it's probably best that I can't recall what it is.

It'd be even more embarrassing now. But she said, I don't know how you can be so inconsiderate. And I said, inconsiderate?

[12 : 53] I wasn't being inconsiderate. I just didn't even think of it. And she said, that's just my point. And I said, what do you mean?

And she said, what does it mean to think of it? Doesn't thinking of it and consider mean pretty much the same thing?

And I, oh, well, she nailed it. It was, I was using that as an escape hatch, see?

I was off the hook. How can I possibly be at fault when I didn't even think of it? And that was just the problem. I should have thought of it. And it was a lack of consideration that I didn't think of it.

Guilty, chalk up one for her majesty. And I'll never forget that. It really brought me up short. And she was so right. Let this mind, and now Paul, what he's doing, and this is, this is beautiful.

[13 : 57] This chapter five here with this kenosis or the self-emptying of Christ is without peer in all of the New Testament for in a succinct, terse, brief way explaining what it was that Jesus Christ really did on our behalf.

And here, what Paul is doing is using the condescension of Christ as a perfect example to the plea that he has been making for each of us looking out for the needs and interests of others.

And it is as though he is saying, look, all of these things that the Spirit of God is requesting and requiring of us that we not do anything through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things. Don't look out only for your own interest. Now let me tell you about the ultimate example of the one who did that.

Let this mind, let this attitude, let this self-deprecation attitude, let this considerate frame of mind, considerate for the needs of others, let that attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

[15 : 30] Now what that's suggesting to me is this, you don't have to do that. You don't have to let that attitude be in you, which was in Christ Jesus.

In other words, it's back to you again. It's a volitional thing. If you want to let this mind be in you, you may, but it's your choice and your decision.

And of course, if you don't, then you will not derive the benefits and the advantages of having done it. You will continue in the same vein that many here in Paul's day were operating in and which many are operating in in the body of Christ today.

It's all about me and my needs and my interests and my desires and my future. This is the curse of self-centeredness.

And all Paul is doing is using the ultimate example of showing us why we ought not to be that way. Let this attitude, let this frame of mind be in you.

[16 : 34] It was also in Christ Jesus. And here's where he started. This Christ Jesus being in the form of God. Some translate it, though the divine nature, the 20th century New Testament, though

the divine nature was his from the beginning.

Philip says, for he who has always been God by nature thought it not robbery to be equal with God. That's a terrible rendition and it's very confusing the way it's rendered in the King James, but some others here give a little more enlightenment on it.

The American Standard Version says that Christ counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped. In other words, here was the Son of God in eternity past on equal terms, equal footing with the Father.

Because you realize there is no rank in the Godhead. We seem to give it rank when we quote Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because if you're going to quote all three personages of the Trinity, you've got to put somebody first and it just comes out Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So the tendency is to think the Father is the head of the Godhead, then the Son is under Him, and then the Spirit is under Him. After all, it was the Father who sent the Son, and it was the Son who commissioned the Spirit to come.

[18:04] So we see an orderly progression there, and it appears as though there is a rank. There is no rank. There is co-equality and co-eternity on the part of all three members of the Godhead.

Eternity requires that. An infinite being cannot have any shared glory. And all three of these are co-equal and co-eternal.

And even though Christ was in the form of God and equal to God, he did not consider that coveted, rightful position something to be clutched, grasped, cling to, refused to give it up at all costs.

But he relinquished it. Now there is a big issue among scholars and theologians over what this actually consisted of.

What did he surrender? What was it that he left behind? Well, I can just say this unequivocally, and that is this.

[19:14] Christ was never divested of his deity, but he was very emphatically divested of his glory.

He laid aside not his deity, which is unthinkable and even impossible. But in not laying aside his deity, he did lay aside the manifestation of the deity.

He clothed the deity in human flesh, which in itself resulted in a tremendous limitation. It was a great step down.

Someone has said that when Jesus Christ partook of the incarnation and came into the world, he was slumming. That's probably a pretty good way to put it.

