

Lookout mtn.conference 1973-05 Philippians

by Stan Ford

The sermon emphasizes the importance of harmony among the saints, which is found in Jesus Christ, and encourages believers to strive for holiness as stewards of the gospel.

Duration: 38:03

Scripture: Acts 1:1-2, Philippians 2:1-11, Philippians 2:17

Topics: "Christian Unity", "Humility Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of harmony among believers and encourages them to look out for the interests of others rather than just their own. He highlights the difficulty of practicing selflessness and sympathy but emphasizes that it is necessary for unity among the saints. The preacher then shifts to discussing the humility of Jesus Christ, who exemplified this selflessness by willingly taking on the form of a servant. He urges the listeners to have the mind of Christ and requests that they strive for unity and humility in their own lives.

Transcript

If any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any vows and mercy, Prove to ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind. Let nothing be done to slight or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equaled with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And, being found in passion as of a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, for things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God the Father.

May the Lord just add his blessing to these wonderful words of his own precious Word. You will have remembered that, in the past days, we have been considering just a little of the first chapter of this wonderful epistle. I reminded you that, first, we saw Paul the pastor, with a heart of love towards those for whom he was writing.

And, we thought that here was one Paul the pastor who was reflecting, as he thought of those that he had met, his brethren and sisters in Christ in Peloponnese. He thought of the problems they had to face, and as he looked back over his own life and over his experience there in Peloponnese, he writes the glorious words that make up the eleven verses of the first chapter, or the first eleven verses of the first chapter. Then yesterday, you remember, we thought of Paul, not the pastor, but Paul the prisoner.

And he was not now reflecting, but he was rejoicing. He was crying again and again, rejoice, and again I say, rejoice. Today, we're going a step further, and we're going to see Paul not now as the pastor, or now as the prisoner, but we're going to see Paul the preacher.

And in chapter two, we face one of the greatest, if not the greatest, sermon that the apostle ever preached. And he associates with it so many things. I'm going to suggest that here we find the preacher requesting.

And he wears the same for those Christians there in Pelopi, And again he says, And so as he, as a preacher, makes requests of those Christians in Pelopi, he has so many, many things to bring before them. I'm going to suggest that the first thing he does as a preacher, he encourages harmony among the saints. And I've got a strong feeling that this is one of the things that every one of us that do a little preaching ought to remember.

Quite frequently, and I say this with some shame, quite frequently one finds that the preacher does not encourage harmony among the saints, but it is often from the platform that strife commits murder, that here is a great preacher. And in those opening verses of this glorious chapter, it's on verses 1 to 4, he encourages harmony among the saints. And then you will notice, indeed, from verse 5 to 11, he is not now encouraging harmony among the saints, but he is exemplifying humility in the stranger.

He's daring to say, I'll show you what it means to be humble. I know not how often he had spoken with Peter. There were times when speaking with Peter, it seemed almost as though there had been hard words said.

I only know this, that Peter, when he wrote his letter, said, and be clothed with humility. But when the apostle writes to the church at Colossae, he says, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh. And here is one who is humble, and he exemplifies humility in the Savior.

But at first he encourages humility, I'm sorry, encourages harmony among the saints, and exemplifies humility in the Savior. Then he goes on, and he expects holiness in the future. And there, from verse 12 to 16, he speaks of the holiness that is expected of any man to whom the message of the gospel has been given.

And as a steward of Jesus Christ, there are things expected of them, and one of the things is holiness. Then he draws this chapter to its close, and I'm thrilled at this, it makes my heart rejoice. For then he exhibits helpfulness in the sermons, and he shows us the story, first of his own experience, and then of Timothy, and then of Ephesus.

And over all their ministry, he dares to say, tell me, is not this the very core of our ministry, that we are helpful to the faith? Firstly then, he encourages harmony, and what glorious harmony it is. He dares to remind us that there can never be real harmony among God's people until we understand that the source of harmony is in Jesus Christ himself. It seems to me that in verses 1 and 2, he reminds us that everything

we need is found in Christ.

