

Born Again people work out Philippians 2:12-16 FBC Canton Sunday am August 23, 2026

Introduction: We are born again by believing his promises, not by performance.

God did all the work of saving us, therefore we can do nothing to lose that salvation.

We simply responded to his work!

All the penalty of all our sin was removed all at one time!



Unfortunately, we confuse being born again with living born again!

God removes the penalty of our sin at one moment, then he removes the power of sin throughout the rest of our life with trials.

This process of having the power of sin removed from our lives is called sanctification=trials.

NOW MAY THE GOD OF PEACE HIMSELF SANCTIFY
YOU COMPLETELY AND MAY YOUR WHOLE SPIRIT
SOUL AND BODY BE PRESERVED BLAMELESS AT
THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
1 THESSALONIANS 5:23

You will never stop being sanctified until you go home to be with the Lord.
This requires perseverance!

Therefore, having been
justified by faith, we have
peace with God through our Lord
Jesus Christ, through whom also
we have access by faith into
this grace in which we stand,
and rejoice in hope of the
glory of God. And not only
that, but we also glory in
tribulations, knowing that
tribulation produces
perseverance; and perseverance,
character; and character, hope.
Now hope does not disappoint,
because the love of God has
been poured out in our hearts
by the Holy Spirit who was
given to us.
Romans 5:1-5

God is going to make us live holy lives. It is not optional...but the question that has to be answered and many of you asked it how does it happen?

- I. **God sanctifies us through working out our salvation. V. 12** We are not allowed to pursue comfort, we must work out our salvation!
 - a. **We are saved by promises and made holy by obedience to the Holy Spirit. V. 12**

**THE STEP OF OBEDIENCE ALWAYS
PRECEDES REVELATION. THAT PATTERN IS
EVIDENT ALL THROUGH THE SCRIPTURE.**

- CHUCK MISSLER -

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- b. **Surrender our will to God's authority=fear and trembling.**
 - 1. Salvation's grace should never be taken advantage of! Romans 6:1

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Romans 6:1-2

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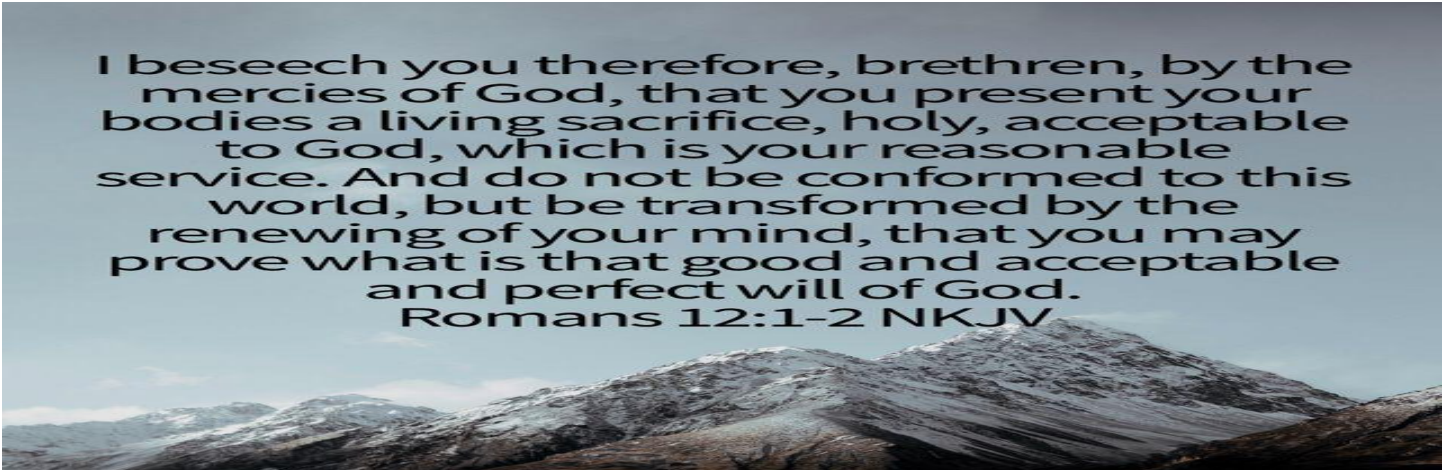
- c. **If we don't surrender we will be living against God's will. V. 13**
 - i. **We live to his preferences, not in loopholes.**
 - 1. **It does not please God to complain and argue. V. 14**
 - a. **Complaining means to grumble in a low tone.**
 - b. **Arguing means doubt-filled dispute.**
 - 1. That is what this crooked generation does.
 - 2. These actions and attitudes belong to the old life, not the new life.

