

[1]
Mirrors for the Son
Philippians 2:12-18
October 23, 2016, Jeff Germs

In the passage Pastor Steve spoke on last week (Philippians 2:1-11) the Apostle Paul wrote that we are to have the humility of Christ by thinking of others before ourselves. Adrian touched on this theme the week before too. Nothing could be more antithetical to how we naturally behave as human beings.

[2]

We do not naturally think of others first. If we did, the newspapers would be filled with stories of the good things people sacrificially do for each other instead of what we read about every day. Take any newspaper on any day of the week in any country in the world and what you will see, for the most part, is selfishness and pride at the centre of almost every story, with the exception a very few feel good stories that come out now and again.

All that is happening in the Middle East right now has its root in self-centred pride. The circus we call the American Presidential campaign is rooted in self-centred pride. Every evil thing that has ever happened in the history of humankind stems from the sin of pride. It is at the core of every human atrocity that has ever happened since the fall in the Garden of Eden.

When I take groups to Israel we usually go to the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem. That is a museum that every person should try to go to, if possible, to see the terrible things that human beings are capable of doing.

Paul said in Philippians 2:1-11 that we, as Christ followers, need to humble ourselves in the same way Christ did, who gave up all of his heavenly prerogatives for the sake of the world. He didn't wait until we deserved it.

[3]

The Bible says in Romans 5:8 that, ***“Even while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”***

While we were still sinners he showed his great love for us. He didn't wait for us to prove ourselves, or to smarten up. He didn't wait until we deserved his love. He didn't give us the cold shoulder until we came grovelling to him. He loved us even when we didn't deserve it. That is the same kind of love God is calling us to. It's the same kind of love that called Jesus to the cross to die for a people who were utterly undeserving.

This is a way of life that is totally unnatural to us. We do not naturally love people who don't love us. We are not naturally nice to those who are not nice to us. We do not naturally look out for the needs of others before our own needs. We look out for number one. That is our first and most natural response.

[4]

And because it's our natural way **we need a spiritual extreme makeover of our hearts.** We need the Holy Spirit to do in us what we cannot naturally do ourselves. We need the risen life of Christ to live through us.

I need a volunteer. I want you to hold this flashlight and aim it at my heart. You are representing Jesus. I am going to hold a mirror. I am representing the Jesus-follower. Turn out all the lights. Christ is the light. My job, as a Jesus follower, is to walk in the light. We are mirrors that reflect his light. We are not the light. We are simply a reflection of the light of Christ.

[5]

So, if we were to put this in planetary terms, we would be the moon reflecting the light of the sun. **The moon does not have light on its own.** It mirrors the light that the sun emits. That is what Paul is saying in the passage we are looking at this morning. He is saying, wherever we are, whatever we do, whatever we are thinking, we should be reflecting the character and image of Jesus.

[6]

We are to mirror the light of the Son of God. That is our job in the world. More and more when people look at us they should be able to see Jesus in us; his character expressed in the fruit of the Spirit. That is the main message of the passage we are going to look at this morning.

[7]

Philippians 2:12-18 (NLT)

¹² Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

[8]

¹⁴ Do everything without complaining and arguing, ¹⁵ so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. ¹⁶ Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless.

[9]

¹⁷ But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy. ¹⁸ Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy.

Paul repeats what he said in chapter 1:27 that the Philippians should behave in a way that honours Christ whether or not Paul is with them.

[10]

¹² Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important...

God's timing is very interesting. I have just been away for a few weeks. I am so thankful that you graciously allowed me to take some time to get rested up so I can come back into the fray of ministry. For three and a half years at CRBC we have been preaching the same message. God's goal for us is that we would be transformed into the likeness of his Son, that we would learn how to love each other better so others would see Jesus in us, so they in turn would find Jesus. That is why we are here. There is no other reason. That is our mission and it influences everything we do and everything we say, "No" to.