Why he dares to say, if there be therefore, and it's not the if of doubt. Let's remember that, if there be therefore, and it is not the if of doubt, it is the if of argument. He says, if there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any communion, fellowship of the Spirit, if any prayer, if any vows of mercy.

He's daring to say that, as we think of Jesus Christ, all that you and I must express to others is found in him. If there be, and it comes, what may I change it for? It is not the if of doubt, it is the if of argument. As there is consolation in Christ, as there is comfort of love, as there is communion, fellowship of the Spirit, as there is care, vows of mercy, it's all found in Jesus Christ.

Brethren, sisters, if there is one thing I am absolutely confident of, that whatever the Bible desires of me, I can always see it, is Jesus Christ. A long time ago at the Bristol conference, as we were going through those opening verses of the first chapter of Acts, and we were thinking of he who began both to do and to teach, I passed a comment like this. As we were thinking of the blessedness of the Savior, I dare to say that when I think of him, is it not true that there was no crossness in his life? There was no complaint on his lips.

There was no change in his loyalty. And the more we speak of him, the more we realize that what the Shumanite woman said long ago is true. He's altogether loving.

And there is not a man or woman who knows Jesus Christ who have an excuse at all for everything that we need for harmony among God's people, we find it available indeed. Consolation in Christ. Come now, when a dear brother or sister says something harsh of you, is it not a joy to your heart to realize that they said things harsh about my Savior? Isn't it? Any comfort of love? Oh brethren, when sometimes we feel in the cold, when sometimes you go to a service and you walk out and you find yourself almost alone, is there not, oh brethren, is there not comfort in love when we realize that he loves us? But I'm not always prepared to accept excuses like that, you know.

Folks say, well I went in and no one talked to me. I went home years ago, I learned all sorts of lessons from my wife, you know. I learned lessons when she intended to teach me.

But I learned lessons in just an ordinary way, as all married men do. And I returned some years ago now. After being on a permit, I returned home.

My wife was caring for the children and so she wasn't with me. And I walked in and she said, well, did you enjoy it? I said, enjoy it? You know, there wasn't anyone shooting at me. And do you know what she said? She sighed me up as I was this high, although she's not much bigger herself.

She said, oh, you didn't shake hands with a goblin. Cut two ways, isn't it? Cut two ways. So don't let's be over-concerned when sometimes we feel in the cold.

But let's find our blessed comfort in the love of Christ, that he loves us. Communion, fellowship of the Spirit. Some of the greatest things I've ever met have been brethren and sisters that have been isolated from others.

I made reference, was it yesterday or the day before, to Jehovah's Witness. Apparently a day when one was going through the missionary list. And by the way, I hope you brethren and sisters were praying for

the missionaries this morning.

Let's see, it was the end of Korea and Japan today, wasn't it? I didn't read his missionary list this morning, though. But nevertheless, as we were praying for the missionaries today, and I couldn't help but think again of the folks that I'd met in different parts of the mission today. And I thought of that little girl, away there in the heart of Angola.

Among thousands, if not millions, of Africans. Lovely folks, but of a different social strata, of a different background. And there was one great girl with no one to commune with.

If there was not such a thing as the communion of the Spirit, what is there? Praise God, it's there, it's available for us. Everything's found in Christ. I say as we go further, and he speaks with vowels of mercy.

He speaks of the heart of mercy, the care that comes from Christ, the day-by-day he cares for. This is what he's daring to say to you and me. Brethren and sisters, we must have harmony among the saints, because everything that's necessary is found in Jesus.

Our consolation, our comfort, our communion, our care, it's all found in him. And having spoken of the fact that everything's found in Christ, then he dares to say, and every one of us should delight Christ. Verses 2 and 4. Be like-minded, he says.

Love him. Do nothing to strife and vainglory. Oh, I say, here are two things in it.

