Written Service Sunday June 14th 2026
A service of worship for use at home
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Charity number 1134226

Bible Month: Philippians 2
Shine Humbly

If you want a background to the book of Philippians and have access to the internet, search for "Bible Project: Book of Philippians Summary: A Complete Animated Overview" on YouTube for a good overview of the book: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oE9qqW1-BkU

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As we enter this time together, this service may seem disjointed, and more notes than finished thoughts, but that's ok. Actually that's largely what Paul does in Philippians. He's got lots of different bits and sections all trying to work out — that is to bring to light — what it is that he is beginning to understand about Jesus. All he really appears to know with any confidence in the letter is that there is joy in the journey and the discovery, and that what and who he finds in a life of following Jesus is worth more than anything.

We'll take two sections of chapter two and reflect on them, interspersing them with prayers and songs, as we too try to work out what it is that God might be teaching us through Paul and Jesus today.

Whilst we might be entering into this moment of worship alone, we remain part of the body of Christ whenever we worship. It is the presence of Christ and the passion of our hearts that unites us, even outside of physical presence and worshipping together at the same time. We join in worship with others in our present world and the saints through the ages. Take heart that we worship together:

"If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind."

(Philippians 2:1-2)

As we reflect:
We worship as part of the body of Christ, seeking to know God.
We recognise our shared Spirit, our shared love, and our meeting journeys.
May we learn something of what God has revealed in others;
May we create space in our minds to know more of God;
May we create room in our hearts to love God more;
May we allow our lives to be shaped by Christ;
And may we be led into living lives where we:
"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,
but in humility regard others as better than ourselves.
Let each of us look not to our own interests,
but to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3-4)
By the power of the Spirit,
Amen

Hymn – StF 504

May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do or say.

May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea;
him exalting, self forgetting --
this is victory.

May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson

Philippians 1:27 prepares us to enter into Philippians 2.
Paul says: *"Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel"*

But what is "the gospel of Christ"? What is the faith and mind that the Philippians were called to stand in? If you had to turn to a single passage in the Bible to try explain the gospel of Christ, explain why we think Jesus is important, and why we live the way we do as followers of Christ, you probably can't do much better than turning to the hymn in the middle of Philippians, in chapter 2:5-11. Whether it was written by Paul or borrowed from fellow new Christian theologians who were also trying to figure out this faith they were pioneering (without the benefit of 2000 years of people going before them!), it's poetry written to be sung and remembered, recalled in worship and as encouragement for life:

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord
to the glory of God the Father."

(Philippians 2:5-11)

It's difficult to know what to say to follow that! Whilst it's worth remembering again that this is a hymn and poetry that is trying to explain something that is massively beyond words and comprehension, it does allow us to grasp something of the magnitude of what happens in the life of Jesus when we believe in the incarnation.

And this hymn obviously doesn't reference the "why" of Jesus: Paul does that in plenty of other places, and Jesus declares it himself in the Gospels. "Why" is, ultimately, the most important question for us to get our heads round in life. We need to appreciate that God loves us more than understand "how" the bigger theological logistics and implications of the incarnation work, but in these 19 lines Paul (or his accompanying hymns) has composed something deeply simple towards understanding what is going on in the life of Jesus.

Because of its poetry and its simplicity it won't be complete, and it definitely leaves those of us who like to understand things with questions. But it is a hymn that does enough for us to lean into with faith.

May we find the balance between recognising and accepting the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ, and the desire to know how God being human works!
May our faith be real, and our response be pure as we seek to share in this hymn and respond to the love.
May our faith be strengthened as we draw closer to God through Jesus.

Hymn - StF 362

Meekness and majesty,
manhood and deity,
in perfect harmony --
the man who is God.
Lord of eternity,
dwells in humanity,
kneels in humility
and washes our feet.

Oh, what a mystery --
meekness and majesty:
bow down and worship,
for this is your God,
this is your God!

Father's pure radiance,
perfect in innocence,
yet learns obedience
to death on a cross:
suffering to give us life,
conquering through sacrifice --
and as they crucify,
prays, 'Father forgive.'
Oh, what a mystery --

Wisdom unsearchable,
God the invisible,
love indestructible
in frailty appears:
Lord of infinity,
stooping so tenderly,
lifts our humanity
to the heights of his throne.
Oh, what a mystery --

Graham Kendrick

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So what does all that mean for you and me?
What does it mean to you that God in Jesus would take on such a role, and live such a life, in order to proclaim the love of God, to declare the forgiveness of sins, to usher in the kingdom of God, and to bestow on us life in all its fulness?
How are we to respond to that?

We are to be "Shining as Lights in the World":

“Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labour in vain. But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you— and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.”

In this section Paul recognises what the Philippians are already doing well, whilst also encouraging them to think about how they can live it even better. He recognises that they have done great in following his example when he’s been there, and in the things they’ve learned from him, but in the new world of Christianity and the church they’re still going to have to work some things out for themselves as they go.

