

Good morning. My name is Chris Callahan and I am one of the Elders here at Trinity E Free in Plainview. Last summer during Pastor Ty's sabbatical several people were given the opportunity to preach God's Word and I was one of them. I enjoyed the study, the praying and meditating on the passage. I even enjoyed the nervous feelings of stepping out of my comfort zone and trusting God to take what he taught me and open your hearts to hearing. So after a year I'm back up here and **most of you are at home!** I'll try not to take it personally.

Alright, grab your Bibles, a pen and some paper and let's look at the first 11 verses of Philippians chapter 2 together.

But first would you pray with me and for me. **(Pray)**

This probably comes as no surprise but I love football! I love the cool Friday nights, the cracking of the pads, the big plays, the underdog beating a powerhouse. Back when I played I liked the nervous tension of the bus ride to the town down the road, taking the field for warm ups and hootin and hollerin and the first hit of the game. I even enjoy the halftime speeches when coaches can help change the momentum of the game through helping them get their heads right, dialing into the specifics of the game plan and reminding them what they are playing for and why. The best coaches know exactly what their team needs and leads them well.

In Philippians Paul is inspired by God and his own love for the church in Philippi to write them a beautiful letter. Can't you almost see the anticipation on their faces to get a letter from Paul who led them to Christ and means so much to them. In our passage today I see Paul like a football coach at halftime. In vs 1-2 Paul is calling them to dig deep, remember their training and unite. In vs 3-5 he is getting specific with "here is what you need to do" and in 6-11 coach Paul inspires them with why they are playing and who the greatest example of perfection has ever been and will ever be.

To sum up the thrust of our scripture today I can hear Paul saying, **"Christians unite in mind through love in humility and service that your Lord and Savior Jesus perfectly exemplified."**

Let's read vs 1-2. (read)

Here Paul is transitioning from the previous paragraph where he is basically saying, "Hey, I know you are suffering, I am too. Those who want to destroy us and what we believe are working to make us weak. Being a Christian includes suffering for the sake of Christ. You are going to need to band together."

A great football coach might start with, "Guys now is not the time to be tired or think you can't win. You need to **dig deep** and remember your training, look at each other and think about how you will do what it takes to pick each other up, make each other stronger and we will share in the joy of victory. Believe in each other and believe in this team.

In the same way Paul is firing up his team. He says, "are you encouraged by who you are playing for (Christ)?, are you comforted through love?, are your gifts from the Spirit being used?, don't you have affection and sympathy for one another? Then come together and be resolved to this unity in mind you are called to!

Examine yourselves and remember all this you have in Christ!

Man they needed to hear this! They are facing some hard stuff. Paul is in prison, can't come see them and he might not get out alive. They are being pressed hard for their beliefs. I know if I was in this position, I'd be fighting hard to stand up. I would need encouragement and maybe you would too. Remember what Christ did for you! The victory is already yours!

In Ch 1 v 21 Paul declares **for him to live is Christ and to die is gain** and they should be encouraged by the life they have in Christ and that death for them is **where they will receive all Heaven holds for them and eternal life in the presence of God!**

How about loving comfort, boy I would want to be reminded of that. And The **Spirit of God, alive in you and leading you.** You only get to have that if Jesus is your Lord and Savior. Those without Jesus do not have the comforter living inside them. You would want to be **reminded of the affection and sympathy and care** Christians have for one another. True of the early church, through the generations and true today. Be of like mind in these and in full accord (or whole heartedly).

The reminder is that you are equipped to endure brothers and sisters. You have God and he has given you each other.

Next a good coach in the halftime speech moves to the x's and o's. The coach has seen what has happened in the first half and becomes surgical in laying out what the team needs to do to make the 2nd half push. You can't just fire a team up and send them out there to make the same mistakes. Enthusiastic mistakes are still mistakes and will not change the performance of the team. Instead the coach tells the team "here is what you are going to do"

In vs 3-5 Paul takes a similar direction. **(Read vs 3-5).**

You see the change here.... Paul is **not asking** the Philippian believers to do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, **he is issuing a command**. Team, here is where your focus needs to be. You need to check yourselves and focus on the desires of your heart.

It is easy to be locked into your own selfish ambitions and be conceited in your desires. That takes no effort at all. Or how about considering yourself more significant than others. Boy is that easy. Let's face it nothing is more natural than thinking about yourself!

And how about when things get difficult? Take for example resources running short. And by resources let's say it's something like ohhh... maybe something like **...toilet paper or sanitizing wipes!!** You know know what I'm talking about! Why huge signs reading "1 Package per customer" have to be plastered all over the TP section at Costco Cameras and intercoms and voices, (deep voice on an intercom) **"Hey you! Big guy in the khakis with sandals, you do not need 300 rolls of toilet paper! Put the other 10 packs back, and move along to the 96 oz bags of Cheetos, no shortage of those big fella!"** Point is, nobody has to train us to be selfish and watch out for one's own interests.

