

Series: Philippians Series 2024

Title: Christ in Your Midst

Text: Php 2: 12-18

Date: Feb 25, 2024

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Philippians 2: 12: Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13: For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure. 14: Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16: Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. 17: Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. 18: For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

We came to these verses at the end of the message Thursday. So now, we will focus more on these verses. My intent is to preach the same message to you now as I preached Thursday night.

We are familiar with our Lord's word from Matthew 18.

Matthew 18: 20: For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Often that verse is preached declaring that where Christ has done the gathering, and where Christ has established the preaching of his gospel, though it may a very small number, even it be as few as two or three, Christ declares he is in the midst of them. And that is true. But it is not the context of Matthew 18.

Another way this verse has been used is that individuals have used it to justify not assembling with God's saints where Christ has established the preaching of the gospel. That is certainly not the context nor the meaning of the verse.

Neither of those interpretations are according to the context of Matthew 18. In Matthew 18, if a brother goes alone or when he takes two or three brethren with him to speak to a brother, our Master said, "*where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" Through Paul, our risen Shepherd declares the same word in Philippians 2: 12-13, "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*"

"*Work out your own salvation*" means work out your own daily affairs with each other. Christ knows there are two believers--sisters made one in and by Christ--who are not of the same mind. The Lord is declaring through the apostle Paul the same message that Christ preached in Matthew 18. He is telling them to work this out. "Work out your own salvation" means work out your affairs with each other as brethren, citizens of new Jerusalem, in a way that adorns the gospel.

Philippians 1: 27: Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your AFFAIRS, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

He says the same in Philippians 2: 12, "*work out your own SALVATION [your daily affairs] with fear and trembling.*" Fear and trembling comes from knowing you have no ability in yourself to make the word of God effectual in any other person's heart. It is from believing and trusting Christ. Paul told the Corinthians he was with them in fear and much trembling. He only preached Christ, that their faith would stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Cor 2: 1-5). God's saints have this fear and trembling from knowing,

Philippians 2: 13: it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

Our sovereign Lord is in our midst. He is working his will and his good pleasure. Therefore,

Philippians 2: 14: Do all things without murmurings and disputings.

Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Subject: Christ in Your Midst

Propositions: Philippians 2: 1-18 and the whole chapter of Matthew 18 shine much light on each other. They are both the word of our sovereign Lord. They both deal with the same subject: the humility we are to have toward Christ and toward each other when we have a need like these two sisters had at Philippi.

A BRIEF COMPARISON

We will begin by comparing the Lord's word in Matthew 18 with the Lord's word here in Philippians 2: 1-18. Let's review some of what we saw last time in Philippians 2.

Philippians 2: 1: If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,...

If you have experienced that Christ is the Power of God then this is the will of Christ for you. This is Christ's word to you delivered through the apostle Paul as truly as Christ spoke in Matthew 18.

These are the things Christ is to us and the things he makes us experience when Christ works effectually in our hearts through the preaching of the gospel.

If Christ has made you experience that Christ is the consolation of his people then heed this word and console brethren with the gospel of Christ.

If Christ has made you experience the comfort of his love in laying down his life and redeeming his people then this is the mind of Christ that Christ has put in you in the new birth to comfort your brethren with the good news of Christ's love for the elect.

If the Spirit of God has made you one in fellowship with God our Father and with your brethren, in and by Christ Jesus, then you have experienced the strong affection (bowels) and mercies of God the Father and of Christ Jesus our Righteousness. It is Christ who makes us hear this word and makes us willing to show the same consolation, love and mercies to brethren as God has shown us for the sake of Christ, especially brethren who have sinned.

That is the point. If you have experienced these things from Christ then show the same to your brethren.

Philippians 2: 1: If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2: Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

He is saying have the same mind and same love as Christ. Verse 5, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" Do all in humility and meekness. Meekness is bowing to Christ and trusting Christ to work his will and good pleasure in your brethren. So if we have been given the mind of Christ in the new birth then Christ says through Paul we are to do all things in humility and meekness.

Philippians 2: 3: *Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4: Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Now, let's compare Philippians 2 with Matthew 18. First, note why Christ began his lesson in Matthew 18.

Matthew 18: 1: At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

The apostles were doing exactly what Philippians 2 teaches us not to do. They were seeking vain glory. This was not lowliness of mind. This was not esteeming their brethren better than themselves. This was not

looking on the need of brethren. This was being concerned with one's own self being regarded as the greatest. It was seeking vain glory.

Christ knew this prideful spirit of our sin-nature would lead to strife, especially when a brother trespassed against them. So the message Christ teaches in Matthew 18 is the same as Christ's message through Paul in Philippians 2: 1-18.

