

Working out Salvation

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the assistant pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you.

A special welcome if you are new with us, you're visiting with us. We're glad you're here. And we're glad you're here, as I say every week, not because you are filling a seat, but because we are following Jesus together here as one community.

And we're convinced that there's no one so good that they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it. And so God has something to say to everyone in his word.

He has something to say to those of us who might say we've been Christians our entire lives. He has something to say to those of us who might say that we're not Christians, that we have questions or doubts or objections to Christianity.

But God's word is powerful enough and good enough that he's willing to speak to us wherever we're at. If you remember, we are looking at the book of Philippians, and the book of Philippians is a letter.

[1 : 04] It's a letter that's written to a church that's very much like our church. That church is in a city very much like our city. Remember, we've been talking about the fact that this is a military city.

It has a military history. It has special privileges in the province of Macedonia. And so people who are citizens, people who have served with Rome are given special privileges, special benefits. They have reduced taxes. They take pride in the fact that they belong to the Roman Empire. And so in a world that, in a city that takes pride in its Roman citizenship, we saw last week that Paul encourages his readers instead to take pride in their citizenship in the city of heaven, that they belong to God.

And this is a book overall in the big picture about partnership in the gospel. So it's about our partnership together, that we are working side by side, that we have the same goal.

We're seeking the same treasure together. And it's also about the gospel, that our treasure is the news about Jesus. It's the story of his life, but also the announcement, the news, that his life and his death and his resurrection did what we could not do.

[2 : 13] It took the punishment that we deserve for our sins and gave us the righteousness that Christ earned through his obedience. And so we're both working together and we're with the gospel, that we can't take those things and separate them.

Last week we asked the question of how we can stand together, how we can have a partnership in the gospel together when we face opposition. And we saw that we can either go on a mission with each other or we can go on a mission against each other.

That those are our two options. And Paul encourages and exhorts the people in Philippi to strive side by side for the gospel. That they have to pursue unity together and with one another.

And so last week we saw the why. We saw that God builds us up, he confirms our faith and that we belong to him when we stand together. And this week we're going to see the how.

How is it that we're able to strive side by side? It is one thing to join a church and another to get along with the people in it.

[3 : 16] It's one thing to take vows for better or for worse. And another to figure out how to actually live with your spouse. It's one thing to be excited about the school year that just started.

And another to actually get along with the classmates around you. It's one thing to talk about people from both sides of the aisle listening to each other.

And it's another thing to do it. And so our big question is this. How do we actually work together? What is it that we actually do? Because we know that it's easy to say and hard to do.

It's something that we wish for. We know that there's few things in this life more satisfying than working with a team, with a group, towards a common goal. And yet if we've lived in this life for more than a few minutes, we know that there's also nothing that's more difficult.

And so Paul is going to address that very thing in his letter to the Philippians today. We're in Philippians chapter 2, starting at the very beginning. We're going to start in verse 1. And remember that this letter is God's word.

[4 : 22] And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold. And that it is sweeter than honey. Even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so we're going to read it starting in verse 1 of chapter 2. Please read with me. So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Verse 3. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. But in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

Verse 7. But emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[5 : 42] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name. Verse 10. So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Please pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Dear Father in heaven, we confess as we read your word that it's impossible for us to hear from you unless you speak.

And even if you speak, it's impossible for us to understand unless you send your spirit to work in our minds and our hearts. And so we ask simply that this morning, that you would send your Holy Spirit to us.

That you would take what's dead in us and make it alive. That you would take what we can't understand and make it clear. And most of all, that you would take a spotlight and that you would put it on Jesus Christ so that we could see him for who he is.

And we would respond to that. We ask all these things in the name of your son. Amen. Paul begins this section essentially by asking a question.

[7 : 04] Have you experienced anything good from the gospel? Verse 1, is there any encouragement in Christ? Do you take any encouragement from the fact that Jesus' death has paid for your sins and his life is credited to you?

Does the gospel mean anything to you? But remember, this isn't just about the gospel. It's about the partnership. And so we also ask, does the partnership mean anything to you? Do you have any comfort from love?