Strife, not the first and damned group. Vainglory comes from us. And God dares to say, don't you do anything for the sake of strife or vainglory.

He dares to say that we should be loving and of like mind. He dares to say that we should be selfless and sympathetic. He says, why, in lowliness of mind, let you esteem others better than themselves.

Selfless. Oh, brethren, how difficult it is. Sympathetic.

Look not every man on his own things, but on the things of others. It isn't a matter of just esteeming others better than ourselves, but it's looking on other people's things as well. It is not only being selfless, but it is being sympathetic.

And this is the way harmony comes in the church, isn't it? And brethren, sisters, when you and I came to know Jesus Christ, well, I can't speak for you, let me speak for myself. When I bowed my knee and took Christ as my saviour, I didn't realise the claims Christ was going to have on my life. Like most of us, I expect, I just wanted to get rid of the consciousness of sin.

I understood so little, I just bowed my knee and said, God, I must penetrate me. But as the days have slipped by, one has learned it, that our good friend, Brother Harry, has been emphasising so ably day by day that it isn't just what we know, but what we do. He dares to put his hand upon us and say, esteem others better than themselves.

Oh, how difficult it is to do that. But having encouraged harmony among the saints, then he exemplifies humility in the saviour. Now you all, all of you, read, quoted, preached from, listened to sermons on the next verses that are contained here in the second chapter.

As he thinks of the wretched saviour who is being in the form of God, I find out, in every country I've visited, and it's been my joy in less than some thirty more countries to have told of Christ, I have found that of the Lord's Day morning, there are three portions of the word of God which I use maybe more than any other. The fifty-third of Isaiah, the second chapter of Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, and, as we saw, Lord's Day morning, the fifth chapter of Revelation. I've heard them ranged in a dozen and more different languages.

And upon God's people, letters of the Spirit draw on their tongues. And if the Spirit of God, as he has, has used these verses so frequently, why, surely this morning, our hearts will be attracted to this man who dies. And again we look at them.

I've nothing new to say about them. You wouldn't expect me to have anything new to say about them. I trust when they come, though, with a very freshness of the Spirit, as we see humility exemplified in Christ.

Would you notice, first of all, that here is the Saviour on the throne, he's confirmed. On the earth, he's controlled. On the cross, he's consistent.

But on the throne again, he's compensated. On the throne, he's confirmed. Hark unto the words of Holy Witch, Who being in the form of God, Taught it not to paint a big glass back, To be equal with God.

As we were thinking a little in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, Of the One who is none other than the Divine Son of God, As we were pondering together again, Something of the wonders of the Trinity, Does it not thrill our hearts to realize That the One of whom we're seeking Is the One who is none other than God over all, Blessed forever. Unto the pond, he said, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. Yet, as we look back in the eternity that's past, Of old times worshipped by angelic beings, The upholder of all things, Yet he was concerned with you and me.

I will let God look down to see if there were any that did understand. The equal world doomed and damned and passed on its way To the caverns of endless remorse. Yet there was one who could say, Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of me.

I delight to do thy will, O my God. Oh, the wonder of it all, That he ever could look down the avenue of time And see you and me and be concerned with us. Oh, God, help me to appreciate that.

And he didn't think it a thing to be grasped at, To be held on to, to be equal with God. But if we see him on the throne, concerned on the earth, We see him controlled. And this is mystery of mystery, That he who in the beginning created all things, For all things were made by him, And without him was nothing made that was made.

This is that which Paul dares to say to the saints, Away with Corin. He took unto himself the form of a servant. He's in control.

How many times do we read words like these in holy writ. Not only do I delight to do thy will, O my God, But my meat is to do thy will. Here in the beginning of his days, As a boy he said, wish ye not, That I shall be about thy father's business, As the one who at the end of his days Said, not my will, but thine be done.

I'm not sure, because I don't keep an account Of what I say and where I say it. But I have a strong feeling that when I was last with you Some three years ago, we were thinking In the 13th chapter of Hebrews Of something of the wonder of this one. And I reminded you that here was a Christ Of whom it could be said,

and of him alone, The only man that ever lived, Who finished his life where he began it, And began it where he finished it.

