

## The Attitude of Christ

### Philippians 2:1-11

Today, we are going to be looking at a passage from the book of Philippians... Philippians was written by Paul, late on in his ministry and from prison... It's a familiar book, and this is a familiar passage that we are going to be looking at... When you think of Philippians, the commands to rejoice, rejoice, rejoice might come to your mind. Paul encourages the Philippians to rejoice in any circumstance, to rejoice in suffering, and to worship in hardship. You may remember the encouragement to think on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, etc.... You may remember Paul's confident exclamation, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" Paul's relationship with the Philippians feels like the attitude of a very proud father or coach who is distant in geography but not in spirit. Like he is communicating love and affection for his kids. And there is also a tone of challenge in the book of Philippians. A good coach will always challenge his best players the hardest and that's what Philippians feels like. An encouragement, an exhortation, a challenge issued from a place of deep love and affection. Philippians is a familiar book, Paul is a familiar character, and this subject matter just seems familiar. And what we are going to focus in on today goes past familiar, almost to the cliché, but my prayer is that you would stick with me even through the familiar. I believe there is real, deep power in this passage. So let's take out our Bible's and turn to chapter 2 v. 1-5.

"Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? <sup>2</sup> Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. <sup>3</sup> Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. <sup>5</sup> You must have the same *attitude* that Christ Jesus had..."

The attitude of Christ. The attitude of Christ, you must have the same attitude as Christ! This feels already like a call beyond the average, but again it's something that we've heard before. Paul isn't looking for normal love or normal obedience. He isn't asking hard hearts to accept the good news. He's going deeper. He's asking for something pretty intense. He's asking for a serious attitude, and we all have been told that we have a bad attitude... We all have been told that we need to drop the attitude. Maybe I'm just speaking for me, but I think this is normal... the word Attitude generally carries a negative connotation. Simply saying, "he has an attitude" means that he or she has a *bad* attitude... And what are we supposed to do with that attitude? We are supposed to drop it... But that's totally not the tone of this passage. There is a good, positive, powerful attitude that we are supposed to have as Christians. In fact, Jesus had this attitude.

So let's remove some of the stigma from the word attitude... It's not all bad, we *are* supposed to have an attitude, and, at times, **we know it's good for people to share a collective attitude.** That's called vision... That's what this passage is talking about... a collective attitude. He's asking everyone in the church in Philippi to have the same mindset or attitude.

In order for a team to succeed they must share an attitude. I played soccer when I was a kid... I was on a team with the same group of guys two consecutive years. One year was great and one year was horrible. The first year was terrible, we got beat in the first round of pretty much every tournament we entered, we didn't like practice, we didn't like our coach, we didn't want to be in good shape, we didn't want to hang out with each other, we just wanted to whine and complain. The very next season, everything was different. We changed coaches, and two of 15 players left, and everything changed. We won games, we won tournaments, we wanted to be together, we wanted to work out, we wanted to hangout... Our new coach brought a new attitude and everything was different. We weren't that much better as players, our opponents got older just like we did, but our attitude was different. And success followed. A different attitude created different results.

Philippians 2 is a request from a spiritual coach to put on an attitude, to pick up the championship mentality, a championship attitude. **God wants us to pick up an attitude.**

So what's this attitude? Champions have tenacity, ambition, competitiveness, chip-on-their-shoulder, and they want to do it together.

Our experience tells us that those are what is normal and good. But Philippians 2 gives us an attitude that is extremely unnatural, that feels backwards, that feels counterintuitive, like you're stepping up to the plate to bat, and God asks you to bat with your off hand... It feels wrong and off. This attitude is going to be in a fight against our sin nature, our American nature, our past experiences. This attitude... we've got blind spots to it at every turn. But this passage builds support for us to fight against our sin nature, our natural tendencies, and our blind spots, and put on the attitude that God wants us to put on.

So the first element, a humble attitude: V. 3 says, "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble."

Who am I really? **Reality is the basis of humility.** I'm not, Paul's not, the Bible is not, asking you to be something that is outside of reality. It's not asking you to be something that you're not. It is only because we have a warped sense of reality that we have pride... I want to share some descriptive words that the Bible calls us before Christ...