When you realize what he stepped down from, those ivory palaces out of which he came down into a world of woe, indeed he was slumming. Being in the form of God, thought it not robbery or counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but instead, and the but of course is a conjunction of contrast, he made himself of no reputation.

[20:40] He emptied himself. There's that expression again. Of what did he empty himself? Certainly not his deity. And you know, there were times when he allowed that to be reflected.

In fact, each time, each time he overruled a physical law with a demonstrable miracle, he allowed his deity to flash through.

And there was a unique way when he was with Peter, James, and John in the Mount of Transfiguration. And as they beheld him, his countenance was changed.

He was transfigured before them. We still don't understand exactly what that means, except it was an awe-inspiring thing. And John and Peter both referred to it later, talking about we beheld his glory.

The glory as of the only begotten of the Father. Full of grace and truth. So in that transfiguration, Christ just pulled back a corner of his humanity a little bit and allowed this deity to shine through.

[21:47] And I think this was reminiscent of what Moses experienced when he went into the Mount in Sinai and saw the glory of God and the reflection was so overwhelming.

Remember when Moses came down and came among the people, his face shone and it was lit up. He didn't even know it. But everybody there knew it and they knew that something really different had happened to Moses.

He had seen something. He had been in the presence of deity and it was reflected even in Moses' face. So, this deity, this character and quality of deity was enshrouded in human flesh when he made himself of no reputation, emptied himself.

20th century New Testament says he impoverished himself. That's a good way of putting it. The incarnation was a depreciation of deity.

Stripped himself of his glory and took upon him willingly, volitionally, in his humanity, he took upon him the form of a servant.

[23 : 03] Coney Bear renders it the form of a slave or the nature of a bondservant and was made in the likeness of men.

Born in human guise. Born, Norley says, to be born like other men. This is the most significant thing of our gospel.

It is just mind-boggling in every aspect to think in terms of God, the creator and the sustainer of the universe, the one who spoke all the worlds into existence by the word of his mouth.

This one, this eternal being took upon him human flesh. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

He was the eternal Logos, John says in John chapter 1. And he says, and the word, the Logos, the essence of communication, the word became flesh.

[24 : 17] The word, deity, was transferred into humanity, took a human nature upon him and became one of us. This is the most incomprehensible aspect of Christianity where this creator God actually became as one of his creatures.

This is perhaps one of the most difficult sticking points of our gospel. You are asking people to believe that the God who was responsible for creation became as one of his creatures.

It almost sounds fairy-tailish, doesn't it? Stop and think about it. Well, it is supernatural. No question about it.

And yet, this is where the gospel has to begin. It has to begin with God being made flesh. It has to begin with the incarnation. Because if you do not have God incarnated, then you negate and depreciate what was happening on the cross because then you have nothing more than a mere human being dying on the cross.

And then it negates also the power of the resurrection because if he is not who he claimed to be, the resurrection is patently impossible. did not happen.

[25 : 45] And this is exactly where a lot of people are. It is just too much for them to believe. And on what basis do we believe it? Not on the basis of human logic, only on the basis of revelation.

The only reason we believe in the incarnation, the only reason we believe in the substitutionary death, the only reason we believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead, is because these are all aspects of revelation.

None of these truths would be made known to us if it were not for revelation. So God has been pleased to reveal that, otherwise we would not be able to know it. And the incarnation, which is all what Bethlehem is about, and the cross is all what Bethlehem is about, and the empty tomb is all what Bethlehem is about, and of course it is all tied together.

Being found in fashion as a man, as a human being. It wasn't enough that he became a human being, but there is another step down.

He became humbled as a human being. So, our Lord from the ivory palaces is on a downward progression, starting out in the form of God, equal with God, taking upon him the form of a servant, that's one step down, made in the likeness of men, that's another step down, because he could have assumed an angelic form, and we know that angels are superior to humans in their power and wisdom, etc.

