



# The Mark of Christ

*Philippians 1:27 - 2:11*

## Phil. 2:5-11

Every pastor that is guided by a commitment to Biblical principles tends to have, a “spiritual bi-polar problem”.

There is a side to me that would like to come in and tell you that we have a great need in our children’s ministries and we need more of you to be involved. That is certainly true. And the same side would like to tell you that every person here needs to be committed to a small group, because that is certainly true. In that same side would also tell you that we are falling short on our world mission offering goal this year and more if you really need to make a financial commitment to it. In that same side would like to say that too many in our congregation take their commitment to Christ lightly, reflected in their sporadic worship attendance and almost no attendance or involvement in anything else.

But there’s another side, which reminds a pastor who is guided by biblical principles that all of those things, and as good and necessary as they are, really come out of a higher and *greater work* of God active and alive in a Christian’s life. They come out of, and are actually a result of the kind of spiritual life that Paul has told us about, summed up in these words found in Philippians 3:7-8

*whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my*

*Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

When someone wants to know Christ and magnify him in whatever they do, the natural result is to live out that desire on a daily basis.

Remember, we are in the midst of our annual Spiritual Growth Covenant time, and I am challenging you (there is that other side) to make commitments that are necessary and practical. But I know, and I think you know, that the ones who really do that are the ones who desire to magnify Jesus as their “real goal”. So let’s keep going this morning in Philippians and see what God would teach us.

We will see today that if we are going to magnify Jesus Christ we will have to think like Jesus Christ and have His attitude.

## The Song of Songs

Now we are going to start at 1:27, where we left off last week, but today I am going to do something odd (what’s new) and first share a song to you.

That’s right. Today Pastor “Barry Manilow” Saylor is going to sing you (actually I think he’s Jewish). From the Bible. Earlier we read the passage, Philippians 2:6-11. In many ways this is the greatest and most moving passage Paul ever wrote about Jesus. These verses are remarkable are a number of reasons.

It is remarkable doctrinally. In these few verses we see the great sweep of Christ’s life from eternity past to eternity future, and we are admitted to the breathtaking purposes of God in human salvation. These verses have a structure to them that has by some been called the *great parabola of Scripture*. First they picture the descent of the Lord Jesus Christ from the highest position in the universe down to his death on the cross. This is his Humiliation. And then they carry the mind of the reader up again to see him seated once more, exalted

on the throne of his glory before which every knee shall bow.

It is also remarkable from the viewpoint of early church history. The apostle Paul is talking about a man, Jesus of Nazareth, who had lived only a generation earlier in Jerusalem. He is stating tremendous things about him. The divinity of Christ, his preexistence, his equality with God the Father, his incarnation and true humanity, his voluntary death on the cross, the certainty of his ultimate triumph over evil, and his eternal reign.

Yet he says these things in such a way that we know he is merely presenting what he knew to be the accepted teaching of all the Christian churches. Suppose someone said this about a man who had lived in 1990. It would be preposterous, unbelievable. Yet Paul writes these things as if everyone—certainly every Christian—knew them to be true beyond question.

Sometime we hear people say that the doctrines we believe about Jesus “evolved” slowly over time into what we believe now. That the early church didn’t really believe them. Poppycock!

And the third way this passage is remarkable drives home this fact even more. Because many biblical scholars interpret these 6 verses, as an early Christian hymn that Paul includes here. A song whose words were memorized and sung by believers like you and me in the early Church.

That conclusion comes from the rhythmical quality, rare words and phrases in this section. Of course, being translated into another language we lose most of that. Yet most of the translations format the text in such a way to show it as different, in this case the words of the great hymn about Jesus Christ.

In fact, this week in preparation, I found that there is one English translation that makes an attempt to turn this into something we might consider a song. The International Standard Version, which I shall read in a few moments adds meter and rhyme, similar to a modern poem or song.

Now as I read it (not sing it) and you follow along on the screen, I want you to imagine the emotion that Christians, maybe worshipping together like we are, may have expressed as they sang this song of Jesus. First as they follow Jesus to

the awful suffering and humiliation of the cross - and then singing about Gods pleasure to exalt him and gave him the highest name and place where every knee shall bow before him, I can just hear the hallelujahs at the end. Maybe you can to. Here we go.

Philippians 2:6-11 (ISV)

<sup>6</sup>In God’s own form existed he,  
And shared with God equality,  
Deemed nothing needed grasping.

<sup>7</sup>Instead, poured out in emptiness,  
A servant’s form did he possess,  
A mortal man becoming.

In human form he chose to be,  
<sup>8</sup>And lived in all humility,  
Death on a cross obeying.

