

# Philippians 2

# Good Examples

Introduction

Christ's  
Humility  
2:1-11

Visible  
Results  
2:12-18

Two Faithful  
Servants  
2:19-30

Conclusions



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# Introduction

- The **city of Philippi** was an official Roman colony, largely settled over the years by retired Roman soldiers - so citizens of Philippi were citizens of Rome
- The **church in Philippi** is the first church Paul planted in what we would today call **Europe**.
- It is the place Paul went after receiving his visionary **Macedonian Call**.
- Many believe the pastor there was **Luke**.
- If so, he may have been back there again, after accompanying Paul to Rome.

Important  
Topics in  
Philippians

What's in  
Philippians 2?

Key Verses

# Five Important Topics in This Letter

- 1. Joy and Rejoicing** - especially in the midst of trials and suffering. The words **joy** or **rejoice** appear **15x (5x in Phil 2)**
- 2. Partnership or Fellowship (*koinōnia*) in the Gospel** - Even when it is not mentioned, we can see that Paul felt a close bond with this church. They were true partners who shared in his ministry.
- 3. The Gospel Itself** – The word appears **9x** in this short letter, but **only 1 of those** is in this chapter.
- 4. A Right Attitude** - Focusing on humility, unity, a godly mentality.
- 5. The Importance of a Good Example** - Paul will point to several, including himself. This is the main topic in **Phil 2**.

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## What's in Philippians 2?

- In this chapter Paul sets **Jesus** before us as the ultimate example, who humbled himself for our sake.
- We are told to have **the same mindset** that Jesus had.
- Paul will also emphasize that our **faith** should lead to **visible results** in our lives.
- In that light, he points to **two personal examples** that the Philippians would have known.
- These were **Epaphroditus**, who was a part of the Philippian church, and **Timothy**, Paul's young assistant.

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# Key Verses

## **Philippians 2:12-13**

12 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.

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## Christ's Humility 2:1-11

- One way to ensure unity in the church is for Christians to take on **the attitude of Christ**. This will **complete Paul's joy**.
- Paul contrasts this with *selfish ambition or conceit*
  - (See also 1:17 where some proclaim Christ out of this).
  - This **self-focused mind** is defined by rivalry, the seeking of followers, or acting for one's own gain regardless of the consequences to others - thinking too highly of ourselves.
- Paul now describes **the mind of Christ** in terms of what is likely an ancient hymn.
- Notice the **V pattern**, in which Christ lowers himself and then is raised up by God the Father.

He Emptied  
Himself

From Alec  
Motyer

Taking on  
This Mindset

# He Emptied Himself

From Grant  
Osborne

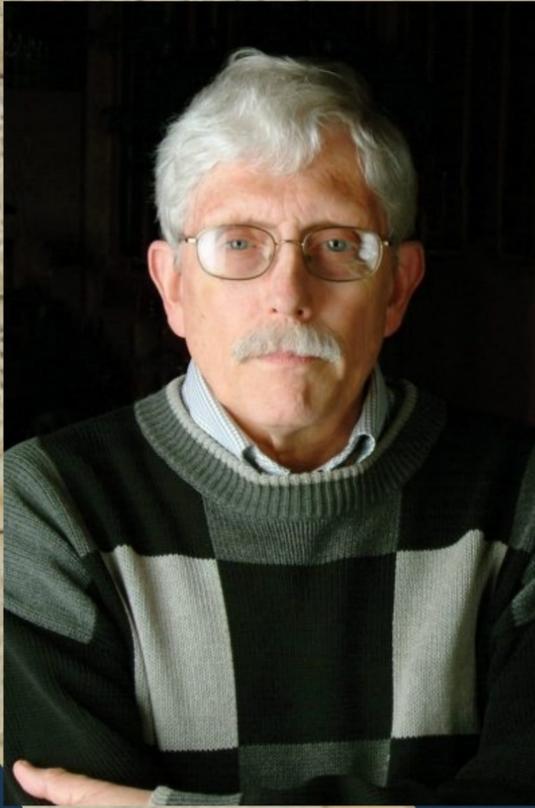
5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

**Down**

6 who, though **he was in the form of God**, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a 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**.

**Up**

9 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.



Grant R. Osborne (1942 - 2018)  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

The One whose very nature was divinity as God is the same One who at his incarnation took on the very nature of a slave, becoming the God-man - fully God and fully human - and then, as the God-man, serving all humanity as its slave who was willing to die on its behalf. There is no way that the human mind can fully grasp this concept; we must accept it by faith.