Paul goes on to tell us that we need to **humbly** consider others more significant than ourselves and look out for each other's interests. This is not a hard concept to understand, but it is a hard thing to do.

When I read Philippians, I do not read a letter of admonishment. There is not that feel of a letter saying they were way off track and needed to do a 180 and head in the other direction.

These are probably what we would consider “good Christians folks” Paul talks about their long time partnership in the Gospel, his fond memories of them, the good works started in them. These do not sound like believers who have fallen off the tracks and lost their first love who is Jesus. What Paul is addressing here is that settling in on good, content with OK will not be enough to endure what this world will be throwing at them. Being good enough will also stall the journey down the road of sanctification. **When we think we are already humble and do not seek to be more humble, growth will be stunted.** To stick with the coaching analogy, you’ve become uncoachable.

In vs 5 Paul again issues a command and that is for us to be like minded in these things. Similar to the end of vs 2. Sharing this mindset with one another is key to us being able to build one another up.

Let’s move into an example that has helped me in the past couple weeks to bring these verses to life. We will look at a good level of humility and a good level of considering others more significant than ourselves as well as looking out for the interests of others and not just our own, and then we will compare it to another level.

Currently there is this thing called Covid-19. I see by all the masks looking back at me that you have heard of it. Through the past several months we have been asked to do many things we don’t want to do to slow the spread of this disease. We have varying levels of doubts about this approach or even its effectiveness. We have given up things we love doing. Some of you trained for years to do once in a lifetime events and can never get that back.

Most things we were forced to miss. Not many of us voluntarily sacrificed or followed directions that had no teeth behind them. But also for many of us, we have chosen to at least comply, perhaps at a minimum, but still comply. As a church family we have sacrificed meeting together in full, indoors with no restrictions for what will soon be 5 months.

Some have strong feelings the government has overstepped their authority by dictating how we gather. This has been a trying time of balancing personal beliefs and finding the humility to comply. Others firmly believe in doing all that can be done to mitigate contracting and spreading the virus. They are balancing the frustration of believing what they are doing for the greater good is being mocked

and devalued by those who “Don’t care” enough to do their part. They are having to find the humility to stay patient and trust the positive intent of the other viewpoints. Those in the middle who see both sides and may tend to avoid conflict. They are trying to find the middle ground of compromise in a time where voices on all sides see their facts as true, their interpretations as truth, and for some reason can’t escape from the politics that seem to be tied into everything. They are showing humility in staying hopeful and not crawling under a rock because if they did it would be selfish and of no help others.

I have seen humility and making others more significant in our church family! **Amen?** People are doing all kinds of things to keep unity and think of others and that is good. But what Paul knew and what the Philippian church needed to know and what we need to know is **very few Christians some close to the ground floor of the 200 floor Pride/Humility skyscraper**. If the top floor is the penthouse of pride, then the 60th floor may seem like a humble place. A place where there is a lot of considering other more significant than myself but in reality, there are still 59 floors of humility yet to find.

It has likely taken a lifetime of molding by God to help you down to the 60th floor, for our church family to find the 60th floor. Praise God and thank you God for bringing me here, but **I’d rather not go any lower Lord**. 60 is pretty good and I’ve learned so much, but oh Lord how much lower do I need to go? **I don’t think I want to** and **I don’t know if I can**.

What if how we handle Covid-19 is the down elevator to floor 59 in the Pride/Humility skyscraper.

Perhaps the trip from floor 60 to 59 with the help of the Holy Spirit looks like this.

Here on floor 60 “Lord I have bit my tongue so many times about all these Covid mandates, I have stayed calm and listened to those around me who have different opinions, I have done what our church leaders have asked of me, I have loved those who have more fear than I do, **but Lord how can I were a mask for an hour in church** and try to sing through this crazy thing. I just don’t think I can do it. ... I better just stay home rather than risk losing it in front of people at church and being a poor witness.”

Moving to floor 59 might sound something like this. “My church family needs to worship together... we need each other and I will wear a mask even if everything inside me says don’t. I will sing through a mask with my brothers and sisters around me and let the joy of the Lord fill my heart. A mask will not hinder my praise or my love for my church family. Thank you Lord for daily helping me through this and feeding my desire to be more like Christ.”

How about this one?

“I have patiently listened to people who choose to go against Covid-19 mitigation recommendations. I try to reason with them but they treat me like I’m silly for jumping on the Dr Fauci train. I can’t take much more of this. I love them but it is so hard when I know we need to do all we can to save people’s lives.”