I say God's timing is interesting because this passage came up the first Sunday after I had been away. It fits in very much with the context of Paul's message in this passage. Whenever I am away there are certain people, a very small group, who think there is a leadership vacuum, and they decide they are going to stir up trouble and whine and complain. These same people do it periodically when I am here, but more so when I am gone. It's a very small group of people who, by their actions, over and over again, show that they have little or no interest in the Gospel of Jesus. The way they behave shows that their only interest is in preserving their particular brand of church.

It's interesting, things have not changed in two thousand years. Paul had the same kinds of problems with, overly religious, spiritually blind people in his day too. These are people who do harm to the name of Jesus. That is why he was so harsh with them. They chase people away from the church.

These are the same kinds of people Jesus continually butted heads with. Most of you would not believe the kinds of things these people say behind my back and behind the backs of the other leadership in the church. Jesus had some very harsh things to say about these kinds of people.

If you are sitting here thinking, "I wonder if he's talking about me," and you are feeling overly guilty about it, It's likely not you. When *you* hear things like this from God's Word, you sense the Holy Spirit speaking to you and you make the necessary changes. That is great. I'm not talk to you right now.

The kinds of people I am talking about do not feel guilt or shame. Their consciences have been dulled by continually turning a deaf ear to the voice of Jesus. They have so many blindspots that they do not see the wake of damage they leave behind with their self-righteous, judgemental attitudes. These kinds of people do not seem to grow. They don't change except to get harder, and more bitter and resentful. They continually push people away from the kingdom of Jesus.

Some of you might be sitting here right now thinking, especially if you are new here, "Boy, this pastor is mean." Read Matthew 23 about some of the things Jesus said about these kinds of people. Believe me, I am being very easy on them. I am here to tell you that we will no longer tolerate that kind of behaviour at CRBC. That is not who we are any longer.

Jesus said we are to love even our enemies. There are some people, for what ever reason, who seem to see the church leadership as their enemies. I have no idea why. It has been going on for years and years. But, we want you to know that we love you. And our prayer for you is that God would open your eyes so you would see what is really happening in your heart and change and join us in the mission of Jesus to reach Campbell River with his love.

That is enough for that rant. Paul is simply saying the church in Philippi should not slack off in the progress of their faith when he is away from them. He is in prison and he doesn't want them to slide in their faith journey. **If God's goal for us is that we look more and more like Jesus and grow in our capacity to love him and others, we will not get there by coasting.** We will not coast into maturity. It won't happen. Paul continues,

[11]

12...Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.

Now, as we have said many times, Paul is not saying we are to work **for** our salvation. We cannot earn our way to heaven. We cannot pay God back for what he has done. That is an impossibility. **There is nothing I can do to make God love me any more than he already does, and nothing I do will make him love me any less.** He loves me completely and unconditionally.

[12]

Ephesians 2:8–9 (NLT)

8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

We do not work **for** our salvation in anyway.

[13]

Most English Bibles translate verse 12 of Philippians 2 as, ***"work out your salvation..."*** That can be a bit confusing. What could Paul mean by ***"working out your salvation"***? I think the NLT's rendering is clearer. It says, ***12...Work hard to show the results of your salvation.***

Paul is simply building on what he has just said. Don't coast in your faith. Don't think you will mature just by going to church on Sunday mornings. Or by studying doctrine or theology. It ain't going to happen. Nobody becomes a disciple of Jesus simply by saying "the sinner's prayer," or being baptized, or coming to church on Sunday mornings, or even by reading or studying the Bible. It takes discipline and training to grow and get stronger. That is what discipleship is all about. When Jesus told us to make disciples who follow him he did not mean that we should just gather a bunch of people who agree on certain doctrines and then argue about them with others who might have a different point of view.

[14]

We've looked at these passages several times before, but we need to remind ourselves of these things over and over, because we are prone to forget. So, here are a bunch of Scriptures relating to this.

In Luke 6:40 (NLT) Jesus said,

40 Students are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher.

That is the goal. Jesus is the Master teacher, and we are his apprentices. Our job is to cooperate with his Spirit and allow him to change our character to become like him. So, you gotta ask, how are you doing with this?

[15]

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NLT)

24 Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! 25 All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. 26 So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. 27 I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should.

Why is discipline and training necessary? Because we do not naturally live the way that God requires. I don't. And neither do you.