He started off, That holy thing that shall be born of thee. But isn't it easy to say of a baby, Thou holy thing? Is not that the chance? What chance is what they tend to say At the end of the journey? And what is it's chance? He offered himself without spot to doubt. He started as a boy during the will of his father.

But I'd heard hundreds of boys As they'd come to me and said, Uncle Stan, I'd like to be about the father's business. Maybe they'd not use those words, But that's what they said. And I'd put my hand on their shoulder And say, God bless your son.

And that's where it begins, But that's not where it ends. What chance is at the end of the journey That they're going to say, I want to be about my father's business. Christ it was, not my will, That lined it up.

At the beginning of his journey, He starts his ministry. And he says to those as he looks upon their faces, Blessed and merciful. But anyone can say that before they've found you out.

What do you say when three and a half years have passed? When those same people have lived in the same home And walked the same streets And listened to you again and again and again. What do you say then? What did he say? Oh, hallelujah. Father forgive them.

They know not what they do. Where he started he began, And where he started he finished, And where he finished he began. Oh, this is the wonder of it all.

That in here we see it as he who is the servant. The gospel of Mark. He the servant of Jehovah.

But if we see him on the throne concerned And upon the earth controlled, We see upon the cross consistent. He became obedient unto death. Oh no, please, brothers and sisters, Do not, do not translate these words Into one isolated truth.

It is true that he became obedient And therefore went to the cross. But this was the will of the father. That is the outcome of his obedience.

He went on to kill. But it's more than this, is it not? That here is one who became obedient to death. Death laid his hand upon him And he obeyed the claims of death And he went through it.

He became obedient unto it. And I thank God for that. That death had no control upon him.

He willingly and humbly placed himself Under the power of death. That you and I might know the power of life. Oh, glory to his name.

What a savior we have. What manner of men and women Ought we to be with him. What manner of men and women.

But then, bless God, But if we see him on the throne, Concerned. If we see him on the earth, Controlled. If we see him on the cross, Consistent.

We see him back on the throne. And glory to his name. He's compensated.

Wherefore God has highly exalted him. Give him a name which is above every name. That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

Oh, the wonder of it all. The wonder. I thank God for this.

I bless God that as we think of him We are thinking of one who lived. For never let us forget there could be no harmony in the church Unless the head was alive. There can be no great picture of humility That he who died was raised from amongst the dead.

And I'm glad of that. You know, I like to tell young folks That they took our blessed Lord and they put him in a tomb. They rolled a stone over the tomb.

And they put a seal on the stone And they sort of stood a soldier by the stone. But hallelujah! No stone or sealed soldier could keep him there. For upon the grave he arose.

He had been loveless. Been loveless. I was telling a crowd of youngsters some little while ago When they'd asked me in a school to speak on the eminence of the resurrection.

I don't think any of the youngsters had any doubt about it. It was the schoolmaster who did. But nevertheless, we went along and spoke on the eminence of the resurrection.

And I dare remind these young folks That they took one of every one of the kingdoms, didn't they? They took a stone, the mineral kingdom. They took a seal, the vegetable kingdom. They took a soldier, the animal kingdom.

They took one of every one of the kingdoms And they said we'll keep the king of kings in the tomb. But hallelujah! He defeated them all. Wherefore God finally exalted him.

Giving him a name which is above every name. Oh, what a saviour we've got. What a saviour.

And when you think of it And then you remember his humility. Oh, oh God, teach me, teach me humility. But if we see exemplified in the saviour humility Then we remember that this preacher He not only encourages harmony amongst the saints And exemplifies humility in the saviour But now he expects holiness in the stewards.

He's going to speak of them as stewards Of those that hold forth the word of life. Those to whom have been given the blessed pleasure Of the glorious message of the gospel. So he speaks to them of their holiness And he says first of all That holiness, holiness depends on the work of Christ.

