

Focus On The Cross (Part 3)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 March 2026

Preacher: Mark Cardwell

[0:00] Amen. According to the counsel of your perfect will, and we ask now that by your spirit you will illuminate our minds and soften our hearts as we turn to Philippians 2.

Lord, we confess that apart from you, your grace, we are blind, proud, and unable to humble ourselves as we ought.

Yet we thank you for the gospel of Jesus Christ, who through, though he was in form of God, did not count equitable with God a thing to be grasped, but equipped himself, taking the form of a servant. We praise you for his perfect obedience, even unto death on a cross for his glorious exaltation. As we study this passage, conform us to the image of Christ.

Produce in us the mind of Christ, a true humility that flows not from our own strength, but from the regeneration work of your spirit within us.

[1:40] Guard us from the mere outward conformity, and instead work in us a deep, abiding transformation rooted in your sovereign grace. Teach us to see both the depths of Christ's humiliation and the heights of his exaltation, that we might live in joyful submission to him as Lord.

And may everything we learn tonight lead us to greater worship, obedience, and hope in the coming kingdom of our Savior. We ask all these things in Christ's name. Amen.

All right. So, tonight we are going... Oops, I turned that off. There we go. Tonight we're going to be going over Lesson 3, Focus on the Cross.

This is going to be really... It's part two. It's going to be the discussions of Philippians 2, 5-11.

Really, it's going to be broken down into three areas.

Christological foundations, which is verses 5-7. Then the incarnate obedience, which is verse 8.

And then we'll dive into the exaltation and universal lordship, verses 9-11.

[2:57] First, a quick review. So, in chapters 1 and the first part of 2, we've learned that genuine Christian living flows from a transformed identity in Christ rather than just external rule-keeping.

In Philippians, we see that the believers are saints. We are set apart by God. Our lives should show humility, gratitude, and a gospel-centered partnership.

Spiritual maturity is not reached through self-efforts alone, but through God's ongoing work within our lives, given both the desire and the ability to be faithful, to live faithfully.

As believers, our obedience is rooted in grace, leading to joy, unity, and a life that shows Christ's character in practical ways.

So, can I get somebody to read Philippians 2, 5-7? Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who as he already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a bondservant and being born in the likeness of men.

[4:25] So, given that, what do you all see the theme of that passage is?

Anybody? The whole, verses 2, or sorry, Philippians 2, 5-11. So, the overall passage, what is the theme that you get out of that?

Humility of Christ. Excellent. Anything else? That's a very good one, though. And that is definitely one I had. Or nothing, no reputation.

Made himself nothing, no reputation. So, along the lines of still humility. So, bring, okay, okay, good.

Anybody else thinking, might be able to pull something else? Reading in the form of a servant.

Okay. Excellent. So, good discipleship, and really his lordship.

[5:37] So, how about, one thing that I pulled out, actually two things, was really the humiliation and exaltation. They establish, really what the pattern of our Christian discipleship should be, but also, really, the certainty that Christ is the ultimate lord, and he has universal lordship.

So, as we read through that, you can pick those pieces out, that he will be, it is certain that he will be glorified.

So, also, what about Paul? As Paul's writing this, do you see anything in there that he's establishing that we as believers should adopt?

There you go. That's a great one. Also, obedience to God. Mm-hmm. Anything else? Work out your salvation, if you're in his moment.

Mm-hmm. Be near God, and there goes, you know, that obedience as well. That kind of goes to, I think where you're bringing up those points, goes to my next kind of follow-along is, so, where is he directing his readers, us and Philippians, where is he, what is he directing us towards?

[7:12] So, he's saying that we should adopt Christ's attitude, but then, what is he pointing us to? Okay. Or, there we go.

So, yeah, he's saying that we should be adopting Christ's attitude, and the reason why we should, he's pointing us to the cross and the work that he's done there.

So, Paul introduces the passage ethically before he unfolds it Christologically. So, the command is that believers adopt the same mind that should, sorry, that was in Christ Jesus.

The humility is, therefore, not merely a practical device for church's harmony, but it, it's the conformity to the disposition of the incarnate son.

So, we should be looking to conform to how Jesus, excuse me, how Jesus was. So, really, kind of define Christology.

[8:31] Well, it's what Christ, who Christ is, and what he has done. It's his person. So, true God, true man.

His work, the incarnation, the obedience, the cross, his resurrection, and the exaltation. It really is the doctrine of Christ.

So, Paul starts off first, though, instead of diving into that aspect, he talks about it ethically. Well, what is ethics, and what does that mean? Well, ethics, or ethically, answers how we are to live in light of that.

So, in light of our knowledge of who Christ is, how do we live, and how should we live? Our attitudes, our choices, our relationships, and obedience.

