

A Brilliant Attitude

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[0 : 00] Okay, so very quickly we are going through Philippians, this great letter that Paul wrote to the church in Philippi. We said a little bit last week about the church, that we know some of the people who are members in the church, the Philippian jailer and his family, Lydia, the slave girl, some of the different elders and leaders that were appointed.

And we're just taking a whistle stop tour through this letter, the four chapters, obviously not original chapter divisions because it was a letter, but we're using the chapter divisions that we have.

And we're looking at different aspects of each chapter, taking one verse from each chapter as a kind of theme for that chapter.

Now I do realize that this is probably one of the greatest chapters in the whole Bible, and so it seems a bit unfair and a bit harsh to just go through it in one evening, but that's what we're going to do.

We're going to dip our toes into this passage, into this chapter this evening. And maybe particularly if we have a verse that's in the middle of it, it's the verse that brings together what's before it and what's after it, it would be verse 5.

[1 : 21] And I'm using, okay, I'm an old person and I'm using the old version of the NIV this evening, okay, which is the NIV 1984 version, okay. It's not the version you read, that's the modern one.

I'm a traditionalist. I like the way things were in the old days, okay. So we're going to read, I'm going to be using that because that's the one I really know and it's a beautiful translation of Philippians chapter 2.

And verse 5 in Philippians chapter 2 says, your mind it says in the ESV or your attitude and it's the same. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ.

So we're looking this evening at a brilliant attitude, looking at different brilliant things from Philippians last week. We looked at a brilliant philosophy of life. This evening we're looking at a brilliant attitude to life and we find that is explained in this chapter.

Obviously, we're not going to look at everything in this chapter, but I would ask that you would pray for it to provoke you to look at the chapter a little bit more and to pray over it and to inspire you to study it a little bit more and to luxuriate in a way that we're not able to do this evening.

[2 : 37] That is such a magnet verse, the verse 5 there that our mind should be, our attitude should be the same as Jesus Christ. So Paul's really wanting the people to learn from Jesus and to in their lives share the same attitude that he had when he lived on earth as our redeemer and our Savior as the Son of God and the Son of Man.

What he's really encouraging the people to do is to live their lives reflecting who they are, who they belong to, who their identity is in.

The idea of attitude here, our mindset, mindset is probably a really good translation as well, that it's the mindset we should have every moment or every day as that reflects our instinct, our spiritual heart.

The way we live from our heart that comes across in our attitudes, in our actions in other words. So it's the motive that comes from within us, the attitude that we have in all of our living.

So, okay, it's the middle of the summer, you're tired and everything else. But the great thing about that is it draws everyone in, okay, because we all have attitude, okay?

[3 : 57] We all have degrees of attitude one way, oh, oh, it's losing my brain here, my brain is falling out. Okay, my brain's back in and I can speak again.

Attitude is something we all have. We all have some kind of attitude that we take into our work, into our relationships, into the way we get up, what we think about when we get up, how we eat our breakfast, everything that we do reflects the attitude that comes from deep within us in our lives.

So if I gave you a minute or two, I'm not going to, but if I gave you a minute or two to reflect on what your attitude is, what generally, your life's attitude, what would it be?

You know, if you were to discuss with the person next to you for a few minutes, how would you describe your attitude to life? What is, how do you think other people would describe your attitude to life?

And that's maybe more telling, isn't it? We maybe have one image of what our attitude to living is, oh yeah, yeah, brava, but someone else might have an entirely different attitude and that would be interesting.

[5 : 04] Maybe we'll do that sometime. Ask each other what kind of attitude we have in life, because the attitude we have, the mindset that we have, it will reflect your priorities, it will reflect your faith, absolutely will reflect your faith, and it will reflect how you interact with God as a Christian and also how you interact with other people.

And Paul's very interested in both these interactions in this letter in Philippians. So really our attitude, in other words, should be as Christians, I'm speaking to as Christians here, our attitude should reflect our identity in Jesus.

So if we call ourselves Christians, we say that we are identifying, we are followers of Jesus, therefore our mindset, our attitude should reflect that in our day-to-day living.