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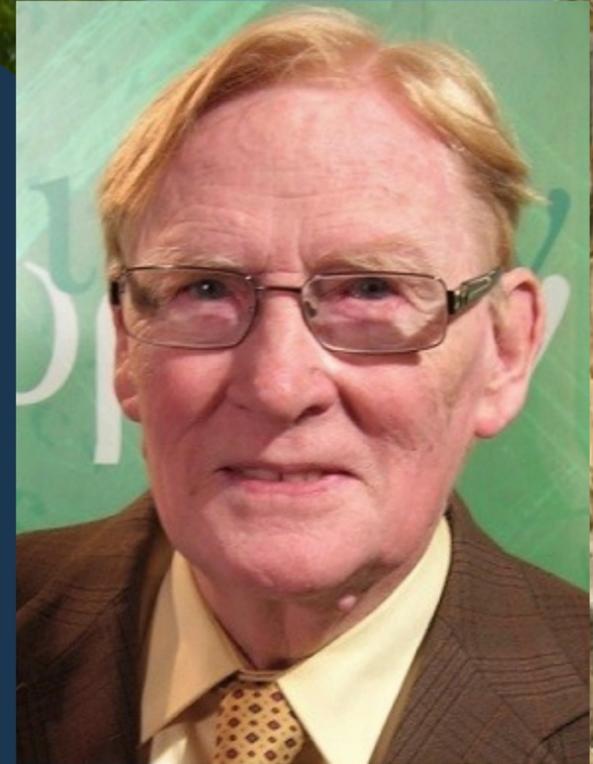
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The story of the cross of Christ is told in each of the four Gospels; the meaning of the cross is the preoccupying theme of the epistles. But the present passage uniquely unfolds the cross as seen through the eyes of the Crucified, and allows us to enter into the mind of Christ. We tread, therefore, on very holy ground indeed. We do well to remember that this privilege is given to us not to satisfy our curiosity but to reform our lives.



**Alec Motyer (1924 - 2016),  
Irish-English Bible Scholar**



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## Taking On This Mindset

- Paul could easily have simply told the Philippians to be more humble and consider others more significant than themselves.
- This makes sense all by itself.
  
- Paul, however, points them to Christ.
- Our motivation is not a "do this, don't do that" moralism.
- It is that God the Son came as a man and died a cruel, painful, and humiliating death for our sins.
  
- When we humble ourselves before others we are dealing with them as Christ dealt with us.
- In fact, we cannot go nearly as far as he did.



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## Visible Results 2:12-18

- The Philippian church did not have the extreme problems with disunity or flagrant sin that we saw, for example, in Corinth.
- Still, any church, any family, any two people may have to check their hearts as they deal with one another.
- Paul wants them to "shine as lights in the world" (v.15).
- The difference between us and the "crooked and twisted generation" in which we find ourselves should be obvious for all to see.

Key Verses

Shining as  
Lights

Paul's Life  
as a Drink  
Offering

# Key Verses

## Philippians 2:12-13

12 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.

Working Out  
What God  
Works In

## Working Out What God Works In

From D.A.  
Carson

- We can take Paul's (and the Holy Spirit's) word at face value.
- God is working in us to will and to do what is pleasing in his sight.
- When we cultivate godly attitudes and carry out godly actions, we are bringing to fruition that which God begins within us.
- Can you think of a greater encouragement toward godly living?

God himself is working in us both to will and to act: he works in us at the level of our wills and at the level of our doing. But far from this being a disincentive to press on, Paul insists that this is an incentive. Assured as we are that God works in this way in his people, we should be all the more strongly resolved to will and to act in ways that please our Master.



D. A. Carson,  
Trinity Evangelical  
Divinity School

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# Shining as Lights

- Think of the stars, which are in the sky during the day, but only stand out at night due to the darkness.
- We live in that environment of darkness.
- If we are "blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish," then our light will shine brightly for all to see.
- Specifically Paul tells the Philippians to "hold fast to the word of life."
- We need to do the same.



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# Paul's Life as a Drink Offering

"Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering" (v.17)

- Both the ancient Greeks and Israelites had a custom of offering wine as a sacrifice. We see this as early as the book of Genesis.
- In Paul's case we might think of him as offering up his life, shedding his blood, just as Jesus did for us.
- The Bible does not teach us to desire suffering.
- There is no merit in bringing suffering upon ourselves.
- At the same time, there is a rich understanding that suffering may be part of God's will for our lives.