So this is you, alone, on your own, before Jesus saved you:

- Dead
- Dust
- Led around by the 'prince of the power of the air' (that's the devil)
- Asleep
- Deaf
- Wicked
- Unrighteous
- Blind
- Adulterous
- Condemned

Who am I with Christ?

- Justified – we are seen by God just as if we'd never sinned.
- Adopted – we are put into the family of God.
- Led by the Spirit – we have guide and mentor and comforter and helper with us.
- Seated in the Heavenly places – we are safe and secure even in death.
- Holy – God is able to have relationship with us because He has given us a new nature.
- Temple of God – God dwells in us.
- At Peace with God – NO more condemnation. No more war.
- Sealed with the Holy Spirit – Safe. Nothing can take us out of His hands.
- With countless other promises.

But what did you do to earn that? What did you do to gain that standing? What did you do to be moved from the darkness to the light? Nothing! We are justified, adopted, made holy, because of Christ alone – humility acknowledges this reality.

Ultimately, **that's what humility is, it is reality.** I learned that from Brad almost more than anything. Humility is a reflection of reality. You cannot read these lists and thank yourself. You cannot read these lists and puff yourself up, pat yourself on the back, and look down your nose at other people, you cannot. But you also cannot read these lists and call yourself garbage... you can't read these lists and read worthless... You have

intrinsic value because you were made in the image of Christ, and you are so valuable to God that He would die in order to bring you into His family. Calling yourself worthless or garbage is not true humility. That just creates more bondage.

True humility brings freedom. **Freedom from self-promotion** – (v. 3 says don't try to impress others) we don't feel the need to talk about ourselves, to talk about our accomplishments, to assert ourselves in every conversation, we will be able to appreciate accomplishments (ours or someone else's) simply and joyfully. Not concerned about whether our brother or sister in Christ is passing us up in something. Even if that is their intention! We do not have to respond to pride with pride! Because Jesus Christ is the one who accomplished the work, Jesus is our maker and fulfiller, Jesus, the cross of Jesus is our only boast.

Humility will also bring us **freedom from our easily offended spirit** – in my marriage I have to check myself... am I being pointlessly sensitive to things when Valerie clearly never meant to hurt me, but it just wounded my pride? There is nothing worse than being easily offended... our pride is just out there getting wounded and making us miserable, but humility protects us from this easily offended spirit. Think about the reasons that we get offended: someone does not notice us, someone compliments someone else, someone is not impressed by our accomplishments, or someone isn't blown away by our obviously brilliant and original revelation... How does humility accomplish this protection? In what amounts to essentially a summary of the two lists I gave you, Tim Keller says this, "We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." So where is the room for the offended spirit when you recognize those two things? It is gone with humility. Because we have Jesus loving and accepting us in spite of our flaws. **We are known completely and loved fully.** **What more are we looking for?**

So let's pick up humility. Let's pick up the attitude of Christ. And let's pair it with the next step... Sacrifice... now, out of humility comes sacrifice. Sacrifice is an expression of humility. **It is humility in motion.**

Jesus, of course, is our ultimate example of sacrifice. This passage goes on to lay out what Jesus did out of the overflow of His humility. I want to stress the connection between humility and sacrifice - Out of the overflow of His humility Jesus took on the form of a servant in order to bring us to God. He was willing, more than willing to pay the price to make us right with God. He was willing to lay aside everything in order to bring us home. Jesus knew the cost. Jesus knew the price of this extremely extravagant love, but He was willing to pay that price because He loved us so dearly. Hebrews explained that He did this out of the 'joy' that was set before Him... He calls it joy to make this sacrifice. When you look at people in need, when you look at single moms and homeless individuals and the needy people in your communities are you willing to sacrifice for them? Do you love them with a real, active, powerful love? Is it joy for you? <sup>4</sup>Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

When you look at the cross does it compel you? When you look at the cross does it change you? When you look at the cross does it change the way you look at everyone else? Our motivation for sacrifice comes from Jesus Christ and if we don't have the right motivation we will be sacrificing in order to build ourselves up. **I know that I do this** like, yeah, didn't you see how I gave up my chair, didn't you see how I spent my time doing the dishes instead of partying, didn't you see how I handed my granola bar to that needy guy on the street? That's me, all the way. We will be sacrificing in order to get something from someone else but when our sacrifice is motivated by the cross, our sacrifice can be beautiful and pleasing to God.