Any participation in the spirit? In other words, have you experienced even the smallest benefit from partnership in the gospel? Have you been able to catch the smallest glimpse, to see the smallest part of it, just a sliver of light?

Have you been able to see even only a little bit? Have you been able to experience the love that comes from being part of this partnership? Has it affected you in any way?

Has it piqued your curiosity in any way? If it has touched you in anything, in any part of your life, if you've been a part of this community, then he asks them to make it even more.

[8 : 12] Because he's appealing not just to their relationship with God, but also to their relationship with him and with others. Because in Paul's mind, this partnership is so important. And so that's why he says in verse 2, to complete my joy.

Not only have you experienced something from your relationship with Christ, but have you experienced something with your relationship with me, Paul? He's appealing to the fact that he knows this church personally.

It was 10 years ago that he was with them, and he was in prison for the sake of the gospel. And so he appeals to them like a father to his children. Have you experienced anything good in this family?

Has it been a blessing to you? Do you want to stay in? Do you call yourself a Christian? Well, then you just have one choice. Have the same love.

Be in full accord and of one mind. Verse 3. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. And it's in verse 3 that we begin to see the answer to our question.

[9 : 17] How is it that we can actually work together? What is it that we actually do that allows us to strive side by side? And Paul gives us a simple answer. It's humility. Now, we could leave it there, but we wouldn't have any definition of humility.

Thankfully, Paul's a precise thinker. He's a precise writer. And so he doesn't leave us to wonder what this kind of humility is. He's very clear. Humility here is the opposite of selfish ambition or conceit.

And so we can do one of two things. We can either pursue things that make us look good or feel good, or we can pursue things that make other people, that go after other people's interests. We can either do things that make people look, ourselves look good or feel good. That's the conceit or the pride. Or we can focus on what's good for others.

That's the first part of humility that he gives us, but that's not the end of it. Verse 4, he says, Now, I'm not going to take credit for this definition.

[10 : 25] I'm not sure where it comes from, but it's a common definition of humility, and it's simply this. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.

It's not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. In other words, the focus of your mind, the focus of your energy and your thoughts is on other people.

It's on their needs. It's on their concerns, rather than on what makes you look good and feel good.

That is Paul's answer here to how this partnership is going to work.

What is going to have to happen if these Christians in Philippi are going to be able to achieve what we talked about last week? If they're going to be able to actually continue striving side by side for the sake of the gospel?

If they're going to have any humility, any partnership, any unity, then the answer is humility. Now, don't hear what I'm not saying here. Paul is not saying that you should allow people to abuse you.

[11 : 32] He is not saying that you should live as a doormat. Remember, he's writing to a church that's in the middle of conflict. We are going to find out in chapter 4 that there are people in the church that cannot figure out how to get along.

And so he's saying in the middle of conflict, the answer is to figure out what other people need. And so in verse 4, I wish this word were even stronger.

Let each of you look. We could say maybe look into. But a better word for this might be research. That this looking is an inquiring, it's an asking, it's a questioning.

It's going and trying to figure out what other people need. And so it looks something like this. It looks like young families trying to figure out what is it that our widows in the church need.

It's widows in the church being concerned, first and foremost, what do young single people in the church need? What are their concerns? What are their interests? People who were born in the U.S., they make their primary concern trying to figure out what are the needs and the interests of people who are not born in the U.S.

[12 : 55] It's husbands who are making it their job to research and look into what are the needs and concerns of my wife and my children. That is my primary concern. And so there's a question challenge here for us.

Because Paul is saying that the answer to our disunity in the church, our answer to conflict, is to become researchers. To become researchers about other people in the church.

Our conflict in the situations that we find ourselves in, if we're not able to reach unity, this is his initial answer. And so when he says in verse 2, be of the same mind, having the same love, he does not mean that everyone in the church has to agree about everything.

He's not saying that we're going to have a church meeting and at this church meeting we're going to write down ten questions of opinions and preferences. And at the end of the meeting all of us have to leave believing the same thing.

