

Title: "Have the Mind of Christ Jesus"

Key verse: Philippians 2:5-7 (ESV) – "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be held on to for advantage ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a bond-servant, being born in the likeness of men."

Good morning, everyone. It's good to see you all here today. Today, I would like to share with you one of my all-time favorite passages of Scripture, the first half of Philippians chapter 2 ... actually, verses 3 to 13. This passage contains three sections, related but distinct.

Part 1 - The Christian's attitude toward others (vs. 3-4)

Part 2 - The attitude of Christ (or the mind of Christ) (vs. 5-11)

Part 3 - The Christian's work (vs. 12-13)

I have taken as my key verse today Philippians 2:5-7 (ESV) – "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be held on to for advantage ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a bond-servant, being born in the likeness of men."

I have taken the title of today's message from these verses. The title: Have the Mind of Christ Jesus ... Have the Attitude of Christ Jesus. Even though He was God, the Second Person of the Trinity, He humbled Himself, left His place in heaven, and became a man, a servant ... He became human and He became a servant, to help us human beings ... to redeem us and set our lives right by restoring our relationship to our Creator. We are to have this Mind of Christ Jesus, an attitude of humility, to humble ourselves in order to obey God and to serve our fellow human beings. This is the main theme of today's message.

Now that I have given an introduction, let's look at the different sections of the full passage today, beginning with verses 3 and 4.

Part 1: The Christian's attitude toward others.

Let me ask you a question. Do you have a "Life Verse"? A "Life Verse" ... a particular verse of Scripture which you center your life around? There are many Christians who have chosen one or more verses as a "Life Verse," and for me, Philippians 2:3-4 is one such verse. Actually, for me, I have three special verses which I like to call my "Life Verse" ... this one in Philippians, another one in James, and then one in 1st Timothy. I'd like to take a quick look at each of these and I'll tell you why they are special to me.

Let's look at 1st Timothy 1:5 (NASB) – "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." The **goal ... of Christian instruction** ... is three things: **love from a pure heart** ... and a **good conscience** ... and a **sincere faith**. The goal of our instruction is not learning stuff, learning information. You certainly do need to learn the content of Christian doctrine and you need to stand on that as the foundation of your Christian life, but the goal of Christian teaching is not to have this material inside your head. The goal is to change you from the inside out. Change your heart, clean your conscience, have a solid, sincere faith. And that leads to loving God and loving other people. And, although this verse doesn't mention it, this is done with the help of the Holy Spirit.

This has been a verse that I have centered my life around, to remind myself that beyond merely acquiring Bible knowledge, I must put into practice what I learn so that the character qualities

outlined in this verse may be a part of my inner being, a part of my soul.

Another crucially important verse to me is James 1:27 (NASB) – “This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” I find this to be a fascinating definition of true religion, religion that is acceptable to God our Father. There are two aspects to this. One is: living a clean life, unstained by the corrupt world around us. And the second is: caring for the most vulnerable people in our society. Living a clean life ... and caring for the most vulnerable people in our society. Caring for disadvantaged people is an idea that is expanded upon in James chapter 2. And I see it reflected in Mathew 25:31-46, where at the final judgment, those people who inherit a place in the kingdom of God are those who have cared for needy members of society. I’m not saying that we work for our salvation, but rather that a truly born-again Christian will naturally desire to help others in one way or another. Caring for others in one way or another. And living a clean life, unstained by this sinful world.

James 1:27 is a verse I have centered my life on ... one of a few verses I call my “Life Verse.” Another such verse is in my main passage today in Philippians chapter 2. Let’s look at verses 3 and 4 (NASB) – “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

“With humility of mind” – this is the foundation. A Christian mind, formed by ingesting the Word of God the Bible ... and meditating on the Word, and having your mind transformed by it. Romans 12:2 (NIV) – “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

This is a humble mind, being submissive to God’s will, and – back to Philippians 2, verse 3 – regarding other people as more important than oneself. Consider other people more important than yourself. This means being open to helping people who have needs, helping them in whatever way you can. That might mean being open to listening to them when they have concerns, giving answers to questions or advice on handling problems or praying with them. It might mean helping with their material needs. You can’t spend 100% of your time on other people, but you should be open to helping others when the need arises. Verse 4 again – “do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” Don’t close your heart to other people. Consider them important, because they, too, are precious in God’s sight.