Now there's two extremes which may happen, which we might militant against or we might be prone towards.

If we have a similar identity to one another because we are in Christ Jesus, you may kind of react against that and say, well, I'm an individual, am I just a clone?

[6 : 22] I'm expected to come to church and say the right things and do the right things and stand up at the right time, sit down and think the same way as everybody else, so that we militant against the idea of being the same because we don't want to be the same.

We don't all want to be the same. On the other side of it, sometimes we struggle to cope with other Christians who are not like me. We want every other Christian to be just like me, to think like me, to have the same attitude towards me.

And so we struggle sometimes with the whole idea of are we conformist or are we individual? Do I live for myself as a Christian or am I supposed to look like every other Christian?

What is my mindset? Can I think for myself or do I simply need to conform? Do I need to jump through hoops and just be like everybody else because we're all supposed to be like Jesus?

Well, can I set a scene here in the chapter quickly by saying it's both and, okay? Paul speaks about both aspects, we're both individuals and we're both at some levels, as a rebel I struggle with this, but we are both, we're also conformists, but conforming to Christ, okay?

[7 : 47] There's a difference. But so there is uniformity. Our attitude in being like Christ means that in some ways as Christians there is a degree of uniformity.

There's a core to our lives and in our understanding of the text to which we will always return that all of us, all of us as Christians should reflect the same attitude on the mindset of Jesus Christ.

The same mind, like-minded in verse 2. Every tongue is to confess in verse 11, there's a corporate unified confession of Christ.

Yes, it's ourselves that are reborn, what we're born into Christ and our core being, and that means being transformed to be like Him and molded to become different from what we are to become like who He is in our lives, like Jesus.

So there's a clarity and there's a unity and a uniformity which is different from our natural broken and sinful self-identity that conforms to Christ.

[8 : 54] So we come together and there can be an element of conformity, of uniformity that's common to all believers. And one of the good things about that is that people can come from all over the world and we can go all over the world and we can immediately feel a bond and a unity with Christians who we've never met before because there's a sense in which we're going the same way and we're going the same direction.

So there is uniformity, there is, that's true. But there is also individuality as we seek to have the same attitude as Jesus Christ.

This passage speaks about, it says in verse 4 that each of you should work out not only your own interests but also the interests of others. It says your attitude, your individual attitude, it says that we should look out for our own interests, not only our own interests but we should look out for our own interests and of course most classically in verse 12, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

So there's throughout Philippians and throughout the word there's this affirmation of the individual, of the responsibility of each individual, of your uniqueness, of your value, of your worth, of your diversity, of your responsibility and of your mind and attitude.

So there is conformity but you will always have your own mind and I will always have my own mind and I will always have my attitude will always be different from your attitude no two Christians will ever be the same.

[10 : 31] And the challenge for us is to avoid extremism, to be people who resent any guidance and any uniformity at all costs, I'm an individual, I'll do my own thing as Christians.

But on the other hand to be people who judge other Christians who are different, who are not like me or who we think of a different attitude or a different mind because we think they should all be exactly the same and jump through exactly the same hoops as we've jumped through.

So in terms of the conformity and the individuality, what is the binding characteristic briefly this evening? Well, it's humility.

That's the binding attitude, that's the mindset that is summarized in this whole chapter in verse 8. It said in the middle of this great hymn of praise, this great early creed or confession of who Jesus was and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death.

So verse 5 says your attitude should be the same as Jesus. Verse 8 says the attitude is that he humbled himself, he became humble. And that's the brilliant attitude that comes out of this chapter.

[11 : 54] So humility is the one binding attitude that we should put into practice in our Christian lives because that is what is the attitude that was common to Jesus Christ, the same as Jesus Christ.

And of course the opposite of that is pride. In verse 3 we have these words, you know, do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

And that's what we're not, that's not what we're not to live as Christians. So selfish ambition, the word comes from the idea of working for hire, okay, became an idea of being mercenary, not really working because you loved it or working for any noble reason, but really just mercenary for self-gain so that you could get what you wanted and that's where selfish ambition and pride came from.