If I am not compelled to sacrifice for the sake of the lost, for the sake of the people in my community, for the sake of the hurting and the broken around me, I wonder if I understand the cross. I wonder if I understand the depth from which Jesus saved me, I wonder if I understand the spiritual poverty that I was saved from.

**Friends, our natural tendency is toward greed.** We naturally look out for ourselves we naturally want the best for ourselves. We are often blind to the needs of others. But what the Bible says about sacrifice, what the

Bible says about reward for those who sacrifice, what the Bible says for those who take up your cross and follow Jesus, is something far beyond what we can imagine, it is something more beautiful and more fulfilling than what we come up with for ourselves. 2 Corinthians calls it an eternal weight of glory, Jesus calls it a pearl of great price, and in Revelation we are given God Himself as our reward! What moment, what temporal pleasure can match that? What insignificant material thing can measure up to the reward that is waiting for us? A sacrificial attitude recognizes that true satisfaction does not come through greed.

"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Jim Elliot said this... Jim Elliot lived this. Elliot was a man who sacrificed his life for the advance of the gospel, for the joy of being with Jesus. Elliot and four other missionaries – Ed, Roger, Pete, and their pilot, Nate Saint – made contact from their airplane with a native tribe in Ecuador using a loudspeaker and a basket to pass down gifts. After several months, the men decided to build a base a short distance from the village, along the river. There they were approached by a small group of these natives, and even gave an airplane ride to one curious guy whom they called "George". Encouraged by these friendly encounters, they began plans to visit the whole tribe, without knowing that "George" had lied to the others about the missionaries' intentions. Their plans were preempted by the arrival of a larger group of about 10 warriors, who killed Elliot and his four companions on January 8, 1956. Elliot's body was found downstream, along with those of the other men. Elliot and his friends made the ultimate sacrifice. They gave up what they could not keep to gain what could not be lost. After the death of her husband, and now alone with her 10-month-old daughter, Elisabeth continued to live among and minister to a different tribe. During that time she met two women who lived with her and taught her the tribe's language. She then went as a missionary to serve the tribe that killed her husband and that village received the gift of repentance because Jim and Elisabeth Elliot gave up what they could not keep to gain what they could not lose. Their lives were not wasted, their sacrifice was not in vain. **This reward far outweighs the reward they would've received from a comfortable couch and white picket fence.**

Verse four says simply, "don't look out only for your own interests but also for the interest of others." That is the easiest way to explain sacrifice. Don't just look out for yourself; care for others. This seems like a kindergarten sentence, but the Elliot's lived this to its full extent.

Are you willing to sacrifice? This is how community is made possible, if you are not willing to sacrifice and look out for the needs of others in your community you don't have community. Sacrifice leads to community.

So let's pick up sacrifice that is breathed out by humility. Let's pick up this attitude. The last element of this attitude is community.

**Humility produces sacrifice and sacrifice produces community.**

This passage breathes community. Agree with each other, love each other, live in peace together, look out for everyone's needs, be humble, all of these words breathe life into community. We are supposed to pick up this attitude together. Yes, *you* must be humble. Yes, *you* must be willing to sacrifice. **But not only one of us can look out for the needs of everyone, not just one person can complete the joy and carry the weight that Jesus carried,** this is a vision that must get picked up by everyone in our community. Everyone has been specifically, uniquely, divinely designed to serve the community that you are a part of.

Normally, this is where our blind spot pops up, we think of our character traits as ways for us to build ourselves up. This is natural, this is especially American. If someone is practical/good with their hands, they may think, "Well I could become a carpenter so that I can have a good job and make some good money." But what this passage, and what the whole New Testament is asking us to do is look out for others, so if that same practical, good with their hands person looks outside of themselves they could see that they could use their gift to help build a home or a shed for a brother or sister in need. When a person who is gifted in influencing people, uses their gift to get ahead or manipulate someone or puff themselves up, they are looking out for their own

interest, but when a person who is a gifted influencer uses that gift to teach, exhort, or encourage, he or she is looking out for the needs of others. This is the command – be a community that shares the same mindset. Be a community that picks up the same attitude.