Look at the beginning of verse 3 for a word on our motivations. We are to do nothing from selfish motivation. Maybe you’re tempted to help someone because it enhances your reputation if you are seen to be helpful. Oh ... no, don’t do that. Jesus said in Matthew 6:1 (ESV) – “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.”

This is the Christian mind, a humble mind, a mind that puts other people ahead of ourselves. And our ultimate example for this is Jesus Christ.

Part 2 of today’s message: The attitude of Christ / the mind of Christ.

We are told in verse 5 that we Christians are to have the mind of Christ. And in the following verses, we will see His tremendous example of humility, moving from the highest place in heaven to join the place of mankind here on earth ... and then to suffer the greatest humiliation.

Let's read Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV) – “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be held on to for advantage ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a bond-servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

This whole passage, from verse 5 to verse 11 has been called “The Christ Hymn.” I love this passage. I love the imagery here. The imagery of Christ's humble mission to earth. And then His exaltation to heaven in verses 9 to 11.

First, His humble mission to earth. One of the reasons I love this passage is the imagery of how He chose not to hold on to His divine position but, instead, He emptied Himself, He left heaven, and took on human flesh. Remember, Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Second Person of the Godhead. The Trinity is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith: God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – three distinct persons who are co-equal and co-eternal.

Many people find this concept hard to grasp, how Jesus could be both God and human. Well, here in these verses, I see an image that helps me understand it. Look again at verses 6 and 7 – “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be held on to for advantage ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a bond-servant, being born in the likeness of men.” He was in the form of God (He was divine, He had the same nature as God), but He chose to let go of His divine privileges. He had a mission to accomplish on earth, and for that mission – verse 7 – He emptied Himself. He emptied Himself. I like to picture this as the Son setting aside His status in heaven, His divine privileges, and then coming to earth and embracing humanity, being born as a human being, taking on the form of a servant, the very lowest type of human. For He came here on a mission to serve. He was the instrument of God the Father to accomplish the plan of the redemption of mankind. And Jesus came to serve us. Matthew 20:28 (NIV) – “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” He came to serve. And He came to accomplish our redemption, to restore our relationship to our Creator, to pay the penalty for our sin.

And that required the most humiliating experience of all. Verse 8 – “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” He was obedient to His mission. And that obedience meant death. An innocent man dying in the place of you and me. 1st Peter 3:18 (NIV) – “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.” He died for us. And He was executed in the most humiliating way: death on a cross.

He did this for you and for me. 1st John 4:9-10 (NIV) – “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” This is love: that God sent His Son to the world to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

God the Son emptied Himself of His divine place and came to earth to be born as a man and then to die as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of mankind. Here is the mind of Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself for our sake. This is the mind we are to adopt. Don't think of yourself and the privileges you have and your comfortable lifestyle. Put other people ahead of yourself and help them by whatever means you have.

Let us follow Christ's example. 1st John 3:16-18 (ESV) – “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's

goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

So, what happened to Christ after He suffered and died and was buried? You know the story. Three days later He rose triumphantly from the grave. He conquered death, and now we know that we, too, will conquer death and be raised with Him in the end. Forty days after the resurrection of Christ, He ascended into heaven, as we read in Acts 1:9. And in Colossians 3:1 (NIV) we read this – “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” After accomplishing His task, Christ is now back in heaven and seated at a special place, at the right hand of God the Father.