Because the problem here is that not that people in the church believe different things, but that they can't get along with each other. They don't know how to work together. I had an acquaintance in college and I didn't know him very well, but at one point he came up in a conversation with

someone else and I said, oh, do you know so-and-so?

[14:13] I don't even remember what we were talking about, but this person's answer has stuck with me ever since then for the last probably ten years or so. He said, yes, I know so-and-so.

Let's say his name is John. His name's not John, but let's say his name is John. I know John. And then he sat and thought for a second and he said, John, John has a lot of answers, but he doesn't have any questions.

He has a lot of answers, but he doesn't have any questions. And I thought about that for a second and I thought, yeah, that's true. I've interacted with John. John does have a lot of answers.

For a 19-year-old, he knows a lot about the world. He knows more than the rest of us do, but I don't think I've ever heard him ask a question. What we see here in Philippians 2 is that if we want to have unity in the church, we have to be question people, not answer people.

We have to be question people, not answer people. And question people specifically about the needs and concerns of other people. You know, everyone has a list.

[15:30] Everyone has a list, whether it's in their marriage, whether it's in the church, whether it's in your job, whether it's in your friend group. Everyone has a list of things that would make, that need to change and would make life better for them.

And so my challenge for us is this. What would it look like to have a list of things that would make things better for other people? And would cause us to lose something?

What would it be like for us to have a list of things that would make a situation better for other people, but it would cause us to lose something? Now, we're going to have a chance to practice this a little bit in a few weeks.

So you heard this morning from Mark that we're going to have a survey about what time the church should meet. Now, this is a simple thing. This is probably the simplest of things we could talk about. This doesn't involve our theological convictions, hopefully. But it involves our preferences, and I'm just going to say it. Someone's going to lose.

[16:36] If the time doesn't change and you wanted it to change, then you're going to lose. If you wanted the time to say the same and it changes, whatever happens, someone's not going to get their preference.

And so we're seeking as deacons and elders to try to do what's going to be good for our whole community. And so if what happens is not your preference, if you're anything like me, if you're a normal human being in this world, you're probably going to say, you know, man, I wish it had been different.

I wish it had been what I had voted for. Don't they understand that I have young kids? Or don't they understand that I wake up at 6 a.m. every morning and I have to wait three hours for service to start and now I have to wait four.

But the response here, if we're listening to Paul, our response would be this, if we lose. Someone in the church must have really needed our time to change. And I'm glad we're doing what's in the interest of other people.

I'm going to lose something, but I'm willing to do it. I'm willing to do it for the sake of our community. I'm willing to do it. Now, I don't mean to be trite in giving you that example. I'll say that is probably the least of things we could worry about.

[17:56] So if we can't pass that test as a church, we're in trouble. I'm confident that we'll pass it. I have a preference about which time we're going to change to or not change to. I'm not going to tell you. So then you can't hold me accountable if it doesn't go my way.

But that's what Paul is telling us here. Be questioned people, not answer people. Be looking to the needs of other people. Be researchers.

When you see that word, look in verse four, I want you to think, let each of you research not just his own interests, but really research the interests of other people. Don't be brainstorming answers, but be brainstorming questions.

Think about what you don't know about other people in this situation. So our first question then to our, our first answer to our question is this.

How do we have unity? How do we work together? We promote the good of other people even when it costs us. So we're not just researchers, we take action.

[18:59] We figure out the needs of other people. We're willing to put those needs above the needs of our own. We're willing to act. We're willing to lose. We're willing to lose something for the

sake of others.

And so when Paul tells the church to be of one mind, again, he doesn't mean you have to agree about everything except this. Agree that you're all going to have the one mind of pursuing what's best for other people.

And when you do that, unity will not be a problem for you anymore. You might have disagreements. You might have friendly debates.

But you won't have disunity. You won't have people fighting in factions. Instead, you'll have people fighting over how they can help other people, how they can promote other people and lift them up. Now this isn't some, just some trite self-help advice. It's more than that. It's actually impossible. So Paul asks us to do something that we are incapable of doing.