That’s what Paul’s asking when he says, “work out your salvation.” It’s not a debt they have to work off, it’s not a prize that they have to work toward, it’s a gift that they work out of… We, like the Philippians, are to work out what it looks like in practice in our lives.

He’s encouraging the Philippians, and latterly us, to live into that which we have received. Let it come to its fulness in us as we live like Jesus. And whilst there is an encouragement to do so “with fear and trembling” I’m not sure that’s about being afraid as much as it is about having a healthy respect for the magnitude of the love and gift that this been given, and with a quiver of anticipation.

To quote a hymn that Paul didn’t have at his disposal, the works we undertake and the life we live are in response to a “love so amazing, so divine, (that) demands my should, my life my all…” not like a slave driver demands, but in a “how could I not want to!?” sort of way.

We will do this not out of our own strength. Because it is God working in us, that not only excites us and gives us the passion and the will to be all we can be, but also to actually live in the light of love and salvation, to claim forgiveness, grace and mercy.

It will look like shining “like stars in the world,” like lesser lights but lights nonetheless.
It will look like walking straight paths in the midst of the crooked options offered by the world.
It will involve holding onto what is known about God through Jesus, even when the going gets tough, and about remembering that the joy of the Lord is our strength.
It will be together, united, and without the in-fighting. It will stand out as being different to the way of the world.

The fulfilment of the life and the hope, when the race is complete and the work is done, is that God in Christ through the Spirit was with us every step of the way. It’s that the house was built with the Lord and therefore the labour was not in vain.

May God help us to live that way.
Pray for opportunities to do so, and for strength to change any areas that you feel might need to change in order for you to live into your calling as a follower of Christ, trying to work out what that faith means in our world.
Claim the forgiveness that God offers through Jesus that says we do not have to be held back by our past, our sin, guilt or shame, but that we are free through love to live for God in Christ.
Pray that the church continues to build with Christ so that our labours are not in vain.

Hymn - Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy my righteousness and freedom
My steadfast love my deep and boundless peace
To this I hold my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to his
Oh how strange and divine I can sing all is mine
Yet not I but through Christ in me

The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side the Saviour he will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need his power is displayed
To this I hold my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley he will lead
Oh the night has been won and I shall overcome
Yet not I but through Christ in me

No fate I dread I know I am forgiven
The future sure the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And he was raised to overthrow the grave
To this I hold my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released I can sing I am free
Yet not I but through Christ in me

With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For he has said that he will bring me home
And day by day I know he will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne
To this I hold my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to him
When the race is complete still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I but through Christ in me

Jonny Robinson, Michael Farren, Rich Thompson
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The end of chapter 2, verses 19-30, is a bit of encouragement and story sharing to encourage the Philippians that they know two people who are already living it well and that they could do a lot worse than to follow their lead. Timothy and Epaphroditus are championed by Paul:

> *“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy’s worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me; and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.*
> *Still, I think it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus—my brother and co-worker and fellow-soldier, your messenger and minister to my need; for he has been longing for all of you and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. He was indeed so ill that he nearly died. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, so that I would not have one sorrow after another. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, in order that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy, and honour such people, because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for those services that you could not give me.”*

I wonder who in your life you might write about if you were trying to encourage someone else to live more like Jesus? Who has been part of your story and your journey and has acted and loved with the same mind of Christ? Who has taken their gifts and passions and combined them with humility to share the love of God? Whose life of discipleship have you witnessed as being a good example to follow? I wonder whether you think someone would write about you in the same way.

It's not just the big things that make the difference. You don't have to keep going on the brink of death like Epaphroditus, and you don't have to do everything Timothy did in following Paul around the area. We're called to live in other ways:
Sometimes what we are able to do is the quiet and humble service of our neighbours;
Sometimes it is the earnest prayers of our longing hearts for the world around us;
Sometimes it is offering the right words and actions to the right people at the right time;
Sometimes it is being ourselves and remaining faithful in the midst of turmoil and uncertainty;
Always it is working out what faith responding to the love, salvation, and life that we have been offered looks like in our everyday living, to the glory of God.

What does it look like for you? Be encouraged and continue to *"live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."*

Take a moment to thank God for those people who have gone before us, and who have journeyed alongside us, and who have modelled "working out" what a lived faith in Christ might look like. Recognise that you have very likely been a positive influence on others as you have lived out your faith. Allow God to be pleased with you, and commit to continuing to journey in faith.
May God's church, in unity of mind and passion, and by the work of the Spirit within us, enable us to be a witness to the love of God in the world around us.

We pray using words that so many have used before us, joining in the passion and purpose of their words and lives:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,
On Earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory
Forever and ever
AMEN

Hymn - StF 611:
Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

Richard A. M. Gillard

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As a **blessing**, we're returning to the words of our opening song StF 504

May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do or say.

May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea;
him exalting, self-forgetting --
this is victory.

May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson,

Amen