And that, without reference to God in our lives, that's our natural inclination. And it is the ugly twins that we have here. So we've got ugly twins, we've got selfish ambition and you've got vain conceit.

That is that groundless pride, that vanity, narcissistic sort of self-centered lords of our own lives.

[13 : 17] And we see other people as a threat, they may be their gifts or their talents and any challenges they make in our lives, we resent that. We resent being challenged, we resent being asked to consider who we are and what we're doing.

We're unable and willing to conceive we might be wrong in any area. Often we're really self-justifying and defensive.

We're not humbly willing to be conformed to Jesus or even to be individualistic in His name.

So that's the kind of opposite. But Christ's mindset in this brilliant hymn is expressed or summarized by humility. You know, verse 6, who being in the very nature of God did not consider equality with God, something to be grasped and so on.

Now this is a remarkable poem or creed. It's immeasurably deep. Verses 6 to 11, take time to consider it when it was used and recognized by the early church as setting out the person and the nature of Christ.

[14 : 32] It's full of mystery. It's not easy to understand God in Christ making Himself nothing. Can we understand, really understand the depth of that?

God becoming man, it all gives us an insight into His nature and to His character of humility that He was willing as a living God to empty Himself, taking the nature of a servant.

The King of Kings becomes a servant and what we have in that is a picture of His mindset, a picture of His attitude, that this is the God who is willing.

His desire is, His heart is a King of Kings becoming a servant, leaving glory and an eternal home coming into a stable from a throne to a galley, a banqueting hall to a desert.

From heaven to hell, the lawmaker becoming the lawkeeper, the author of life submitting to death, the one who's infinitely blessed, becoming a curse.

[15 : 57] And that mindset is one of humiliation in many ways, but humility unparalleled, voluntary and motivated by great love.

You know, if you have any encouragement, it says at the beginning of the chapter from being united with Christ, any comfort from His love, any fellowship with the Spirit, any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded.

It's a great challenge for us this evening to consider these things and be like-minded ourselves. That's what we are asked to be. We're asked to be like-minded to this Christ in terms of humility.

So as those who profess and take the name of Jesus Christ as redeemed people, if we understand ourselves and we understand ourselves when we think, when we're looking at maybe when we look in the mirror, do a bit of self-reflection, okay?

Do a bit of self-reflection this evening. When you think about your own life, think about the attitudes you have as you go about your day-to-day living.

[17 : 09] You will see and I will see reflected in what we see, our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. So we will begin to understand, if we do really understand or not, the gift of grace by the attitude of humility or pride that we show.

In other words, humility isn't a kind of pleasant by-product that's nice for a certain amount of people in the Christian life to consider. It's not an option. It's not just a desirable trait. It's not something we should aim for.

It's actually an essential mark of our identity. It is essential if we have understood anything about our own hearts and about Jesus Christ and who He is and what He's done and what He offers to us, then it's essential that we go, you go into your day-to-day life tomorrow.

And I go into mine humbly, as humble people. A proud Christian is an oxymoron, okay?

That word comes from two Greek words, meaning sharp and stupid. It means two things that are complete opposites, oxymoron, okay?

[18 : 22] A dead living person, a happy sad person, a stupid bright person, an oxymoron, two things that are complete opposites that shouldn't happen. There's something far wrong if as you examine the attitude of your life and mind that we find ourselves to be proud, independent, self-motivating, without the need for Christ, Christians.

It's moronic. It is not right for us to think that way or to live that way. We have misunderstood something. Okay, so far so good. We're nearly done.

Not got much more to do. But Paul wants to state that, reflect that in his teaching as we imitate Christ.

But he also wants to be practical in unpacking what it means and what it looks like then to have this attitude and to be like Jesus.

It's the outwork. It's Monday morning theology, in other words. What it means for us on Monday to understand and know and put into practice Jesus Christ in our lives that we've maybe heard about on a Sunday or as we've opened God's Word.

[19 : 36] And it's as radical as it gets. There's nothing more radical than the outworking of this attitude tomorrow. Because you will be asked and I will be asked to do something that we just don't do naturally.