Matthew 18: 2: And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them 3: And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4: Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The greatest in the kingdom of heaven was in their midst. Christ is the Son of God. But Christ humbled himself as a little child. He took sinless flesh to glorify his Father and save his people from our sins. Therefore, as Christ walked this earth, our Savior did all things in perfect meekness trusting his Father. That is what Paul declared in Philippians 2.

Christ said to them, "*Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" The apostles were converted in regeneration of the Spirit of God. Christ had called them and gifted them with faith to believe on him. But Christ declares that they needed to be converted from this prideful, selfish spirit of seeking vain glory. They needed to become as humble as little children. Unless the Spirit of God gives us the mind of Christ and humbles as little children then we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. The greatest in the kingdom of heaven is Christ. He humbled himself as a little child in perfection. He highly exalted God wherefore God also hath highly exalted him. Do you see that Matthew 18 and Philippians 2: 1-18 contain the same lesson for God's saints?

Next, when Christ speaks of receiving one such little child, Christ is speaking of his saints in whom Christ dwells in Spirit.

Matthew 18: 5: And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

Christ is in each of his saints. That is the message here and in Philippians 2. God is in you. Christ is in you, he is in your brethren and Christ is in your midst working his will and good pleasure. Therefore, when we receive one of his people, we receive Christ. That is how truly Christ dwells in us. That is how truly Christ is in our midst. That is how truly one we are with Christ. Receiving one of Christ's humbled saints is to receive Christ for Christ is in each of those born of his Spirit. For the same reason, we should never offend one in whom Christ dwells because it is to offend Christ.

Matthew 18: 6: But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

So our Lord says we are to cut off our hand or foot or pluck out our eye if it offend. Here is our Lord's point.

Matthew 18: 10: Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. 11: For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Christ commands his saints to take heed that we despise not--contemn not, disdain not--one of his saints. Christ abides in them. They are Christ's little ones that Christ has made to submit to him in humility in faith. We are not to offend by despising them because it is the will and good pleasure of God to save each of his chosen people. He sent Christ to save each one which was lost in the fall. That is what Philippians 2 declares. Christ is in our midst working the will and good pleasure of God the Father. Christ is fulfilling the will of God our Father which is to save each of God's elect.

Brethren, each of you who believe, each of your brethren who believe, has an angel in heaven, ready for our Father to give them charge to protect you. And Christ our Shepherd is in our midst saving his lost sheep and his straying sheep.

Christ commands, "*Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.*" What would cause an apostle to despise one of their brethren who believe on Christ? From the context of Matthew 18, it is when they have sinned. Christ is warning us not to despise a brother or sister when they go astray by sinning in some way. We see that because immediately after telling them not to offend, not to despise their brethren, Christ says each saint has an angel waiting God's charge to protect them. He declares Christ came to save his lost sheep and his saints who stray. He gives an illustration of a shepherd going to bring back one of his sheep that went astray. Here is our Master's point.

Matthew 18: 14: Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

This is the same reason given in Philippians 2. Our Savior began in Matthew 18 teaching this lesson because the apostles asked who is the greatest in heaven. He knew where that self-serving spirit would lead, especially when their brethren went astray in sin. They would despise their brethren. Doing so they would offend Christ who dwells in his saints.

Therefore, Christ teaches us to be as a humble as a little child. He teaches us Christ is in our brethren. Our Master commands us to receive brethren for in doing so we receive Christ who dwells in them. Due to Christ dwelling in his saints, he teaches us not to offend by despising our brethren when they go astray and sin. Our great risen, sovereign Shepherd is in our midst--he is in your brethren--Christ is working the will and good pleasure of God our Father, which is to recover and save his straying sheep. He will not lose one.

But the glory to save his people is his glory not ours.

Therefore, Christ gives us instruction on how to work out our own salvation--our daily affairs--with humility--with fear and trembling--to GAIN YOUR BROTHER--when they have gone astray and sinned. Christ instructs us to go to the brother alone. We declare to them, not only their trespass, but we remind them of Christ and his works and our salvation by Christ. Do like Nathan did when David had sinned. The goal is to gain your brother, not to condemn and despise them. Christ said that receiving a brother is receiving Christ and offending a brother by despising them when they sin is to do the same to Christ. It is because Christ is in your brother and sister. Christ is in your midst as you speak with your brother or sister.

Matthew 18: 20: For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

That is the context in which Christ made this statement. It is the same message as Philippians 2. God is in your midst and in each of your brethren, working in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. So do all without murmuring and disputing. Do all in the humility of a little child, esteeming your brother better than yourself, looking on their need that only Christ can meet. That is why we are to remind them of Christ and his works and trust Christ to make his servants stand.

Then notice how this lesson ends in Matthew 18.