[20 : 15] If you were to run into some kind of strategy like this in a leadership book, it would ultimately be manipulative. Look out for the interests of others so that you can build their trust and then push your agenda through.

But Paul's not saying that. Paul's saying, no, you're actually going to lose. This is not some leadership strategy that was published in the Harvard Business Review for people to figure out how to make their agendas happen faster.

This is actually losing your agenda. It's completely dying. And so how are we going to do what is impossible, what we do not have the resources to accomplish?

Well, Paul tells us that we do. We have the resources but only if we are in Christ. You see in verse 5, he says, have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus.

In other words, the only way you are going to be able to do this is if you belong to Jesus and his spirit is at work in you. That's why he talked earlier about participation in the spirit in verse 1 because that's the prerequisite for anything to happen.

[21 : 24] Anything of spiritual value or worth. That's how, remember we talked about we're one garden growing together. That's how the garden grows. It's because there is a great gardener. And then he goes on to tell us why this is ours in Christ Jesus.

Because who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with a God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.

In other words, there is no one in the history of the world who has lost more than Jesus lost. There's no one in the history of the world who's lost more than Jesus lost and there is no one who is willing to lose more for the sake of others.

Jesus didn't hang on to his personal interests. He didn't hang on to what was good for him. He gave up all the privileges that he had in heaven. And not only that, he took on the body of a human being with all its frailties, with all its inabilities, all its limitations.

That he didn't just lose everything that he had but he took on something that would cause him to have tremendous suffering. And yet he was still God in the midst of it.

[22 : 53] He took off everything that would give him stature or power or status and took on the form of a human being. Now this passage here is primarily it's about church unity but it's become a point of debate in the church about the relationship between Christ's human nature and his divine nature.

And so I'm going to tell you a story. The story is not my own. It's a famous story among preachers to explain this concept so I take no credit for it. But the story is about a tribe in Africa.

And this tribe in Africa had a deep, deep well. And so to get water people would have to climb down a shaft and take their carrier and get the water and then they would have to come back up.

And there was a chief in this tribe and this is a true story by the way. It's from missionaries in Africa. There was a chief in this tribe who had many honors and privileges. The reason he was the chief was because he was the strongest person in the whole tribe.

And he had honors and glories that went along with being a chief so he had a great headdress. He had a great robe that he would always wear. And one day there was a man who went down to get his water and while he was down at the bottom of the well he broke his leg.

[24 : 11] And so he was unable to get back up. He was trapped at the bottom of the well. There was nothing he could do. And so they went to get the one man who was able to do anything the chief because the chief was the only person strong enough to go all the way down and lift this man up on his back and carry him up.

But to go down the shaft of the well the chief could not do it with his headdress because it was so big. And he could not have his robe on because he would get in the way.

And so he took off the headdress and he took off the robe and he climbed all the way down into the shaft and he was able to put this man on his back and carry him up. He got rid of everything that would give him glory or power.

Everything that was his by right he took down for the interest of this man. And so did he stop being a chief? Of course not. He was still always the chief. But he took off all the things that gave him his status and his authority and his power for the sake of saving this man.

And so did Jesus cease to become God when he became man? Of course not. He simply took off everything that gave him power and glory. We're told in Isaiah that there was nothing in him that would cause us to look at Jesus and be impressed with him.

[25 : 36] When people saw Jesus walking around they did not think there's a great leader. There's a man right there. No. There was nothing that would draw our attention to him.

There was no beauty in him. And yet he laid it all down for our sake. And so Jesus first of all he's our model here. He shows us that he has lost more than anyone else ever lost.

And so whatever we lose is less than that we can follow after him. But he's not just our model. If Jesus were just a model then he would also be the stupidest man who ever lived because he would have died for no reason.

But remember Jesus is not just our model he's our reminder because as we look at him laying aside all his glory all his privileges all his rights we have to remember the reason why. And the reason he did it was to die for our sins.

And you know that the cost of the remedy shows the severity of the illness Jesus' death the fact that he died for our sins shows us how bad off we are.