Consider others better than yourselves. That's the outworking of understanding what it means to be a Christian.

It means that we consider others better than ourselves, middle of 3B. That's humility. That's the attitude of Christ worked out.

It's the opposite of our own natural mindset, which is to consider ourselves better than others. Please consider that for a while. There was a while, don't get it now, there used to be an advert on TV where you were a great, really amazing person.

You really loved someone if you're willing to give them your last role. That was a great mark of sacrificial service. You considered them better than yourselves.

[20 : 50] You would give them your last role. Now, that is kind of what's behind this, but we would give everyone our last role, our last spiritual biblical role, whatever that might be.

I'm not sure. But this complete internal revolution that we don't simply give to people and consider other people better than ourselves in an exclusive way, one or two people that we look up to, in other words, not just the one or two we look up to that we consider better or more gifted.

It's this attitude of life that says, wherever we are going, we value others as God-imagers, and we are not the center of our universe. God is, and therefore we treat other people as if we only have one role left and we would give it to them.

We consider others better than ourselves. Think about that as you face conflict in your workplace or you go back to work or as Rowan works with students and faces lots of different issues.

Your boss, your teacher, your students, those who are isolated, maybe those who you would not naturally consider them better than yourselves and serve them.

[22 : 22] That's what we're called to do. We're called like Jesus Christ to serve us. We're not necessarily called to like them or to be best friends with people, but we are called to love them and to consider them better than ourselves.

And that's a difficult thing to do. I take off my hat to you if you find that easy. You will find the Christian life good and easy to follow if that's the case.

But as we conclude, how do you do that? How do you consider other people better than yourselves? And I've just finished really by looking at verse 4.

How do we consider other people better than ourselves? Each of you therefore should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

So we consider other people better than what? By doing what? Firstly, if you break this verse down, by looking out for our own interests. It doesn't say don't look out for your own interests.

[23 : 27] It says each of you should look out not only for your own interests, but for the interests of others. So it's saying it's important to look out for your own interests. That is where we will first have the foundation to be humble and to consider others better than ourselves.

And this is getting back to your individuality and my individuality and our significance. You need to look after your own interests. And I need to look after my own interests.

Firstly spiritually, you know, we have that great and contentious verse, verse 12, my dear friends as you've always obeyed, not only my presence, but much more in my absence.

Continue to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Spiritually look after yourself. Work out the gift of salvation that you've been given yourself.

Don't resist the work of the Holy Spirit. Don't quench the work of the Spirit. Don't be unlearned. Don't be lazy. Know Him. Worship Him. Love Him. Nobody else can do that for you.

[24 : 32] Get to know Him. Listen to Him. Listen to Him. Think about Him. And be someone who works out your salvation. It's like working out. It's like someone giving me a gift to the gym, a gift membership and a trainer to go with it.

And you've got the gift. You've been given that. I can go in any time. It will be free. But if I don't go, if I don't use the gift, if I don't develop myself by going to the gym and using the expertise of the trainer, then it's of no value with.

And that's what it's saying about working out your own salvation. God has given us the gift of salvation and the Holy Spirit. But we have to exercise and train ourselves under Him and with His strength and with His cooperation.

Look out for our own interests. It's not just in kind of quote or pure spiritual terms, but also our life. Generally look after yourself.

Look out for your own, care for your family, care for yourself, enjoy God's creation, develop your gifts and talents, acknowledge Him and His pleasures, food and drink and society and culture.

[25 : 42] Give thanks to Him for these things and remember them as being significant in caring for yourself and looking out for your own interests.

Do so in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to Jesus and therefore also look out for the interests of others. That's how we consider others better than ourselves, is that we have a different mindset that we don't only look out for our own interests, but the interests of other words.

In other words, take that same interest you have in your own life and that same concern you have in your own life and that same love you have and apply that to other people as well.

Look out for their interests. Appreciate this dual responsibility, not just to look after your own self spiritually and in every other way, but also other people.