1 Peter  
4:12-16

Acts  
5:40-42

## 1 Peter 4:12-16

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But **rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.** 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

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## Acts 5:40-42

40 and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.** 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

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## Two Faithful Servants 2:19-30

- The two brothers that Paul specifically mentions do not seem to possess extraordinary gifts.
- **Timothy** (*honoring God*) and **Epaphroditus** (derived from *Aphrodite*, so he was obviously a Gentile convert).
- There is nothing about their ministries, as Paul describes them, that immediately stand out as special.
- Precisely for this reason, we need to pay careful attention.
- The things Paul commends in a faithful coworker may not be the things that we, with our somewhat worldly standards, would easily notice.

From Warren  
Wiersbe

Timothy  
2:19-24

Epaphroditus  
2:25-30



Warren Wiersbe  
(1929 - 2019),  
pastor and Bible  
teacher.

Now [Paul] introduces us to two of his helpers in the ministry, Timothy and Epaphroditus, and he does this for a reason. He knows that his readers will be prone to say, "It is impossible for us to follow such examples as Christ and Paul! After all, Jesus is the very Son of God, and Paul is a chosen apostle who has had great spiritual experiences!" For this reason, Paul introduces us to two "ordinary saints," men who were not apostles or spectacular miracle workers. He wants us to know that the submissive mind is not a luxury enjoyed by a chosen few; it is a necessity for Christian joy, and an opportunity for all believers.



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## Timothy 2:19-24

- This little paragraph reminds us how highly Paul valued Timothy.
- Paul's strong expressions in vv20-21 are probably a bit exaggerated for effect.
- It is possible that other faithful friends like Luke or Titus were not with him at the time.
- A good rule of thumb, no matter our ministry, is to find your Timothy(s) and to try to be a Timothy to someone else.
- Paul's confidence in v.24 reminds us that he did not really expect to die just now.
- Likely, he made it back to Philippi only to be rearrested, retried and executed later.



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Epaphroditus  
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## Epaphroditus 2:25-30

- Poor Epaphroditus.
- The Philippians sent him to Rome to help Paul.
- He probably brought some financial support with him.
- But then he got sick. Really sick. And almost died.
  
- Somehow, the church back home heard about him and was worried.
- And Epaphroditus heard about that and he was worried about how they were worried about him.
- And Paul was anxious about all of this anxiety.
  
- So he sent Epaphroditus back with the best reference. (vv.29-30)



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- **Philippians 2** is chapter full of good examples.
- The ultimate example is Jesus, who humbled himself beyond anything we can ever do.
- Imagine the sweetness of fellowship we would have if we all took this attitude toward one another.
- Paul was ready to suffer and die for his faith if that was what came to him. Are you and I also ready?
- Finally, Timothy and Epaphroditus show us that faithful servants need not ever make headlines.

From Wayne  
Grudem

From Tony  
Evans

Homework  
Assignment

A Final  
Prayer

Although Jesus' human nature did not change its essential character, because it was united with the divine nature in the one person of Christ, Jesus' human nature gained (a) a worthiness to be worshiped and (b) an inability to sin, both of which did not belong to human beings otherwise.

Jesus' human nature gave him (a) an ability to experience suffering and death; (b) an ability to understand by experience what we are experiencing; and (c) an ability to be our substitute sacrifice, which Jesus as God alone could not have done.



Wayne Grudem,  
Phoenix Seminary

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God takes us through a developmental process so that even though things are dark around us, we are light. He's not telling us to become light. Rather, if God is in us, we are light. We're to be unhindered light, shining forth. Because when we are, it becomes clear that we're different than the world surrounding us.



Tony Evans, Bible Teacher  
and Commentator

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# Homework Assignment

There are three parts to our assignment for this week.

1. Meditate upon Christ's marvelous example of humility in **2:5-11**. (Pray that we would all have this mind.)
2. Read **2:12-13**, our key verses, daily in an effort to let their truth sink into your heart. (Pray them for our church.)
3. Pray about and take steps toward **finding your own Timothy**, and/or **becoming a Timothy** to someone else. You can also come alongside someone as an **Epaphroditus**, but try not to get sick.

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# A Final Prayer

Dear God and heavenly Father,

- We owe everything to Jesus and we praise him as being truly God, our Savior and our Substitute, who died on the cross for our sins.
- Thank you for loving us so much as to put together such a wonderful plan to save us from our well-deserved condemnation.
- Help us, going forward, to work out what you have worked into our hearts and minds. That we might will and work according to your good pleasure,
- Help us to follow the good examples you have given us,
- In Christ our Lord,
- Amen.

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