[26 : 44] That we're not just mistaken we're not just incorrect but we're deeply broken in every way. That God was pouring out his wrath on humanity and Jesus had to come and receive that wrath for our sake.

And so Jesus is not just a model for us but he's a reminder a reminder that as we're struggling with unity as we're seeking the best of others we have to remember that our ideas are not as good as we think they are.

Because the reality of sin doesn't just affect our emotions it doesn't just affect our will our desires it affects every part of us it affects our mind as well. So whatever we want whatever we're pushing for the cross has to give us a moment to pause because we have to remember how mistaken we are. We are so wrong that Jesus had to die for us. And so it causes us humility we don't just have humility as we follow after Jesus as our model but we have humility because he reminds us of how desperately in need of rescue we are.

How desperately broken we are in every part. and so the gospel humbles us because it shows us that Jesus did more than we can do but it also humbles us because it shows us that we needed him to do it.

[28 : 09] There are few things stronger in this world than a person's need to be right. I'll say that again.

There are few things stronger in this world few forces that are more powerful than an individual person's need to be right. Yet the gospel frees us from that because to accept the gospel we have to admit that we're wrong.

To accept the gospel we have to admit that we're wrong because Jesus is not just our model but our savior. And so we can put the interests of others above our own not just because we have the Holy Spirit working in us not just because of Jesus' example to us but also of the reminder that whatever we think whatever we know whatever we feel strongly about none of it not all of it can be 100% correct.

And we know that our desires and our wants and our needs our temptation is always to make them bigger than they should be and less than they need to be.

And so the gospel the story of Jesus his life and his death and his resurrection and the news that he gives us both empowers us as we seek the good of others and it also humbles us that if we admit our need for him we have to realize that we are not right even as our desire to be right can feel overwhelming at times.

[29 : 59] But it doesn't end there. We still have verses 9 and 11. Jesus gave up but then he gains.

In other words Jesus was willing to lose everything for the sake of others and God gave him everything in return. Jesus didn't earn those things something didn't become true of him that wasn't true before but instead now we know he has the name above every other name because now humanity is aware mankind is aware of the fact that he is the one who showed us what God is like he's the one that is willing to give up everything for the sake of others and so it doesn't just stay in his humiliation we don't just stick with the fact that Jesus died but it ends in his exaltation it ends in the fact that he's risen from the dead that he's sitting at the right hand of the father and so by losing everything Jesus gained everything because God gave it to him and so Jesus isn't just our model but he's also our encouragement if we're united with him if we have participation in the spirit that we see in verse 1 if we have his mind in verse 5 then his future is our future as well and so that when we lose for the sake of others when we lose for the sake of Christ we also know that we will gain with him we will gain everything with him that his story is our story his exaltation will ultimately result in ours when he returns in his second coming and so his model and his story belongs to us that we can lose for the sake of others because Jesus did and we will win with him because he won as well but it will look like the path that he's given us a path of suffering and then glory

Jesus models this for us in John 13 you remember in Mark 10 we had James and John and they asked Jesus if they could be great if they could be the first if they could sit at his right hand in the kingdom and Jesus said it's not for me to give but my path is the path of a servant and a slave and then he demonstrates it in John 13 by washing their feet it says when Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer garment and resumed his place he said to them do you understand what I have done to you you call me teacher and Lord and you are right for so I am if I then your Lord and teacher have washed your feet you also ought to wash one another's feet for I have given you an example that you also do just as I have done to you truly truly I say to you a servant is not greater than his master nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him if you know these things blessed are you if you do them so as the master walks so walk his disciples both in his giving up losing everything for our sake but also in his gaining because we follow him in his suffering and his victory please pray with me dear father in heaven we thank you that you were willing to lose everything for our sake for us to gain to gain life because without you we have nothing but death so we thank you for that we ask that you would make it real in our lives that you would give us the humility that comes from that knowledge and you'd give us the humility that comes from your example that you'd move in us that we would be researchers looking out for the interests of others above our own we confess that we can't do it by ourselves and so we ask that you would do it for us we ask all these things in the name of your son amen