

AMITY BIBLE CHURCH

“To Know God and To Make Him Known”

SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

— April 15, 2018 —

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SERMON: Saved to Serve

TEXT: Philippians 2:3-4

INTRODUCTION

Like me, many of you are in a season of life where God is causing and allowing you to feel desperate and even depleted. It's like the very wind has been knocked out of you. In a general sense, based on His Word, you know God is wanting you to dive deeper in love with Him and to depend wholeheartedly on Him; but you lack clarity about the specifics of His plan for your life. So much has transpired that you now have questions concerning even the details of which you thought you were certain. May I suggest that you and I are right where God wants us. Again, I want to suggest we are right where God wants us!

Where are we, exactly? I'm glad you asked. We are at a spiritual crossroads.

Where are we headed? To a greater realization of the promises and presence of God.

How will we get there? By taking on the form of a SERVANT.

DEFINITION OF “SERVANT”

Philippians 2:3-4 HCSB

SERVANTS are people who consider others as more important than themselves, and who genuinely look out for the interests of others the same as they would their own interests.

In a very practical sense, we have been SAVED TO SERVE. Serving God by serving others will lead us to deeper knowledge and experience of God, and to more authentic community. But we must serve with the right POSTURE, the right PASSION, the right PURPOSE, the right PARTNERS, and the right POWER. Drawing from the lives of Jesus, Paul and saints at Philippi, I will lift from the text *5 Imperatives* that I think will help us become the caliber of SERVANTS God intends us to BE.

FIVE IMPERATIVES

- I. Serve with a posture of humility (mindset)
 - a. ***God-honoring service derives from Christ-like humility.***

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- b. 1:22-24 “Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don’t know which one I should choose. I am pressured by both. *I have the desire to depart* and be with Christ—which is far better—but *to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.*”
- i. Paul can encourage the believers at Philippi to have a humble attitude because he himself had adopted a humble attitude. In humility, he considered these believers as more important than himself. Paul decided that he would set his mind on doing what’s in the best interest of others over what he desires personally.
 - ii. An important question to ask ourselves when we are faced with choosing between pursuing our own selfish desire and pouring ourselves out for someone else’s benefit, we should choose the latter. That’s what Paul chose countless times, and in a moment, we will know the inspiration behind his humble service.
 - iii. Paul did not think of his service to the Philippians as burdensome or bothersome; he embraced his call to serve with joy, grace, and compassion. Listen to his words in 2:17 and 3:1.
 1. 2:17 “But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, *I am glad and rejoice* with all of you.” JOY
 - a. 3:1b “To write to you again about this is *no trouble for me* and is a *protection [safeguard] for you.*” GRACE & COMPASSION
 - b. This verse helps give context to Paul’s words in 1:24 “...but to remain is more necessary for you.”
 - c. What Paul wanted to protect the Philippians from is spelled out in 2:2-3.
 - iv. The reason for Paul’s humility was not that he had nothing about which to boast; in fact, just the opposite was true according to 3:2-11, which would be a wonderful study for those of you interested in doing that kind of thing. I do, however, want to point out Paul’s conclusion in these verses. Beginning in 3:8b, he admits, “Because of [Christ] I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith.”
 1. Are you willing to become a servant like Paul, giving up everything, considering it all filth [dung], to know Christ and join in His service? Or, have you become so important and so attached to your stuff that in this moment, in your heart of hearts, you would not consider loosening your grip on what you have achieved or even inherited. Is the surpassing value of knowing Christ and being found in Him not worth freely surrendering ALL to His service and glory?
- c. Let’s look for a moment at the source of Paul’s inspiration. He was inspired by the example of Christ. Look at 2:5-8...I want to highlight a few principles I think will help us.
- d. 2:5-8 Christ’s humility...
 - i. Jesus, through God, did not use His divine nature for His own advantage. Instead, He emptied Himself by becoming a servant. In becoming a servant, He was looking out for our interests.

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1. It has been difficult for scholars to understand exactly what Jesus emptied Himself of, but we certainly know He did not divest Himself of divinity or divine attributes.
 2. Millard J. Erickson suggests, “...it is equality with God, not the form of God, of which Jesus emptied Himself. While He did not cease to be in nature what the Father was, He became functionally subordinated to the Father for the period of the incarnation.” He goes on to say, “The union of the two natures meant that they did not function independently. Jesus did not exercise His deity at times and His humanity at other times. His actions were always those of divinity-humanity. This is the key to understanding the functional limitations which the humanity imposed upon the divinity. For example, He still had the power to be everywhere (omnipresence). However, as an incarnate being, He was limited in the exercise of that power by possession of a human body. This should not be considered a reduction of the power and capacities of the Second person of the Trinity, but rather a circumstance-induced limitation on the exercise of His power and capacities. Picture the following analogy...” (*Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 238).
- II. Serve with passionate obedience (model)
- a. ***The cost of discipleship is not only about what we give up in following Jesus, but it is also about what we take on in modeling Jesus. We empty ourselves and take on the form of a servant, just as he did.***
 - b. 1:20 “My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness [courage], Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.”
 - i. The goal of passionate obedience is to highly honor Christ in your body...doing the right thing at the right time with the right motive.
 - c. 2:8 “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on the cross.”
 - i. This represents the passion, or suffering, of Christ. Christ shows us that the ultimate example of passionate obedience in service is death.
 - ii. While we may not have to die physically as Christ did, we are to die daily to our selfishness and pride, and live daily doing good works in the interests of others.
 - d. 2:12b “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”
 - i. At the end of the day, applying your salvation to your daily life is your responsibility, and one that should not be taken lightly.
 - ii. Serving is the way we apply our salvation because serving is the way Jesus secured our salvation.
- III. Serve with the purpose of the gospel (mission)
- a. ***We are saved to serve, and we are serving to save!***
 - b. Paul’s primary mission was that the gospel was proclaimed and advanced... so that people could experience saving faith as well as grow in their faith...
 - c. 1:12 “...what has happened to me has actually resulted in the advancement of the gospel...”
 - d. 1:13 “my imprisonment is in the cause of Christ...”

