

# SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 18.05.25

**PREACHER: PS NATHAN BEAN**

IN LIGHT OF THE CROSS

## BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

***BEING [HEART], THINKING [MIND] & DOING [BODY]***

*[A PERSONAL REFLECTION]*

**Conviction of a Disciple:** The cross of Jesus Christ is not just a past event but it affects and shapes our lives today, demonstrating how we should live and act differently from the world. By focusing on the cross, our behaviour is transformed, and we are reformed by the renewing of our minds, countering the absorption of worldly culture. This transformation enables us to become more like Jesus, and live humbly, overcoming issues like selfish ambition and the pursuit of 'vain glory'.

### OVERVIEW

The sermon series is titled "In the light of the cross," focusing on how believers should live now because of the cross. Paul writes to the church in Philippi, a letter described as his most affectionate. This church, however, had problems, such as two leaders, Euodia and Syntyche, fighting.

### ACTION

**Step 1:** Reflect: Consider the four resources Paul highlights in Philippians 2:1-4: Are you united with Christ? Are you comforted and strengthened by his love? Do you have common sharing in the spirit? Do you have any tenderness and compassion (a transformed internal world/feelings)?

**Step 2:** Commit: What is one area of your life that you can surrender to God today, laying your weapons down and no longer fighting for yourself, and allow Jesus to fill your cup instead?

**Step 3:** Act: This week, intentionally focus on Christ and the cross as the way to become more humble, rather than focusing directly on trying to be more humble. Live from a place of being filled to overflowing with Jesus' loving presence, empowered by union with Him, strengthened by His love, and through the common sharing of the Spirit.

# THOUGHT

**SCRIPTURE:** PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11, JOHN 13:1-17

The church in Philippi was planted as described in Acts chapter 16. Paul, after being prevented by the Spirit from going to other regions, had a vision of a man from Macedonia asking for help and travelled there. In Philippi, finding no synagogue, they gathered by the river with women. There, Lydia, a seller of purple from Thyatira, heard the gospel and she and her whole family were saved. Later, Paul cast out a fortune-telling demonic spirit from a girl. This angered her slave owners, leading to Paul and Silas being beaten and put in the inner stocks. While imprisoned, they sang hymns, leading to an earthquake, open doors, and freed prisoners. The Roman jailer, about to take his own life, was stopped by Paul, heard the gospel, and he and his household were saved. The Philippian church leadership team consisted of Lydia the businesswoman, the formerly demon-possessed girl, and the Roman jailer.

This diverse background illustrates that churches are primarily messy and that believers, though saved, still have a way to go in changing their behaviours. Before addressing specific issues like the fighting we see in chapter 4, Paul highlights four crucial resources believers have in light of the cross: union with Christ, comfort from His love, common sharing in the Spirit, and tenderness and compassion.

Tenderness and compassion (splachna) refers to a transformed internal world, where the seat of deep emotions, traditionally understood in the 'gut', is changed by Jesus, giving new sensitivities and enabling relational resolution. Paul also addresses negative behaviours like selfish ambition (hyper-fighting, love of fighting) and vain conceit (kenodoxia, or 'empty glory'). He explains that we often fight or are sensitive because we are trying to fill a cup of 'vain glory' with worldly affirmation and achievements, which ultimately leaks out. This 'vain glory' is often based on what others say or do, leading to hypersensitivity and fighting to preserve honour.

The solution presented is to live in humility, having the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Jesus, being God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but humbled himself, taking the form of a servant, obedient even to death on a cross. Humility is consistently presented positively in the New Testament. We are called to value others above ourselves.

However, the way to become humble is not by directly focusing on humility, but by focusing on Christ and becoming more like Him. Jesus is the ultimate example, demonstrating humility by serving his disciples in ways such as washing their feet. When Jesus fills our cup, we can live from a place of being filled, lay down our weapons, and serve others humbly without needing anything in return or needing to defend ourselves.

# DISCUSSION

*[A GROUP REFLECTION]*

1. How might the four resources that Paul lists (union with Christ, comfort from love, sharing in the Spirit, and tenderness and compassion), help us in navigating difficulties in our relationships and community?
2. What does the concept of 'vain glory' mean, and how does the pursuit of it affect our behaviour and relationships? How does focusing on Jesus, overcome our need to pursue 'vain glory'?
3. Jesus is presented as the ultimate model of humility, and it's suggested that we are to focus on Jesus rather than focusing on being humble. What does this mean for how we approach our personal growth?
4. Considering the messy background of the Philippian church members (Lydia, the demon possessed girl and the Roman jailer), how does this perspective help us understand and approach challenges within our own church community?

# PRAYER

Lord,

We thank you for the Cross, and the ever present weight and power it carries today, transforming our lives. We ask that you would help us to draw near to you and rely on what you have given us - unity with Christ, comfort from your love, the common sharing of your spirit, and a transformed internal world of tenderness and compassion. Fill our hearts with your presence, and help us to recognise and lay down our pursuit of selfish ambition and 'vain glory'. We don't want to strive for humility in our own strength, but instead focus on You, Jesus, knowing that as we become more like You, we serve and live humbly. Enable us to live from a place of being filled by Your love and living differently in light of the cross.

Amen