<sup>9</sup>Now lifted up by God to heaven,  
A name above all others given,  
This matchless name possessing.

<sup>10</sup>And so, when Jesus’ name is called,  
The knees of everyone will fall  
Where’er they are residing.

<sup>11</sup>Then every tongue in one accord,  
Will say that “Jesus Christ is Lord,”  
While God the Father praising.

Oh, isn’t the love God and amazing, that he would leave his glory behind and consider our needs ahead of his rightful place in heaven as God? The amazing love of God.

### Philippians 1:27-30

Now, but that said, let’s return to Chapter 1 and see how we get there.

Philippians 1:27-30 *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*

This immediately draws me back to what I consider to be the heart of Paul and his purpose in writing this letter. “*Whatever happens*” - we have seen over and over that Paul’s definition of *Christian success* was not to have a “cushy” life. It was to magnify Christ “*whatever happens.*” It didn’t matter what - in good order in bad, his goal was to make Christ look good to the world around him and to find his ultimate joy in Him. “*Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ*” - see, that’s what I mean. And he’s telling the Philippians to have the same set of goals. Let me ask you, do you have those goals too? Really? Is your highest goal, your ultimate aim to take the

things of God and through your life, magnify them, so that the watching world sees them with greater clarity? Or is your aim to be comfortable, have friends and happiness and wealth?

What your true aim is will determine what you invest your life in.

Paul goes on to say that for him, to see them live in such a way as to “glorify God in all of life” would make him the happiest man alive—whether he had the opportunity to see it or not.

*<sup>27</sup> Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel [<sup>28</sup> without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.]*

And in verse 29 he reiterates the fact that if they choose this goal they need to know it’s not always going to be a cake walk. *<sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, <sup>30</sup> since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.*

That’s just the way it is, Paul says.

### The need for Unity

There was one other thing in this section that I want to draw your attention to. In the second part of verse 27, Paul begins to address the importance of Christian unity. He calls it “*standing firm in one Spirit*” and “*contending as one man.*” Paul is convinced that one of the ways we magnify our Savior is to demonstrate **unity** in the Christian church.

And that brings us to chapter 2, where Paul begins to expand that topic.

**Philippians 2:1-2** *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.*

Do you see it? Paul says, “if you understand that Jesus made you one with him, then please be

“like-minded” and “love each other” and show that you have “one spirit and purpose!””

You see the Philippian church was definitely a great church. Paul was excited about this church. It was a faithful church, a healthy church, a generous church, a mission-minded church. Among the churches mentioned in the New Testament, the church at Philippi has to rank near the top -- somewhere close to First Baptist Church, Manchester.

However, a grave danger threatened the Philippian church, and we can see it in Paul’s words. It was that of disunity. Discord. In Chapter 4 he even mentions some names, two ladies, Euodia and Syntyche, who, in spite of their deep love and service to the Lord, we’re having real problems with each other. So much so that it was affecting the rest of the church.

There is a sense in which this is the danger of every healthy church. When the devil can’t get the church to forsake the gospel, and he can’t get it from being mission focused, and he can’t get it from being generous and caring -- than the devil changes his tactics. He gets good people to fight one another. He creates discord and disunity.

- You see, the greater two persons’ enthusiasm is, the greater the danger is that they may collide.
- It is when people’s beliefs really matter to them, that they are apt to get up against each other.

I hate to say it, but that seems to be a good description of the history of the Christian Church. Baptists may be one of the worst groups. There are more Baptist denominations and independent groups than any other type, it seems. Some Baptists can’t get along with anybody else. And sometimes they can’t get along with themselves!

I’ve heard some people quip that for some Christians, those who become so narrow in their beliefs, who criticize everyone but themselves, God is going to have to create a separate room for them in heaven for them to enjoy it!

It is against that danger Paul wishes to safeguard his friends. And I am convinced that Paul was not taking this problem lightly, as I think you will see as well.

Can I be honest with you? I think there may be too many people here in our church who take this problem far too lightly. I think that there are enough

people who would prefer to hold on to their anger, hold onto a grudge, hold on to a resentment - concerning someone else in the church fellowship, rather than to give it over to the and deal with it as they should. And I don't think they see how much more it affects just their relationship with another person. I don't think they see the strategic work that the devil is trying to accomplish through them. The apostle Paul saw it, as I'll show you in a moment.

Let me say this as well. If it is your desire to be a person who, above all things, has as your goal to bring glory to God in your life, as we have clearly seen Paul indicates should be your goal -- it is impossible to magnify the Lord in and through your life, if you are an unforgiving person.

If you remain wired to see other people's faults and failures and offenses, and treat them roughly, you will not be a conduit to magnify Christ. You cannot say like Paul, "Whatever happens, I am conducting myself in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ."