That's the first thing he says. Now I hear a number of folk talk about holiness And I'll let you into a secret. I would rather a man show me holiness than talk about it.

My experience, if it stands for anything, has been this. That the people who speak most about holiness Are the people who so frequently know so little about it. They have not learned what we've already seen.

One of the sources of harmony in the sense Is of seeing the other better than themselves. But here the apostle does dare to say That holiness depends upon Christ himself. For he says this is God with what condition? Oh, work out your own salvation, he says.

Prepare yourself for it. Let's do this salvation. He won't forget, of course, that he's not saying Work for your own salvation.

He's saying work out your own salvation. And you can't work anything out unless it's in, first of all. Well the Lord puts it in and he says Now you work it out, and it's God who works it in you.

The source of anything that is for the glory of heaven Is found in Christ. And then he dares to tell us that our holiness Not only depends upon Christ But he says our holiness displays the will of Christ. If our holiness depends on the work of Christ It's God who works it in you.

Then our holiness displays the will of Christ. As he says in verse 15, be blameless And harmless. Blameless and harmless.

Oh, pleasant sisters, I must leave you To interpret what that means. It hurts me too much. If one of us would stand before another And say I am completely blameless Any one of us would say we're harmless.

But this is that which is required of us That if we are going to be stewards of the world Then surely we must be those who are blameless and harmless. But then he says holiness not only depends upon the work of Christ And holiness displays the will of Christ He dares to say that holiness declares the word of Christ Holding forth the word of life. Sir Brandon? The longer I find myself in the service of God The more I realize That it is the word of Christ That brings liberty to men and women.

That I am responsible both in my gospel preaching And in my ministry That I shall present to men and women the word of the Lord Not what I think about it, but the word of the Lord. And I have a desire that if there are Christians I want to teach them And if they are unconverted I want to reach them with Jesus Christ And I can neither teach nor reach unless The word of God is declared. And holiness declares the word of Christ Not what we think of it, but it is faithful and true To that which it's enwritten.

And then he goes on And he dares to say this He dares to say as a preacher That he not only expects holiness in his spirit But he exhibits helpfulness in his sermon. I think that's wonderful, don't you? And would you notice he uses three distinct things to show helpfulness He uses first of all sacrifice And then he uses service And then he uses suffering As that which can be helpful to others First of all sacrifice, and he speaks a little himself And he dares to say that my sacrifice is helpful to the faith Yea, says verse 18, yea if I be offered If I be offered, I will rejoice And then he goes on And for the same cause also do you joy and rejoice with me If I be offered, if I be sacrificed If something happens to me, then if it's for the glory of God I rejoice And my rejoicing in my sacrifice It enables you to rejoice also What a remarkable thing That as a servant of God All that we say and do should have this before us Not only the glory of Christ But the blessing of the church And then having spoken of his own sacrifice, and he speaks of it so briefly He speaks of himself being offered, and then he goes on and speaks A greater length of timidness That's always the sign of a man of God, isn't it?

He speaks of others more than he speaks of himself All he witnesses, he tells folk what Jesus means to him But he speaks of others And here having spoken in things of sacrifice that he made Now he speaks of service that Timothy has made And he does tell us three things it seems to me about Timothy He says first of all that Timothy was a true man In verse 21 all speak their own Not the things of Jesus Christ Is he not saying, and behold Timothy up in contrast That here is a man that is true Others may speak the things of themselves But he speaks the things of Christ Brethren, sisters, if you and I are going to be servants of the Lord in any capacity Believe I am not just speaking now of being a preacher I wonder why it is, I wonder why it is That amongst us we have some idea that the greatest gift is the gift of preaching Or how many young men, just long, that they might be able to show their spirituality by preaching Please remember this That the Bible teaches, as we've seen already through the ministry of our brother The priesthood of every