[27 : 24] But Christ was not content to stop with the angelic sphere, he went below the angels. He was made a little lower than the angels, he was made one of us, so there's another step down.

And in fashion, found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, another step, and became obedient unto death as a human being, another step, and even the death of the cross, another step.

Because we all know that crucifixion was the form of capital punishment that was reserved by the Roman government for the lowest of the low.

If you were a common ordinary criminal, you didn't have to worry too much about being crucified.

But if you were an especially despicable type, then crucifixion might be the fitting thing for you.

And Christ, of course, was crucified. So we have all of these steps down. And culminated, of course, in the death of the cross. All of this is to exemplify what it means to prefer others better than yourself.

[28 : 35] Jesus Christ did not do any of the things he did beginning with the incarnation. He did not do any of those things out of a selfish motive, but only out of a purely unselfish motive that caused him to take into consideration the needs of others at the expense of himself.

This is the ultimate sacrifice. And this is set forth as our example. Now, if Jesus Christ went to this extreme on your behalf, can you not reflect that by preferring others better than yourself, using him as your great example and your motivation.

It is as if Paul is saying, in light of what Jesus Christ has done for you, the very least you can do for each other is to love and serve one another, looking ever to him as that example.

And because Christ did all that he did, the consequence, the end result, was not only the purchase of all who have trusted him and the reversal of the curse imposed upon all of humanity because of sin, but God therefore, wherefore, God also has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow.

I've often thought of this and expressed it in terms of no one has been so highly exalted in all the universe. No one has been so highly exalted as Jesus Christ.

[30 : 41] And the reason that is given here for his exaltation is that no one has ever been brought so low as Jesus Christ from one extreme to the other.

the result God has bestowed on him, conferred on him the name which is supreme above every other name.

Thou shalt call his name Jesus. Why? Because he shall save his people from their sins.

And the name Jesus, of course, in the Hebrew or in the Greek. There is no J. So, it is spelled with what we would call a capital I.

It would be an iota in Greek. And his Greek name is Iesus. Iesus. And in the Greek or in the Hebrew, in the Hebrew there is no J, but there is a Y that they use, and it is Yeshua.

[31 : 51] Yeshua, we are more familiar with Joshua in the Old Testament. We put a J in front of it, but Hebrew doesn't have a J, so they use a Y. And at the name of Yeshua, every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth.

That just about covers the waterfront, doesn't it? There are no exceptions. Nobody is omitted. We do not know who all these entities will be, but we are given the locations in which they will occur. Things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth. I suspect that that includes perhaps demonic hordes that have been confined, as Jude talks about in their own place, and that every tongue, not most of them, but every tongue, should confess, and the word confess means homologeo, it means to say the same thing as, or to agree.

Every tongue should agree. Some will unwillingly agree, but they will agree nonetheless, because they will have no alternative that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

And we've expressed the term, defined the term Lord, as being that entity beyond which and above which there is no other. That's what Lord means.

[33 : 26] It is the last and final court of appeal. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, and what's the upshot of this? wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, or were always obedient, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

And I'd like to take a few minutes here, we've only got eight or ten left before we conclude, and I'd like to get your input on this expression that Paul uses here, about working out your own salvation, because it is a phrase that is commonly misunderstood in Christendom, and some find it to be a cause of real anxiety, because they're not sure that they've done all that they ought to do to work out their own salvation.

So, I'd be interested in entertaining any input that you might have, or questions that you might have about it. What do you think Paul is saying here? And bear in mind that context is king, we ought to always keep in mind what the context requires.

Any thoughts? How do you go about working out your own salvation? Live out. I'm sorry? Live out. Live out. Okay.

[34 : 53] Salvation is something that you possess, and it is to be lived out. It's someone who said, if you talk the talk, you need to walk the walk.

And in essence, this is partly what this is talking about. Other thoughts anybody? John? Develop an attitude. Try to get your attitude in line with Jesus' attitude that he didn't think about himself, he thought of others.

So that would be the way to work it out. Yep. Yep. Get your attitude. Yep. Your thought life is important.