This wiring to be unforgiving —it is universal in all human beings— but it must be dismantled. We must become forgiving people.

One of the reasons the apostle Paul wrote this magnificent letter to the Philippians, is because of his great concern that disunity in the church would destroy the great work God was doing through them. We will see hints of this throughout the rest of the letter. But here we see it and Paul's pleading with them, "*be like-minded*" "*have the same love*" "*be one in spirit and purpose.*"

And he goes on to tell them how to change that: **Philippians 2:3-4** *<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Self-centered ambition and vanity are enemies of unity. They are enemies of cross. Instead, Paul tells them, and us, that *humility* that *considers others better than ourselves* and *puts the interests of others before our own* is a pathway of retaining and restoring unity.

Placing others before ourselves is nothing less than the work of God in our lives. It is counterintuitive. It goes against the grain of our

fallen, self-centered human nature. But it is also *absolutely necessary* if we are ever going to make Christ look good to the watching world! (Other verses....)

Now I know some of you are thinking, "Pastor Dave, I'm all for Jesus, and I'm all for God, and I'm all for being a Christian and all that... But I think I'll take a pass on this. After all, I can live a pretty good life as a Christian without having to really put other people's concerns first, can't I?"

No, not according to my Bible, you can't. You can't magnify Christ and magnify self at the same time. It just doesn't work. You will waste your life.

Now, the reason I know that this was not just some "secondary" issue to the apostle Paul is the way he chooses to drive it home. After making his plea, he says, in effect, "this is so important I need to show you an example that you should never forget."

And what does he do? Well, let's read it: **Philippians 2:5** *<sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

Paul says that our attitude has to be like Jesus on this point. In other words, what was Jesus's attitude toward the need to "*look out not only for our interests, but to the interests of others?*" And how did Jesus feel about "*considering others better than himself?*"

Whoa! Isn't that what his incarnation, and his sacrificial death on the cross is all about? Precisely! And just in case you don't make the connection, Paul lays it out for you by sharing a song of Jesus that we started out with this morning in verses 5-11.

#### Philippians 2:6-8

As we said before, this passage is among the most glorious sections of the New Testament. In them we view the breathtaking purposes of God in human salvation through the unselfish love of Jesus Christ.

Tonight we shall look at the amazing truths that the verses, in and of themselves teach us. But this morning let's recognize WHY they were given to us in the first place.

They tell us that the most important action that has ever occurred, or will ever occur in this universe -- the miraculous, unfathomable action of Jesus Christ descending from heaven, the God of gods,

laying aside the use of his divine attributes in order to take on true humanity, and further descend to become the penalty for sin for all those that he had created... resulting in an explosion of praise and exaltation in the heavens that will go on for all eternity -- that all of this came to pass because Jesus Christ's attitude was one of humility - where he did not put his own interests first, but put ours ahead of his.

Have you ever actually thought about the fact that Jesus, in coming and dying for you, considered you better than himself?

Paul says, "God felt it was that important to bring us together and make us one with him. Don't you see how important it is for us to have the same attitude and commitment toward each other?"

**STORY OF GEESE**

We will never become a church that effectively reaches out to those who are missing out if we shoot our wounded and major on the minuses.

Instead of being fishers of men, as Christ has called us, we will be keepers of an ever-shrinking aquarium.

When you see geese heading south for the winter, flying along in V formation, you might be interested in knowing what science has discovered about why they fly that way.

- It has been learned that as each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a V formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

(Christians who share a common direction and a sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier, because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.)

- Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front.

(If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed the same way we are going. - small groups)

- When the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point.

(It pays to take turns doing hard jobs--with people at church or with geese flying south. - serving)

- The geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

(There is nothing like encouragement.)

- Finally, when a goose gets sick, or is wounded and falls out, two geese fall out of formation and follow him down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he is either able to fly, or until he is dead, and then

they launch out on their own or with another formation to catch up with their original group.

(If people knew we would stand by them like that in church, they would push down these walls to get in.)

You see, Jesus knows something that we don't know. He knows that unity in his church is a powerful as the V-formation of geese to advance his work in our lives and in the world.

**CONCLUSION**

Are you contributing to that unity? Or are you creating drag that is pulling the work of God down?

Are you a team player who seeks to make a difference for the lord Jesus Christ? Are you a member and an active member at that?

If you are not a Christian - then you need to accept Jesus Christ today. Look at what he did for you? Left heaven, gave up his rights, humbled himself, died for YOUR SINS. His is your only hope. Receive Him today.

If you are a Christian, I urge you to take 1 step forward from where you are to where you need to be.