Let’s continue with the story in Philippians 2, looking at verses 9-11 (ESV) – “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

God has exalted Jesus and “bestowed on him the name that is above every name.” What kind of “name” does this refer to? Commentators are unsure, but the notes in my ESV Study Bible make an interesting statement. Here it is:

This name is not specified here, but many think it refers to the name Yahweh (Hebrew: YHWH), God’s personal name, which in the Septuagint is regularly translated as Greek *Kyrios*, “Lord,” the name specified in Phil. 2:11. In any case, Paul means that the eternal Son of God received a status and authority ... that had not been his before he became incarnate as both God and man. Jesus’ being given this name is a sign that he exercises his messianic authority in the name of Yahweh. ... While Christ now bears the divine name Yahweh (“Lord”), he is still worshiped with his human name, Jesus, since it was in the flesh that he most clearly displayed his divine glory to the world. This astounding union of Jesus’ divine and human natures is reinforced by the allusion to Isa. 45:23 in the words “every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess,” which in Isaiah refer exclusively to Yahweh (cf. Isa. 45:24). The fact that these words can now be applied to God’s messianic agent—Jesus Christ is Lord—shows that Jesus is fully divine. But the worship of Jesus as Lord is not the final word of the hymn. Jesus’ exaltation also results in the glory of God the Father.
(Excerpt From: Crossway. “ESV® Study Bible”).

What does it mean that “every knee will bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”? Does this mean that in the end, everybody will be saved? No, it does not. The lost sinners who rejected Christ during their time of life on earth will be sent to eternal punishment, as stated in many places in the New Testament, but before that happens, every such person will still bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Everyone, including rebel humans and rebel angels (the demons) will bow and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord.

This is all to the glory of God.

Next, Part 3: The Christian’s work.

Here we come to the last two verses of today’s passage. Philippians 2:12-13 (ESV) – “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

I like these verses, but verse 12 makes some people uncomfortable or confused: *Work out your own salvation*. Do we work in order to earn salvation? No, that is not what this verse is teaching. My ESV Study Bible says, “Paul means ‘salvation’ in terms of progressively coming to experience all

of the aspects and blessings of salvation. The Philippians' continued obedience is an inherent part of 'working out' their salvation in this sense."

The Greek verb "work out" means "to continually work to bring something to fulfillment or completion." I see. To bring our own salvation to fulfillment, to completion. We don't just sit around doing nothing till we get to heaven, but we have work to do ... it takes effort to obey God, to root out sin in our lives, and to be active members of the Body of Christ, the church. You have been born again, so please bring your status as a born-again Christian to fulfillment by living a clean life, honoring God in all your activities, and helping to build the kingdom of God.

Work to bring your salvation to completion. But you don't do this by your own power. Verse 13 – "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." God works in you to will what He wants, and to work for what He wants.

God helps us when we face temptation to sin. I love 1st Corinthians 10:13 (NASB) – "No temptation has overtaken you but such is common to mankind; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." God is with us. And He provides the way of escape. I have found this verse so encouraging: I never have to give in to temptation because I know that my God will always provide a way of escape so that I can endure the temptation and turn away from it before falling into a sin.

Jesus told His disciples that God would send the Holy Spirit to them. Acts 1:4-5 (ESV) – "And while staying with them he [Jesus] ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'." Verse 8 – "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The Holy Spirit empowers us for ministry. We can do the work, because the Holy Spirit is with us.

But, let me give you a word of warning. 1st Thessalonians 5:19 (NASB) – "Do not quench the Spirit." It is possible to quench the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and when we do so, our work for the Lord is greatly hampered. In contrast, let's follow Galatians 5:16 (NASB) – "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." Walk by the Spirit, being sensitive to His leading at all times.

Let me finish with the testimony of the Apostle Paul. 1st Corinthians 15:10 (NASB) – "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."

Paul worked hard for the Lord. And yet he testifies that he wasn't laboring alone. The grace of God was with him as he worked for the Lord. Let us remember to always stay close to God and draw on His power, the power of the Holy Spirit, as we do the work of the ministry in whatever gift and whatever task He has given you to do.