It's conduct that is shaped by truth. they really need to flow together.

[9:37] So, ethics and Christology. You don't invent Christian ethics apart from who Jesus is and what he accomplished. Kind of a thought, a way to think about this is Christology is what is true of Christ, and ethics is how does that rule, that truth reshape my life.

If you have ethics without Christology, do you know what you get? Moralism. Moralism. Okay, and if you have Christology that never is touched by ethics, what do you have there?

Dead orthodoxy. You basically, you don't have anything, you have somebody going through motions without application.

so kind of another, an illustration of where Paul is going with this is if we think about somebody in your, a manager or a boss that you've worked with, or think about the CEO who took maybe the night shift instead of working the day shift, so that someone, that person, he has probably the right being a, a CEO or a leader.

He has kind of the right to choose, to be served, but he chooses to serve. So really choosing the lowest practical tasks so others can strive.

[11:24] So taking that, that position that really not everybody wants, he takes that on so that others may have a better position. So really that is the picture that, that the direction of Christ's mind.

Not loss of identity because that person is still that person, but voluntarily lowering for others good. Paul grounds his ethical teachings in Christ's disposition.

establishing the same mind that was in Christ Jesus as the rule of our lives. This disposition carries a specific pattern. It's marked by humility, refusal to exploit divine equity, self-emptying,

slave-taking, obedience unto crucifixion.

So, question, so if we look at for believers, humility is not just pragmatic strategy for a united congregation.

What else is it? Sure. For believers, humility is not just a pragmatic strategy for unifying a congregation.

[12:55] It's a lot, it's much more than that. And so what else? Yes, it is that, but what else? Or a better way to look at it, how is that a unifying, able to unify or unite a congregation?

Kind of goes back to one of the first questions. there you go.

And so would that be a mindset of Christ? Was Christ willing to serve others to bring people together? So humility is not just pragmatism, it's conformity to the incarnate son.

So it really is us coming together and since we all have a mindset of Christ, a similar mindset we're able to unite. So Christ's self-emptying is not a denial of deity, but the voluntary embrace of servanthood.

Paul represents the humiliation of Christ as a paradigm for how believers should treat one another just like we were talking about.

[14:17] Not grasping for a status but giving themselves for good of others. Paul does not tell us that Christ exchanged one form for another.

Rather, without abandoning who he was originally, he adopted the mode of existence of a slave. really, it comes down to one of the words or the word for emptying and what that means through the Greek word keneo, which means emptied himself.

Theologians referred to this as the kenosis or emptying. This is affirming that Christ voluntarily took on himself a form of a slave.

Think about a full cup and then adding room to it. So a cup that's full but I can still add more to it. So kenosis is not God pouring out his deity so he's not losing anything but the eternal son on what he was not before sorry it's the eternal son taking on what he was not before true humanity and the form of a servant like a cup already full but still able to add more to it.

[16:01] So deity unlost humanity added so excuse me a little bit more on the meaning of self emptying so the passage begins with Christ's true deity and preexistence his humiliation was force precisely because the one who stooped in the eternal son who possessed equality with God the incarnation is therefore an addition of true humanity not a subtraction from the deity if we read John 1 1 it declares the word words preexistence equity with

God in the beginning was the word the word was with God and the word was God John 17 5 reinforces this by having Christ himself petitioned the father to restore the glory which I had with you before the world was kind of further illustrations you look at like a king going out into into his people he may go incognito the ruler travels without a crown no herald he does this so he can serve and save his people he is still king he conceals his glory for a mission that hints at incarnation so not less God but glory veiled in true flesh so in his incarnation

Christ voluntarily yielded the independence exercise of his divine attributes to the will of his heavenly father however it is by definition impossible for the eternal immutable God to cease to exist as God and the son did not empty himself of his deity or his divine attributes in his incarnation so what does Christ's humiliation reveal to us as believers his his divine love that's exactly it period it's really it the glory of it and just if you look at it it's the one who was truly

God became truly man and willing willingly took our place so for a servant to us can I get somebody to read Philippians 2 8 so the descent of Christ reaches its lowest point not merely in death but death and crucifixion Paul highlighted the cross because it was shameful cursed it was public and it was degrading the son willingly went to the most disgraceful death in order to accomplish redemption