So you have a responsibility to consider other people spiritually, to consider their needs spiritually, like Timothy. I don't have time to look at Timothy as explained in this chapter, but Timothy was great and significant and important to Paul and Paul uses as an example, you know, Timothy, I have no one else like Him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare, for everyone looks out for their own interests, not for those of Jesus.

[27 : 09] Timothy was a great guy. He looked out for not just Christ in his life, but he looked out for other people, had a spiritual concern for them and not just Christians, but other people.

And I'm saying if you have a spiritual interest in other people, it will take you to places of risk. It will take you because you love people, you don't love them, you're not interested in them as evangelism fodder.

You love them and you'll go with them and you'll befriend them and it will take you into places of risk because you have a spiritual concern for them, just as it was for Jesus who went places and did things that everyone was horrified by.

He's a friend of tax collector and reciters, he eats with in the houses of prostitutes and everything else like that and he did it because he had this great spiritual concern for their souls and he lived humbly among them.

And that's what we need to do with our non-Christian and our Christian friends, you know, these early verses, tender, compassionate, trinitarian love and unity, not complaining, not arguing.

[28 : 18] These are how we practically have the same attitude as Jesus. This isn't all, it's not really optional stuff.

It's not just, these are really important. And do these things characterize our lives? Do we have the great concern for other people's lives, both spiritually and practically, as we also care for our own life, you know, that's what God wants from us.

Does it characterize your life, my life, our attitudes with family at home, you know, at work? Home is the place where it's exposed most, isn't it?

Our attitudes exposed most at home when we're relaxed, when we're not with anyone else. However, and that matters because we don't want to run in vain.

Paul says that in verse 16, I don't want to have run in vain. I did not run or label for nothing. We don't want to run in vain by being proud, individualistic, unwilling to conform to Jesus' people.

[29 : 28] We want like Him to shine as stars as we hold out the Word of life. God leaves you and leaves me in the dark spiritually.

And that then helps us to understand rejoicing and gladness in our life that spreads out to the community, to the family, and to the church.

And even people outside will be singing, probably not that particular song, but one day maybe they'll do one of these tours with Sam's or something, all with their headphones on, singing Sam's all down the high street, and him's and everything good.

So it's great, isn't it? Your attitude should be the same as Jesus Christ, who humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death and the cross. I didn't even get into that whole glorious section of the crucified Savior.

Do take time to consider and think about this great Redeemer who has made our life real. Let's pray. Father God, we ask and pray that we would really hear your Spirit convicting us to consider our attitudes, our mindset, that it's something that sometimes we feel is just set in stone as it were and we can't change, and it's just who I am.

[31 : 01] But enable us to remind ourselves that our hearts and our lives and our attitudes can be changed through Jesus Christ and through His greatness and through imitating Him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Be with everyone today as they go into their working week. We pray for them. We pray for the city. We pray for our church plants in Cornerstone and in Esk Valley and in Hadington.

Remember them today. Bless them, we pray. We pray that we'll be able to help Hadington with teachers and helpers for Sunday School and Cresce. We remember Christian heritage that will be in the building this week.

We ask that you would bless the opportunities they have to humbly share the truth of God with others who come in. We pray for the two performers and the stewards who come and sit in this building and rest and relax.

And we know that there are Jesus booklets that they can take and look at. We pray that you would be working in the hearts of some of them because it will be a long time, three weeks, where they're performing every night.

[32 : 08] Can be lonely, can be isolated. We pray for them and we ask that you would be close to them. We pray for Jared and Elo who leave us on Saturday to go back to the States.

We thank you for them. We thank you for the year they've been here, for the pleasure it's been to have them, for the way they've involved themselves so much in the work and in the life of the church.

And we pray your blessing on them as they return to the States. And we ask and pray your blessing on us now. And we also pray that you would be close to Rowan as she goes out to serve you with other really workers at UCCF.

We thank you for the great work they do. We pray that you would encourage them, that you would build them up, that you would supply for all her needs and for all of their needs. And that it will be a special and powerful year for the gospel in our universities and colleges for Jesus' sake.

Amen.