[16]

1 Timothy 4:7-10 (NLT)

7 Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. 8 "Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come." 9 This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it. 10 This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God...

[17]

Hebrews 5:14 (NLT)

14 Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

What does maturity look like, according to the writer of Hebrews? It is someone who lives in the right way because of being trained by Jesus. Like Steve said last week, that is the meat. It's not necessarily simply someone who knows their Bible. The truth needs to be backed up by right action, in one who has been transformed by the Word through the Holy Spirit.

[18]

Hebrews 12:11-13 (NLT)

11 No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. 12 So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. 13 Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

So, very clearly here, Jesus, and Paul, and the writer of Hebrews all tell us that there is something more to Christian maturity than simply being old in the faith, or knowing our Bibles, or going to church. A mature Christian will look like Jesus. That's what our Lord said in Luke 6:40, ***"The person who is fully trained will look like his teacher."*** Who is our teacher? Who are we training to become like? Jesus, of course.

[19]

Therefore, Paul says in Philippians 2:12, ***"12... Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. 13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.***

Notice in **verse 13** that even our **desire** to do this comes from God. We don't naturally move towards God or want to live in the way he wants us to. The miracle is that when we come to faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our hearts, and if we allow him to do so, he will chip away at the old character and transform us into Christ's likeness. The Old Testament prophets spoke of the day in the future when God would write his law on the hearts of his people and they would actually want to live in obedience to him.

[20]

Jeremiah 31:33 (NLT)

³³ “But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day,” says the LORD. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

We are in that day right now. Because of the miracle of the resurrection we have Christ in our hearts giving us the desire and the power necessary to allow Christ to live his life through us. However, this is not something that is passive. It takes discipline and hard work as we cooperate with the Jesus and enter into his training program as he works in our hearts transforming us to be like him.

[21]

Notice the cooperation between the Spirit of God and us in 2:13. ***¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.***

Do not imagine we can just go on passively living our lives and expect that God is going to transform us without any effort from us. That is not how God ordained that it should work. We work out the salvation that is already ours. We don't work **for** the salvation, but we work **out** the salvation that he has freely given us through the death of his Son.

In my younger days I had the idea that the Christian life was simply about believing in the truth that Jesus died for me. End of story. That intellectual assent made me a Christian, I thought, and my job, after saying the sinner's prayer, was to go to church every week and get spiritually pumped up so I could make it to the next Sunday, unscathed by the world. And then manage my sin between Sundays. If someone ever asked me what difference Jesus made in my life, other than the great truth that he saved me, I didn't know what to say.

[22]

What difference is Jesus making in your life right now? Can you see him at work? Can you see him transforming your character so you look more like him? If you can't see a change in your character from day to day, week to week, year to year there is something wrong. There is a disconnect somewhere. Each day we have to choose, am I going to let Jesus rule my heart and actions, and even my thought life, or am I going to continue being the boss?

[23]

Notice in verse 13 also that **God changes us, not for our good pleasure, but for his**. Wait! What? I thought he was making me into a beautiful person so I'd be popular and successful. God works in you, and even gives you the will to live for him and to cooperate with his Spirit, not for your good pleasure, but for his. Remember, it is not about us. We are not the main event. Jesus is the main character in our story and everything we do should be to bring glory to him.

[24]

And the way we do that is to ***¹⁴ Do everything without complaining and arguing, ¹⁵ so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. ¹⁶ Hold firmly to the word of life...***

¹⁴ Do everything without complaining and arguing... Does anyone feel a twinge of guilt right now? How many of us can honestly say we do all things without **complaining and arguing**? Are you aware of

your attitude? Are you the kind of person who tends to find something wrong, or complains when things don't go your way?

[25]

Did you know that **it's impossible to grow when we whine and complain?** It can't be done. As long as my focus is on poor me, and the fact that things are not going my way, I will not grow.

Instead, when things don't go our way, or when life gets tough we should ask God how he wants us to grow through it so he can be glorified. How can I respond to the difficult situation I am in so I reflect the character of Jesus and so he is made famous through me?