Moving to floor 59 might sound like this, “Those in my church family who see Covid-19 as less of a problem than me are still my brothers and sisters. I know they sincerely believe they are right and actually do have the best interest of others in mind. If the church decided to meet with no masks or distancing, I may not come but I will ramp up my efforts to encourage those who think differently than me. I’ll write them a note, maybe give them a call. I’ll let them know I look forward to being with them again and do not hold any ill feelings toward them. I pray they can fully Worship the Lord. I will not let hurt or anger fill my heart. Our unity in Christ overrules our differences.” Welcome to floor 59!

You see the body is built up and strengthened as its members choose humility and put the needs of others first. Paul tells us, Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ. If you are all doing this, you will be so strong! **Humility is not weakness.** For the Christian humility is the place where God builds His people up.

OK, this is hard! How can I be motivated? When can I find the strength to seek new levels of humility and considering others more significant than myself, becoming less selfish, less conceited?

Here is where the coach moves from the x’s and o’s. So far in this halftime speech he has already **reminded us of all we have**, he has laid **out the game plan and its execution** and now he provides **the vision of how this victory will be achieved.** Providing the vision of the glory that comes with the win and how the team

bonding together is as important as winning. **This team is striving to be the best and be like the best who ever played the game.**

In vs 6-11 Paul moves into the perfect story of Jesus and God the Father. Listen to this and follow along in your Bibles. **(read 6-11).**

Wow! There is so much in these 5 verses. I found myself during this study getting lost in thought as I tried grasping its magnitude. Here we have Jesus who is God in **perfect unity with God the father and the Holy Spirit.** Perfectly Holy, all powerful, all knowing, all authority. He chose to **empty himself (lay down his rights)** and choose complete obedience to the Father. Complete trust in the Father to take human form, and go from all authority to the form of a servant.

He went even further. He continued in obedience to the Father through a perfect sinless life, no matter the temptation or suffering that came his way, staying laser focused on his purpose. He remained obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **(Pause)**

Verses 9-11 is where God held my attention and asked me to really think. I have known for a long time that **through this the Father exalted Jesus, name above all names, every knee should humbly bow in Heaven, on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!** I know this and believe it.

I know Jesus did all these things to become a perfect sacrifice for a sinful race who had no chance for salvation. I remember often that Jesus opened the door to life for a sinner like me, to be free from a life of separation from God and certain death. **Thank you Jesus for saving me!** There is no gift so precious as the one Jesus offered me and offers you. I know this and I cherish it. Yet for some reason I tend to think it was all about me. **(pause)** Jesus did this all for humanity and that was the purpose... but we miss the end of vs 11. **“To the Glory of God the Father”.**

Yes Jesus did everything the Bible says he did for us but **don't miss that he did it to bring Glory to the Father.** Jesus always points to the Father. **Jesus showed us humility and sacrifice in its purest form to bring Glory to the Father.**

So when we choose humility ...and consider others more significant than ourselves.... and not just consider our own interest but also the interests of

others, we are becoming more like Christ and we should give all the Glory to Jesus.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, where are you in the pride/humility skyscraper?

Husbands are you willing to humble yourself when your wife calls out your lack of spiritual leadership in your home and ask her to help you better understand what she sees and doesn't see ... and thank her for caring so much about her attention to God in your home ... **or...** will you defend yourself and point out her shortcomings as a way to avoid the conversation. Will you squash the Holy Spirit working through your wife to reach your heart!

Wives when your husband apologizes **again** for being late because he ran into someone he knew, started talking and lost track of time will you give him the cold shoulder and add one more example his insensitivity to the list you keep in your mind. You know the one that you can access so quickly when a disagreement arises...**or...** will you humbly forgive him, gently ask him to shoot you a quick text the next time that happens and try to throw away the list in your mind to avoid using it as a stick in the future.

Children, (I haven't forgotten about you) have you ever been accused and punished for something you didn't do or had every right to do and maybe they didn't take the time to really listen to what you say happened, so you become bitter and stay angry with your parents... or... do you humble yourself and ask God to help you forgive your parents and not let this situation hurt your love for them, reminding yourself they want the best for me and thank God for parents who love me so much.

Can we take the elevator even lower? **(Pause)**

Mothers and fathers, when your only child is killed by a drunk driver... still driving after his 5th DWI and he walks away from the accident, how humble will you need to be to choose love over hatred... peace over bitterness... to pursue God who you fight blaming for this. ... Could you seek the humility to forgive the driver? To choose hope over despair. To even allow joy to remain in your life when all you want to do is withdraw and beg God to just take you home. Everyone here with me today and all of you at home. **Believe that YES even that kind of humility**

is possible and that kind of suffering can be endured because of what Jesus has done for you and exemplified in his life.

Christians unite in mind...through love...in humility and service...that your Lord Jesus perfectly exemplified.

(Prayer)