believer And it is this that has kept me amongst the people I am amongst And really that's the only reason that's kept me amongst them But a realisation of the priesthood of every believer That Peter said you are, not we are, Paul and Apollos and Peter But you are, you are And is it wonderful as holy priests we have spiritual sacrifices As we've been reminded to offer to God And is it glorious as royal priests We go out to represent Him Who has called us by His name to God and to His glorious light I dare suggest that this is the highest, this is the highest of our spirituality That as priests we might offer sacrifices first to God Then as royal priests, as holy priests to God As royal priests we must go out and present Christ to the nation And I want a deep appreciation of the faith You know Lord's Day morning after we have remembered the Lord here I turned to the dear sister that was sitting next to me I don't even remember, I don't know But I turned, if you were the person you'll know what I said I looked at you and I was thinking again this morning As so often I do of the Lord's Day morning I was thinking of that lovely verse from the 48th chapter of Genesis Remember when Joseph said to his brethren Go, tell my father of all my glory We tried to do that Sunday morning, didn't we?

We tried to tell the Father of all His glory Our brethren and sisters, don't let's forget this That our remembrance to God's Day morning is not a funeral service It's the Lord's death we show, the Lord's death We show it until He comes We're there that we might present our appreciation of Christ to the Father as our worship This is the height of spirituality, appreciating Christ For the Father seeks us such to worship But nevertheless if we do rise that we might be a servant of the Lord in a different capacity It's still true that whether as servants of the Lord in the ordinary things We may be true and seek the things of Christ And then he says he's not only true but don't you forget no man's true until he's tested So he says he's tested in verse 22 You know the truth, you know the truth of him For as a son he hath served with me in the gospel This is it And then he says something more Thank you the Lord's just giving me a real hit this morning And then he says he's tender, he says he's one who cares This is the servant of the Lord Tender, do we care for one another?

And then having brought before us the fact that service the servant is helpful to the Lord Then he dares to tell us that a path would guide us Not now in his sacrifice and not now just in his service But in his suffering is helpful to the Lord He dares to tell us the story of this man He says so many wonderful things about him we haven't time to look at them Just to say this, he says first of all of him, verse 30, that he was a brother Isn't that nice? That covers a lot doesn't it?

A brother, I like that Did you notice as brother Harry was ministering to us this morning Of course you did Did you notice the words of the saviour When they turned to Mary who'd anointed him And they began to criticise her for what purpose is this great Do you remember the words of Jesus Let her alone Was that good? Amen Isn't it wonderful? And I'll let you in on a secret If I really thought you were my brother I wouldn't be willing to listen to someone else talking back to you would I?

I have an earthly brother, if you came to me and said something about our bill I'd put my hand on your shoulder and I'd shake you and I'd say hey, that's our bill He was a brother He was a companion in labour, I like that I like that, a companion in labour Do you know what he did? Well I know he brought from, he brought from Oh I know that we're going to look at that in the last chapter So I mustn't go into that too much But there are other ways he laboured Isn't it wonderful to be a companion in labour?

He says he was a fellow soldier Shall I be carried to the skies in flowery deadlies While others walk among the pines and tell true bloody things He was a soldier He says of him that he was a messenger and a minister Oh this is who he was and what he suffered He suffered sickness And he suffered sorrow, he was

full of heaven Yet how helpful to the saints And he who suffered was he who supplied Their lack of service
As a preacher, this is what he says He says brethren, sisters in Philippi Whatever else you do Whatever
else you do Let me encourage harmony among you Be of one mind Whatever else you do Let me
exemplify humility to you And you let the mind of Christ be a new author Whatever else you do Remember
I expect holiness from you Remember that this only comes to the faith Whatever else you do Exhibit
helpfulness in your complete activity That men and women may look and say There's a church of God in
Philippi May it be so, he says Love of God is greater to us than the tongue can ever tell It goes beyond the
highest star and reaches to the lowest hell Number 39 Let's stand and sing it together And we'll ask our
brothers to commit it to the Lord

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