Matthew 18: 21: Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22: Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

The bookends on both sides of Christ's instruction is so very important. Christ began by saying be as humble as a little child which is to trust Christ to work in your brethren, not offending Christ by despising them when they sin. He ends by saying forgive your brethren without limit. In between our Master declares when you speak with your brother, it is Christ in you working to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Humility, true meekness, is trusting Christ. Tell your brother his trespass like Nathan did David. But also remind them that their sin is forgiven as Nathan did for David. It takes faith in Christ to tell a brother or sister who has sinned grievously that their sin is forgiven due to Christ having put it away. It takes faith in Christ for us to forgive, believing God is just to show mercy to his people for Christ's sake; knowing that it is unjust to condemn God's elect who Christ has justified. It takes faith in Christ to trust that Christ is able to make your brother stand; Christ is the Master able to make his servants stand; a work of faith is a work wherein we trust God is able. [Listen to the audio. There is more in the sermon audio than in the notes.]

So through Paul, our Lord taught the same lesson in Philippians 2: 1-18. It is Christ's word in both passages. It is Christ teaching us to have the same spirit, the same mind and love that Christ has for his people. If you really know Christ is the Power of God, the consolation of Israel, then...

Philippians 2: 3: *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves* 4: *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others* 5: *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus [who, though he is God]* 7: *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

By that Christ highly exalted God his Father. Christ magnified God's law and made it honorable for his people. God is just to show us mercy because God justified his people in Christ. Christ made all God's elect the righteousness of God in him. So God the Father also highly exalted Christ. Our Savior is risen. He has all power over all. Christ dwells in each saint who has been born-again of the Spirit of God. Christ is in our midst. He is working both his will and good pleasure which is God the Father's will to save his lost sheep and to recover his saints when we stray in sin. Therefore, we are to work out our troubles with fear and trembling, without murmuring and disputing, trusting Christ to save.

Philippians 2: 12: *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. 14: Do all things without murmurings and disputings:*

A PERSONAL APPLICATION

Child of God, think how Christ did this for you. He looked on your need when you were fallen in Adam, ungodly, having trespassed against God, against Christ himself. So what did Christ do for you when you had trespassed against him so?

Christ made himself of no reputation. He did not strive or seek vain glory. The Son of God humbled himself as a little child. He took the form of a servant. Christ became obedient to God his Father, trusting his Father, who Christ knew was in him working his will and good pleasure. So Christ went to the cross and fulfilled the law in perfect righteousness for his people in perfect love. He accomplished eternal redemption for his people. God against whom we trespassed, justified us forever! Christ against whom we trespassed, made us the righteousness of God in him by laying down his life for us. Then Christ came to you by sending a preacher preaching his person and finished works. And through the Spirit of God, Christ established every word in your heart. He gave you faith in him.

Romans 8: 1: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

So when you have strayed and have a need, Christ comes to you through the brother or sister he sends. He does not send a brother to condemn but to unite you in one Spirit. Now, consider yourself to be the one who has sinned. Think how much better it is to you, if a brother comes to you as humble as a little child. A brother comes to you esteeming you better than himself. From his very inward man, he has love and compassion on you and he knows your need. Fearing and trembling he distrusts any ability in himself but trusts that Christ is in you, trusting that Christ alone is able to work his will and good pleasure in you and make you stand. So he does not murmur or dispute with you. He simply holds forth the word of Life to you; he consoles and comforts you with the good news that Christ Jesus is your Life, your Righteousness. That is the spirit the Lord will bless to establish every word of consolation and mercy in your heart to revive you.

Isaiah 57:15: For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Matthew 11: 28: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Christ revives and recovers us when we stray by consoling and comforting us with the good news that he has forgiven us without limit. He revives in us the fellowship of the Spirit by reminding us of his inward affection and mercies toward us. Christ makes his servant stand by reviving us with the word of Life declaring how God, for the sake of Christ, has pardoned our iniquity and rewarded us double for all our sins.

Christ knew these two sisters at Philippi had gone astray. So, through Paul, Christ gives them the same word as he gave his apostles that day in Matthew 18.

The will and good pleasure of God the Father is worked in his people by Christ through the Spirit of God as Christ uses one of his saints to hold forth the word of Life. Christ unites us in the fellowship of the Spirit, making us receive our brethren by making us know we are receiving Christ himself who dwells in them. He makes us forgive without limit because he makes us see how God, for the sake of Christ, has forgiven us without limit.

Due to Christ justifying us, God shall bring us to confess our sins to him. And due to Christ being our Righteousness, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Child of God, you are just to forgive your brethren without limit due to Christ having justified all God's elect. It is unjust to do otherwise.

Saints of God, Christ is in you, Christ is in your brother and sister, and Christ in our midst working the will and good pleasure of God our Father. So do not offend Christ by despising brethren when they stray and sin. Instead, trust Christ in humility as a little child. Esteem your brother better. Look on their need and speak of Christ who alone meets every need. And when they repent toward God, forgive and restore one another for that is the will and good pleasure of God our Father.

Amen!