Yeah. And earlier on in this same passage, he was talking about let this mind be in you. We could say let this mindset or let this attitude.

Attitude is so important because out of attitudes, actions flow. We live out in our doing and being what we are thinking and harboring in our attitude.

[36 : 05] And what is it that formulates our attitude? What is it that causes us to think the way we think? It is limited to what we take in, receive, and absorb because all of the information that we are receiving from all the sources that we are receiving, we are processing that information.

And as a result, we are making conclusions. we draw inferences, we gain ideas, we develop motivation based on the information that we process.

And that's what formulates our attitude. That's why what we take in is really critical. We ought to be very, very particular about what we hear, what we expose our minds to, because it formulates and processes in our inner spirit, and then it is reflected in our outer attitude.

And the most obvious thing is it determines the way we treat one another. It determines how we respond to people.

It determines our agenda. It determines our level of love, of care, of commitment. It all stems from this. It becomes very, very important.

[37 : 30] Someone has rendered this this way. Instead of work out your own salvation. And you know, if you take that at face value and ignore the context and what Paul is talking about and ignore all of the other passages that talk about our being secure in Christ, this could be very threatening and intimidating.

And I remember as a young Christian reading that, and I scratched my head and I said, wait a minute, what is this? What is this? Because I had just been really encouraged and enlightened about this thing of by grace, through faith, and not of works.

And now, he's talking about work out your own salvation. What is this? And it almost makes it sound like, listen, if you really want to be saved, you've got to work at it.

You've got to try harder. You've got to do more. You've got to, you know, and that's exactly the way it sounds on the surface, especially if you just keep this phrase by itself. But perhaps a better way to render it is this.

Give your salvation a workout. And when you give your salvation a workout, you do that through the use, the exercise, the involvement.

[38 : 48] What do you do when you give your body a workout? We've even got a gem out here on 68. It's called the workout warehouse.

And when you give your body a workout, I challenge you to do this. Give your body a workout without exercising. You're not going to do it.

You cannot give your body a workout as a couch potato. It's absolutely impossible. Cannot be done. You've got to exercise. exercise. So what Paul is talking about here is give your salvation a workout.

And we do that through our relationships with other people and how we treat them and how we relate to them and how we care for them and how we meet their needs and how we put them ahead of ourselves.

And when you do that, you call that a Christ-like life that is reflecting the attitude that Christ set forth here in Philippians chapter 2.

[39 : 50] It's a beautiful thing. All of this is tied together. Paul has just made that example and he's saying now when he's saying work out your own salvation, give your own salvation a workout, all he is saying is mimic the example I have just given you.

And it's all there in the context. Other thoughts or comments? Anybody? Why the fear and trembling then?

Where does that come in? Why should there be fear and trembling in connection with this?

Reverence and trepidation, Berkeley renders it.

Montgomery says reverence and self-distrust with anxious care. Now that almost sounds like you're back again to the idea of doing something to merit or deserve your salvation and because you realize what is at stake, you do it with fear and trembling.

So, how would you respond to that? You don't know, do you? Okay, well, I'll tell you what we'll do since we are out of time and we're also out of paper.

[41 : 04] We're on to the next page, which we'll distribute next time. I want you to think about that. How does this fear and trembling, reverence and trepidation, look at what Goodspeed says, with reverence and awe, make every effort to ensure your salvation.

Now, has he captured the meaning of this? Or, what do you think? William says, so now, with reverence and awe, keep on working, clear down to the finishing point of your salvation.

These are all salient points that we need to consider. And, we'll take this up, if you don't have anything to add to it right now, we'll take this up and it'll make a nice beginning point for our next session.

And, I can't believe I'm going to be saying this, but, September? Can you imagine that? That's what it's going to be. So, give some thought to this particular phrase between now and then, and we'll open with that and discuss it next time we are together.

Thank you, I appreciate your presence being here today, and I trust that you'll have a joyful remainder of the day working out the salvation that God has wrought in you.