Imagine for a moment, what it would be like if you really could only rely on yourself. **Imagine a world in which you had do everything yourself.** There was no car repair shops, no contractors to help build and repair your home, no teachers to teach you when you were a kid, no people to train you at work... Who would you be? Would you be able to hold the world together? No, of course not. Now imagine a community of people. Normal people – plumbers, mechanics, teachers, doctors, baristas, etc. who personified sacrificial love born from humility born from the reality of our standing with God because of Christ. Do you see how this community lives and moves and loves and sacrifices for one another? The beauty of community is that it makes us greater than the sum of our parts. We become greater because we have one another. **You cannot meet all of your needs on your own, and neither can your neighbor, but you and your neighbor and their neighbor and their neighbor and their neighbor can meet each other's needs.**

It's time to pick it up. It's time to put it on. So how do we start? What do we do? First, ask people to speak into your blind spots. We've got a lot of blind spots, as we've talked about. We have blind spots about pride. We have blind spots about greed and laziness. We have blind spots about independence. Pride (which is sort of the main thing that causes all of these other issues) is **like a pair of glasses.** We see through the lens of pride and it's very easy to see those glasses on someone else, and it's almost impossible to see on ourselves. We need community, we need to allow community, to speak into our blind spots. So ask trusted, wise people to speak into your blind spots. Next, ask yourself: are you grasping the depth of sacrifice that Jesus made in order to bring you into right relationship with God? Do you think you're grabbing ahold of the depth of love that Jesus loves you with that He would empty Himself of His rightful state in order to give you a position you did not deserve. His immutability suffered change, His eternal relationship with His father was broken when He turned His face away from our sins that were laid on Jesus. Jesus was willing to humble Himself to death on the cross. Third, think specifically about what's coming up in our church family. Change is coming, friends. I know that word is hard, and it's even harder in practice. But there is a building being built right here. There is a new pastor coming on soon. There are new songs on the stage. There are new ministries popping up. There are kids growing up. There are new issues in our community. Are you ready to get in the game like Mike said last week? Will you sacrifice Sunday evenings to come pray with your brothers and sisters? Are you ready to be humble and sacrificial and communal? Are you ready to dive in even if you don't love every little change that happens? Are you ready to put on the attitude of Christ which always put the needs of others first? I know this is a lot and I know this isn't small, but I know it's going to be worth it.

We've been told to drop the attitude, but God wants us to pick up the attitude of Jesus. Before we end, I want to try to paint a picture... Look at how these three things come together in the end.

Though he was God,  
he did not think of equality with God  
as something to cling to.

<sup>7</sup>Instead, he gave up his divine privileges  
he took the humble position of a slave  
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,  
<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself in obedience to God  
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

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<sup>9</sup>Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor  
and gave him the name above all other names,  
<sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup>and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Humility, sacrifice, and community... Jesus' ultimate expression of humility led to the ultimate expression of sacrifice, which will, in the end lead to the ultimate expression of community. In the end, we will all be around the throne, throwing down our trophies, throwing down our accomplishments, throwing down our pride, and our greed, and our independence for the opportunity to bow down at Jesus' feet and say holy, holy, holy. Worthy are you, Jesus. You may look around at the people in your church and think, "man I'm nothing like these people, I don't like that music, I don't even like that building." but let me tell you what you have in common. You have Jesus in common, you have the essence of your very identity in common. Your foundation, your hope, your author and your perfecter, your savior. You have more in common than you think. Philippians 2:10, at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, every tongue will confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. That's something I want to be a part of. I want to be a part of picking up this attitude together.

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"THE ATTITUDE OF CHRIST"  
Philippians 2:1-11

**Main Idea:** God wants us to pick up an attitude.

Humble attitude

Sacrificial attitude

Communal attitude

**Conclusion**