



**IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**SERIES: TOGETHER FOR THE GOSPEL**  
**SCRIPTURE: PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18**  
**DATE: JUNE 7, 2026**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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Can you think of a time in your life when you were extremely happy about something, but you had no one to share that happiness with? Maybe you had a genius idea but couldn't explain it to someone. Or maybe you had a personal achievement as you practiced a skill at a sport, but no one witnessed you do it. A person can certainly have joy when they are by themselves, but there is an element of joy that is best expressed and experienced when it is shared with others. When you are happy and someone else is happy with you, then joy is multiplied and rejoicing is sweeter.

This truth will be the focus of our lesson today. But as you might expect from our previous lessons, joy will be most sweet when it is shared around the *gospel*. Notice this—the sweetest of joys will be when two or more people rejoice in the spiritual progress of all those involved. Notice the final words in our Scripture passage today as Paul says, “Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial offering of your faith, *I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me* (Php. 2:17-18).

## Text

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### Philippians 2:12-18

*<sup>12</sup>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, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

*<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or disputing, <sup>15</sup>that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup>holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup>Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. <sup>18</sup>Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*

## Explanation

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### Work Out Salvation with Fear and Trembling

We will remind you once again that as Paul writes this letter, he is in prison. We learned previously that His outcome is uncertain. Yet while Paul waits, he does not despair. Instead, he has expressed that he had an eager expectation and hope that he will be delivered as well as that he will have fruitful labor among the church once again (1:19, 24-25).

Considering the possibility that he would not return to them, Paul had instructed them earlier in his letter:

*“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not being frightened in anything by your opponents.” (1:27-28)*

As we turn to our text today, we see that Paul has reason to view the Philippians positively in case he cannot return. Evidently, in his absence from them, they have established themselves as obedient. Paul says, “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.”

Paul expects the church to live out the gospel. Earlier Paul told them to live worthy of the gospel and he now tells them to work out their salvation. Working out one's salvation does not mean that salvation comes through one's works, as if salvation is *earned through* one's behavior. Rather working out one's salvation means that *works arise out of* salvation. Salvation comes by faith alone. Ephesians 2:8-9 perhaps says it best, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast.” In essence, Paul is urging them to live out the gospel that they have already believed. He is urging them toward obedience.

The attitude behind working out their salvation is with fear and trembling. It is interesting to point out that previously Paul told the Philippians to not fear their opponents (1:28). But here, they are instructed towards an appropriate fear of God. Indeed, fear towards God is appropriate and is different than fear before people. Notice these differences:

- Fear towards people will prohibits obedience, but fear towards God will promotes obedience.
- Fear towards people thinks suffering is for our harm, but fear towards God realizes that suffering has been granted to us by God (1:29-30).
- Fear towards men will cloud our understanding of God's good pleasure, but fear of God embraces God's good pleasure even if it means temporary pain (2:13).

Joy and fear are often seen as opposites. But this is not necessarily true depending on who and how we fear. There is an appropriate fear that enhances our joy if it is a fear of God.

An appropriate fear of God begins as we realize that he is holy. Because he is a holy God, he cannot be in relationship with those who have sinned neither can he let those sins go unpunished. An appropriate fear of God for the Christian means that we understand that the holy God lives within us. Knowing this, we should not allow sin to remain in us, for if sin does then we are subjecting ourselves to the Lord's discipline and threatening the Lord's holiness. Having this fear, we are motivated to pursue obedience in all aspects.

## **Without Blemish and Shining Bright**

Paul appeals to the church that they should progress in their spiritual maturity. His desire for them is that they might “be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.”

Again, Paul desires that on the day of Christ, he “may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.” Paul had put so much heart and soul into the Philippians that his joy was wrapped up in whether they would walk with God or not. If they did walk with God, then Paul would be joyful. If they did not, then he would experience sorrow to a certain degree.