Christ humbles himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross the cross shaped deed which the world regards as foolish I think proves that God that to be God's true wisdom think about a medal versus a scaffold so Rome honored the citizen right the cross was for slaves and rebels Lord of life submitted to the sentence reserved for the lowest so the depth of love and wrath bearing was visible so he put himself on that cross he humiliated himself on that cross showing him he took that position of a slave and a servant to show how much he loved us and what

he was doing for us

[21:35] Paul does Paul magnifies the obedience of Christ and says he abased himself even to death likewise adds that it is no ordinary death but the death of the cross that is accursed and shameful so what is the ultimate demonstration of was this the ultimate demonstration of obedience and self sacrifice what do y'all think and none of it was his not a single one he was sinless his whole life because if he did get down off the cross we would be stuck in our sin we wouldn't have propitiation so we go back to exactly and you think about

I'll get to that in a second but yeah that's exactly right it may not have been his will but it was God's will and he submitted to his father's will so the cross is the climax of a life marked by obedience to the father Christ's death was not accidental nor was it coerced but the high point of this was his voluntary submission he obeyed through suffering and his obedience secured the salvation for us his people his elect the obedience of Christ in view in 2 8 must refer to the death yet the obedience of Christ in Philippians 2 encompasses the entirety of Christ's obedience so if you think about it Christ was obedient from birth his whole life all the way up till his death and then rising again but yeah so

I mean it's Philippians 2 is it covers so much within how Christ was obedient and how we need to be obedient and in the same mindset so Matt you can probably and Jeremy definitely can can understand this signed orders so think about that a soldier he obeys a commission that will cost everything because they are signed orders Jesus knew the father's commission the cross obedience was not easy for being known it was costly willing and complete but knowledge of the commission he had received did not make obedience easy he faced

Gethsemane and the cross with an agonizing agony of intercession characterized by repeated petition he was always saying yet not what I will but what you will understanding the difficulty of what has to be done but accepting it has to be done so Christ declares I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of whom sent me John 6 38 he prayed also my father if it is possible let this cup pass from me yet not as I will but as you will so again he's he's agonizing over this he's seeing how much he knows what he's about to go through and and he's suffering all of he's going to be suffering all this he's still asking father please if it's possible let this pass but not what I want what you want your will so what does the cross show us about Christ any thoughts on that so he's obedient yeah okay mm-hmm to what point that's right so it shameful death a death reserved for criminals for just the dregs of society so yeah it's exactly it it's painful it's it is long suffering this is so true so just a couple more things up top there let me get somebody to read philippians 2 9 through 11 amen amen

[28:15] Amen. So the humiliation of Christ is followed by divine vindiction. Pardon me.

The Father exalts the Son. He then bestows on Him the name above all names. The movement from descent to exaltation establishes the certainty that all creation will bow before Him. God does exalt Christ. He bestows upon Him again the name above every name and ordains that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Christ as Lord to Father God's glory. Christ as God is incapable of elevation. He's already there. But as man, He was raised from the lowest degradation to the highest degree of glory.

Think about when Christ was raised. It's almost like an open court, a reversal of a verdict.

[29:41] And that's exactly what happened. Christ died on the cross for our sins, of which He was not guilty for, but He did serve the punishment for that.

But then Christ was resurrected. God gave forth and said, this is my Son. And He reversed that decision.

So, the resurrection and ascension are the Father's public reversal of that condemnation on the cross. The condemned servant is declared Lord of all.

And there we go. Yep. There we go. Mark, I read this many times, and I think just listening to it being read then, was that under the earth, every knee will bow.

Mm-hmm. So, it, it was like, you know, makes it even more meaningful to know that Satan and his gang are going to bow to every, to the person that they have always known was going to do this to them.

Looking at that, that is what Christ did on the cross for us. Should we not use that as the standard of how we should live our lives as Christians to one another?

Are you saying in the sense of humility? Are you saying in the sense of basically putting others before ourselves?

[38:30] Humility? Not being the me monster? And saying me first? Putting others before us? Being self-sacrificing? Self-sacrificing?

Right. Um, so, thinking of others before you think of yourself. Right. So, Paul's purpose is not to merely present doctrine for administration.

But he's presenting doctrine for imitation and obedience. He's showing us how we need to present ourselves and trying to apply that to our lives.

It's the mindset of Christ. What do you guys? He's our example. He is our example. The perfect example, exactly. So, the mindset of Christ is the pattern for believers' life in the church.

Excuse me. Humility, self-denial, service, and willingness to suffer. Humility, self-denial, service, and willingness to suffer.

[40:05] Humility, self-denial, service, and willingness to suffer. How we should be moving through and taking on that mindset of Christ. So, believers should know that their attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ.

So, Paul, what do you think his primary purpose for describing the death of Jesus was? Talking about the cross.

Talking about the cross. And what he did on the cross. To humble us and to have us realize what we were rescued from.

Okay, that's a great point. Definitely. Anybody else? That God, through Christ's death, God finds favor toward us.

Because without Christ, God would not look upon us. That is definitely true. How about a model for us to live our lives?