[26]

Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Every single one of us here is in process, and we are either choosing to cooperate with Jesus as he refines us, or we are choosing to ignore him. There are only two ways, and if others cannot see a change in our character as time goes by, then we are simply in the group that is ignoring him. The follower of Jesus, while waiting for his return, is actively working with Jesus in what he wants to do in and through us. Malachi 3:2-3 says that God will sit as one who refines silver.

I have heard that the refining of silver is a delicate process. The temperature has to be just right. If it's too low the process of refining won't even begin. If it's too hot, the silver will be damaged. So, how does the silversmith know for sure that he's getting it right?

First, refining silver requires enormous concentration. The silversmith needs to watch carefully as the heat does its work on the molten metal, never taking his eyes off the action for even a moment. Then, timing is everything. If he leaves the silver on the heat seconds too long its value will be seriously decreased.

So, how does the silversmith know that the molten silver has been heated for the correct time, and at the optimum temperature? The answer is that there comes a magic moment, a sort of sweet spot, when the silversmith can see his image reflected in the liquid metal. Then, and only then, is it time to take it off the fire.

That is what Jesus does with us. He is the refiner. As we go through trials, suffering, pain, difficulties, temptations, and testings, we are being refined. We will be changed and transformed into the image of Jesus if we cooperate with him.

[27]

That's why Paul said in the final verses of this passage that it didn't matter what the end result of his imprisonment was. Even if he should lose his life he would rejoice. And he asked the Philippians to rejoice with him, no matter what happens, knowing that God will use it for his good purposes.

Philippians 2:17-18 (NLT)

¹⁷ But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy. ¹⁸ Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy.

God has plans for each of us and it is something more than the mundane lives that we think are important. He has bigger plans for us than a big bank account and a life of ease when we retire. He wants to take our lives and all the experiences, the pain, the history, the joys, our gifts, and everything that has shaped us and use it for His glory. He wants us to be mirrors of his Son. And as we get involved in this process with Jesus our lives will make sense. He will use us for eternal purposes. That is a very exciting journey.



Mirrors for the Son
Philippians 2:12-18
Week of October 23rd, 2016

Objective of this study: To let the Holy Spirit transform us so we reflect the image of Jesus.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Ezekiel 36:22-28** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

Welcome

Can you remember the last thing you complained about, either out loud or in your thoughts? Share it if you are brave enough.

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word (30-45 minutes)

- What stood out from the sermon?
- Read Philippians 2:12-18
- Divide up the following passages in smaller groups or pairs. Luke 6:40; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 1 Timothy 4:7-10; Hebrews 12:11-13; Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 5:14-16. How do they relate to Philippians 2:12-18? What else stands out to you?
 - Look at Philippians 2:12-18 in your smaller groups as well. What are Paul's main points?
 - Come back to the larger group and debrief your findings.

Work (30-45 minutes)

Sermon Quote: "Every single one of us here is in process, and we are either choosing to cooperate with Jesus as he refines us, or we are choosing to ignore him. There are only two ways, and if others cannot see a change in our character as time goes by, then we are simply in the group that is ignoring him. The follower of Jesus, while waiting for his return, is actively working with Jesus in what he wants to do in and through us."

- There were two illustrations in the sermon; one about a light and a mirror and one about how silver is refined. Recap the illustrations.
 - Can you Jesus working in these ways in your life? Explain.

Sermon Quote: "Are you aware of your attitude? Are you the kind of person who tends to find something wrong, or complains when things don't go your way? Did you know that it's impossible to grow when we whine and complain? It can't be done. As long as my focus is on poor me, and the fact that things are not going my way, I will not grow. Instead, when things don't go our way, or when life gets tough we should ask

God how he wants us to grow through it so he can be glorified. How can I respond to the difficult situation I am in so I reflect the character of Jesus and so he is made famous through me?"

- Do you have an awareness of your attitudes? How has Jesus been working on your attitudes? What you like to see him do?
- The first step is to become aware of our attitudes and choices. This is not easy because they can be blind spots. Ask God to reveal these to you. This week practice becoming aware of your attitudes, responses and choices.

○