Paul knows that walking with the Lord is not a simple easy task. Paul admits that it is challenging, but nevertheless he sees it as a real possibility. The Philippians are to be vastly different than the world around them. Where the world is described as “crooked and twisted,” the Philippians are to be not only blameless, unstained by the world, but also positive influences. Paul tells them that they are to “shine as lights in the world.” Two specific ways are mentioned that they can shine as lights to the world.

First, they will be accomplishing this task by doing all things without grumbling and complaining. Indeed, grumbling and complaining are two ways that really kill joy. Have you ever known a person to constantly grumble or complain, who is a pessimistic, or negative about everything? For those who grumble and complain, it is almost as if they take joy in tearing others down, proving themselves right, or oddly enough rejoicing in despair. Those who grumble and complain are rarely content. Nor do they have faith that things will get better. Often, they wish for others to accomplish for them, what they are unwilling to accomplish for themselves.

Second, the Philippians can shine as lights in the world by holding fast to the word of life. “Holding fast” means to firmly and unwaveringly believe the gospel message and its implications. Despite living among a crooked and twisted generation where temptation to fit in is prevalent, the Philippians are to hold fast and progress in their understanding of the gospel. Continuing in their belief of the word of life, will allow them to be blameless and shine as lights in the world.

## **Rejoice with Me**

Paul fought hard so that the Philippians might know Christ and walk with him. Already Paul has said that the Philippians would “complete his joy” if they

imitate Christ's humility toward one another (2:2-5). Indeed, Paul's joy is wrapped up in the Philippians' spiritual growth. Therefore, there is no extent that Paul is not willing to go through to see them grow. He has labored hard for the church, and he does not want his labor to be in vain.

Paul gladly and happily exhausts himself on behalf of the Philippians. Paul says, "Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all." Paul happily spends his life coming alongside the Philippians even if it means harm to himself. But as much as Paul is willing to offer his life on their behalf, he wishes that the church might also happily rejoice in the labor that Paul is providing. Paul closes this passage by saying, "Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me."

You see, although hard, Paul rejoiced still knowing that his labor could produce spiritual growth among the Philippians. But joy for someone else where it is not reciprocated is not complete joy. Joy is best when it is mutually shared. Paul urged the church to be glad and rejoice with him as well.

## Discussion Questions

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- Practically, what does it look like to be joyful in God and at the same time be fearful of God?
- What is the difference between working *for* your salvation and do you are working *out of* your salvation?
- How can we discern whether our motivation is driven more by fear of people or reverence for God?
- Paul said to *work* out one's salvation and yet he also says for it is God who *works* in you. How do you think these two things relate? Which do you feel more: that you are working or that God is working?
- In what areas of life do adults most commonly struggle to trust God's "good pleasure" and purposes?
- Do you consider yourself a pessimistic or an optimistic? Do you think it is possible to enjoy grumbling and complaining?
- Think about this for a moment, when you grumble whom do you most often grumble towards: God or people?
- In terms of your relationship with the world, would you say that you attempt to avoid the world so that you might be blameless OR that you shine as light in the world so that you might show yourself to be blameless?

- How can believers remain spiritually distinct from the world without isolating themselves from it?
- What are some subtle ways Christians begin conforming to the world without realizing it?
- Would you be willing to undergo hardships for another person for only the *chance* they would benefit?
- Looking back over your life, who has “poured themselves out” spiritually for your benefit?

## Conclusions or Applications

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### PROUD OF YOU

This passage is yet another example of how Paul loved the Philippians church so deeply. He was proud of them and certainly wanted them to know that. He affirms them for how they had conducted themselves for the gospel. At the same time, he charged them to continue to work out their salvation, strive for blamelessness, and to shine as lights in the world.

You can sense Paul’s eagerness. He had given so much of himself to them. He does not want his labors to be in vain. Rather he wants to rejoice in them and to share his joy with them. He has been proud of them and want to continuing being proud of them.

It is amazing to think about how a simple phrase like “I’m proud of you,” can increase joy, motivate endurance, and bond relationships. In many ways, this passage feels like Paul is saying that very thing.

Perhaps you can think of someone today that you can encourage by telling them that you are proud of them. You can relay that you have much joy when you see them striving to live out the gospel.