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- e. 1:17 “the others proclaim Christ out rivalry [selfish ambition, competition, opposition, jealousy, antagonism], not sincerely, seeking to cause me anxiety...”
 - f. 1:18 “...whether out of false motives or true, *Christ is proclaimed.*”
 - i. You may encounter people who are not sincere in their service, and the gospel is not their true purpose for serving. Be like Paul and let God judge them and even use their ignorance/pride for His purposes.
 - ii. Sometimes we want to focus on people who aren’t right so we can feel better about our own shortcomings or accomplishments. But, be careful that your motives aren’t just as impure as theirs.
 - g. 1:25-26 “Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that, because of me, your confidence may *grow in Christ Jesus...*”
 - h. 1:27a “Just one thing: *live* your life in a manner worthy of the *gospel of Christ*. Then whether I come and *see you* or am absent...”
 - i. The main thing Paul was concerned about for his fellow servants was that they would live out the gospel, not only when he was present, but also in his absence.
 - 1. How many of us only serve when the pastor or the people are watching? Make certain you are honoring Christ by serving others even when your efforts aren’t seen by many or by someone you want to impress.
 - 2. We must serve with the purpose of the gospel.
- IV. Serve with partners in faith (motivation & multiplication)
- a. You’ve heard the saying, ***“If you want to go fast, then go alone. If you want to go far, then go together.” Partnerships are essential if we want to make significant progress.*** Christ knew this, so He chose twelve disciples to be with Him, and from them came many more.
 - b. Paul was serious about his mission to serve others, so Paul served with partners in faith...
 - c. 1:5 “I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, because of your *partnership in the gospel* from the first day until now.”
 - i. Having partners in faith increases your joy...
 - d. 1:7b “...you are all *partners with me* in grace, both in my imprisonment in the defense and establishment of the gospel.”
 - i. Partners in faith help you endure when times get tough...
 - e. 1:14 “...the brothers in the Lord have gained confidence from my imprisonment and dare even more to *speak the message* fearlessly...”
 - i. Having partners in faith can benefit the partners in that they grow in their personal faith and their confidence in serving...
 - f. 1:27b “...I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, working *side by side for the faith that comes from the gospel...*”
 - i. There are no big I’s and little U’s...we all work side by side. We must tear down hierarchy in the Church...we all are servants, co-laborers, and friends.
 - g. 1:30 “...having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I have.”
 - i. Partners in faith share our burdens. We can identify with them and they can identify with us; we all are in the struggle together.

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- ii. It is comforting to know I am not alone. When I ride solo, it is easy to feel like I’m the only one out here getting persecuted while trying to please Christ; but that is not the case at all.
- h. 2:19-23 Summarizes Paul’s relationship with Timothy
 - i. 2:20-22 “For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests; all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know his proven character because he has *served with me* in the gospel ministry like a son with a father.”
 1. I am striving for my partners in faith to describe me the way Paul characterizes Timothy here.
 2. Let’s all strive to be servants of proven character as we genuinely care about the interests of others. Service for the sake of personal gain directly contradicts the meaning of service as the Bible defines service. Yet, there are pastors who lead or start churches to gain followers to advance a cause that is not exclusively the gospel. Thank God for grace and mercy. Now that we know better, we must do better.
 - i. 2:25-30 Summarizes Paul’s relationship with Epaphroditus
 - i. Paul calls him brother, coworker, fellow soldier, messenger, minister...
 - j. 4:3 “Yes, I also ask you, *true partner*, to help these women who have contended *for the gospel* at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the book of life.”
 - k. 4:14 “Still you did well by sharing with me in my hardship.”
- V. Serve with the power of God (miraculous)
 - a. ***Power belongs to God! Is there anything too hard for God?***
 - b. 1:6 “I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you *will carry it to completion* until the day of Jesus Christ.”
 - c. 1:19 “...I know that through *your prayers* and the *help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ* this will lead to my deliverance.”
 - d. 1:28 “...not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of destruction for them, but of your deliverance –and this is from God.”
 - i. You and I don’t have to serve in our own strength; God is backing us because we are serving on His behalf.
 - e. 2:13 “For it is God who is working in you, *enabling you* both to desire and to work out His good purpose.”
 - f. 4:13 “I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

CONCLUSION

People **who genuinely look out for the interests of others the same as they would their own interests** are people who serve with

- a posture of humility
- passionate obedience
- the purpose of the gospel

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- partners in faith
- the power of God

How will we know when we are serving like Christ and Paul? When we can say to our friends what Paul said to his friends in 4:9... *“Do what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.”*

As we close, I want each of you to consider what service opportunities are currently available to you. When you really think about it, the possibilities may seem limitless, and perhaps overwhelming. But take a moment to think about and write down a few things you can do right away to serve by looking out for the interests of others.

Perhaps the Lord has already been speaking to your heart to...

- 1) Host someone in your home who needs a place to live temporarily
- 2) Help someone develop their gift or talent for the glory of God
- 3) Be a companion to someone who is elderly or homebound
- 4) Visit and pray for the sick
- 5) Send a care package and friendly note to a college student
- 6) Help a single parent by volunteering to babysit, provide a meal, or run errands
- 7) Lead or participate in a crisis relief effort for a family or community
- 8) Adopt a child
- 9) Go on a mission trip or support one
- 10) Use your gifts and talents in a church ministry