[41:14] He's showing us. He's painting a picture of what a true Christian believer's life should be. And the importance of the cross.

And the importance of the cross. Mm-hmm. So, what are the two paths of universal acknowledgement of Christ's lordship?

What are the two paths that you can take? You can go up the hill. Or the wider than there. You can go willingly now in faith.

Or reluctantly confess at judgment. So, you have really two paths. And so, he's... Within this part of it, he's really outlining that aspect.

Because it's certain. Christ will be acknowledged as Lord. So, you can either do it before judgment.

[42:26] Or you will be doing it after. So, I said this before.

Philippians 2 does not teach universal salvation.

But it does teach universal confession. Every creature will acknowledge the lordship of Christ. The great...

The implication here is that men must bow willingly now in faith. Or they're going to bow unwillingly later in judgment.

So, think about two doors. Same courthouse. One door is plea and mercy. The other door is final sentencing.

Same lord. Two outcomes. Depending on the response to the gospel. So, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

[43:25] It does not follow that every tongue will confess Jesus Christ is Lord out of happy submission. There's not universal salvation. But there is universal confession.

As to who he is. So, does the pattern of humiliation followed by vindication apply analogously to suffering believers?

So, basically... Christ's pattern that he went through. And then being vindicated at the end.

Can we look at that as a path for us? He told us we wouldn't. We're going to have trials and tribulations.

There's no way out of it. And as believers, we will be vindicated. So, those who belong to Christ share both in his sufferings and in the hope of vindication.

[44:36] The pathway to abasement is not foreign to Christians. God gives grace to humble. And will finally raise up those who are united in Christ.

Believers have died and have been buried with Christ. And now live... And now living a new life in Christ. Raised up from the dead.

They will also share in his resurrection in the future. So, really abasement doesn't come natural to our human minds.

We really don't want to ever do that. Abasement. So, basically, to be abased, you're being humiliated.

You're basically humbling yourself. And humans, in our sinful nature, don't want to humble ourselves.

[45:38] We want to puff ourselves up. But, because of the knowledge and because of Christ's image, we see the benefits.

We see, basically... Think about it like weight training. Short-term strain for long-term strength. Christ...

Present the hardship for Christ is not meaningless. It is a fellowship with him. And it is preparation for glory. So, I might do this.

So, kind of final thoughts. What I leave for y'all to think about, as we walk through our next days, where am I still grasping for status instead of serving like Christ?

How does a cross reshape the way I treat others? In the church. What does it look like? What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord in my daily life?

[46:58] And then, am I bowing gladly to Christ now? So, Philippians 2, 5-7 moves from Christ's deity to humiliation, to his obedience, to his exaltation, and then to the believer's calling.

The church is summoned to think, live, suffer, and serve in light of the crucified and exalted Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. This all reminds me of a hymn that I sing to my grandchildren. I was with them last week. All three of them wanted to hear it.

And it's Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Oh, there's something about that name. Jesus, Master, Savior. Like the fragrance of the rain.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. I'm going to do it for my singing. Well, sing it. Sing it. Sing it. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

[48:06] There's just something about that name. Master, Savior, Jesus. Like the fragrance after the rain.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Let all heaven and earth exclaim. Kings and kingdoms will all pass away. But there's something about that name. And I don't know what the word's word is supposed to be. But I think it says may pass away.

And I say will pass away. Will pass away, yeah. And I think it says most will bow. And I say everyone. All will bow. All will bow. And that is one of their. They sent my daughter.

And I have sent that to them since they were four. That's beautiful. So that they. That's awesome. Yeah. And you sing it so well. Oh, thank you. That is what I had.

[49:13] So I do thank you all. Ask that we bow our heads. And I'll close this out in prayer. Gracious Father, we thank you for the truth of your word.

And for the revelation of your son in Philippians 2. We stand in awe of Christ. Humbled for sinners. Obedient in our place.

And now exalted above every name. Truly, at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow. And every tongue confess that he is Lord.

To your glory. Lord, seal these truths. In our hearts. Do not allow. Us to be hearers only. But make us doers.

Of your word. By your sovereign grace. Continue. The good work. You have begun in us. Shape us.

[50:21] Into a people who reflect the humility. Obedience. And glory of Christ. Strengthen us to walk in unity. To count others more significant than ourselves.

And to live in a manner worthy of the gospel. Keep us mindful of our salvation. Rest not in our works. But in Christ alone.
His righteousness imputed to us. His obedience counted as ours. As we leave here this evening. Fix our eyes on the hope of his return.
And the establishment of his kingdom. Until that day. Sustain us. By your grace. Keep us faithful. And use us.
For your glory. We ask these things. In your son's name. Amen. Amen.