3. When you live this way, you are still living in the power of sin.

c. The glorious results! V. 15-16

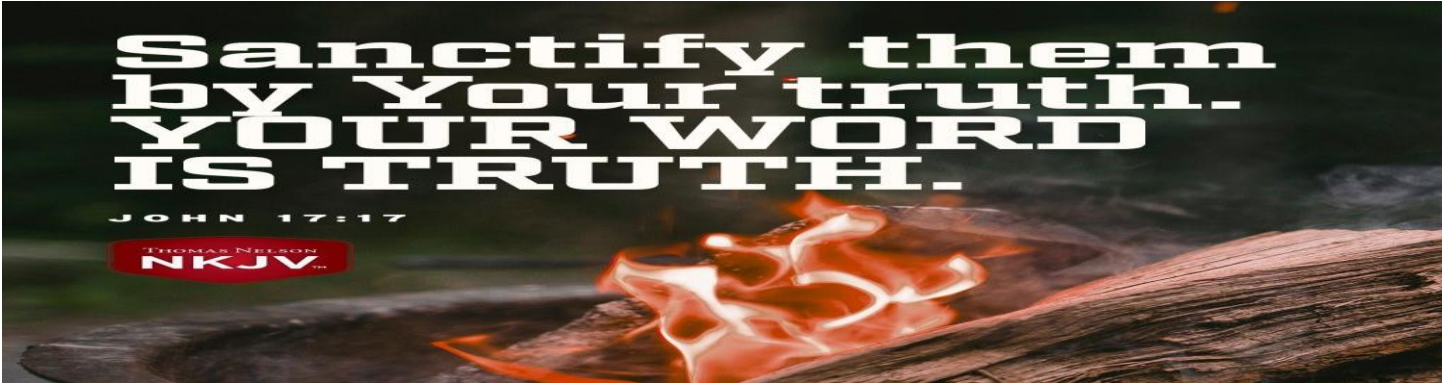
- i. **Blameless**=no one can accuse you of not dealing with your problems.
- ii. **Harmless**=you will edify others, not tear them down.
- iii. **You will know you are born again.**
 - 1. Children of God.
- iv. **You will shine.**
 - 1. in the perverse and crooked generation.
- v. **Your life will count for something.**
- vi. **Others invested well in you.**
 - 1. Those who invested in you will know their efforts were not empty.

d. Renew your mind to be transformed. Romans 12:1-2



I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

e. Many of us learn the hard way...but that is not the only way. John 17:17



**Sanctify them
by Your truth.
YOUR WORD
IS TRUTH.**

JOHN 17:17

THOMAS NELSON
NKJV

f. Trials sanctify us. I Peter 1:6-7 In short, for Missler, trials are not punishment but preparation—a divine process to purify, test, and equip believers for greater service and deeper intimacy with God.

*In this you greatly rejoice,
though now for a little while, if need be,
You have been grieved
by various trials:
That the genuineness of your faith,
being much more precious than gold that perishes,
though it is tested by fire,
may be found to praise, honor and glory
at the revelation of Jesus Christ:*

1 Peter 1:6-7 / NKJV
RevealedTruth.com

1. To strengthen faith and trust in God. 1 Peter 1

- a. — Trials are opportunities to grow in dependence on Him, deepening our trust in His character and promises

2. To produce the fruit of the Spirit. James 1:3

- a. — Suffering can bring out qualities like patience, kindness, and self-control, as described in Hebrews 10:36 and James 1:3

3. To silence the enemy. Job 1–2

- a. — Trials can expose and counteract the schemes of Satan, as seen in Job 1–2

4. To glorify God. John 11

- a. — Through our endurance and response, we can bring Him honor, as in John 9:1–3 and 11:1–4

5. To conform us to Christ's image. Romans 8:29-30

- a. — Trials shape our character, making us more like Jesus in humility, love, and obedience

6. To enlarge our ministry. 2 Corinthians 1:3–7

- a. — God often uses suffering to expand our capacity to serve others, as in 2 Corinthians 1:3–7

7. To reveal and address sin. Hebrews 12:5–9

- a. — Trials can expose our own sinfulness, prompting repentance and transformation (Hebrews 12:5–9)

8. To test our love for God. Genesis 22

- a. — In moments of crisis, God may allow circumstances to reveal whether our devotion is genuine, as in Genesis 22 and Judges 2:20–23

Conclusion: You were born again to work out your salvation.

Chuck Missler's View on the Purpose of Trials

Chuck Missler, through his ministry Koinonia House and commentary on Hebrews, teaches that **trials are not random or meaningless—they are part of God's sovereign plan to refine, test, and mature believers.**

Core Biblical Reasons for Trials

Missler's teaching aligns with the broader Christian understanding found in passages like Hebrews 10:36, James 1:3, and 1 Peter 5:10. He emphasizes that trials serve several key purposes:

- **To strengthen faith and trust in God** — Trials are opportunities to grow in dependence on Him, deepening our trust in His character and promises [Koinonia House](#).
- **To produce the fruit of the Spirit** — Suffering can bring out qualities like patience, kindness, and self-control, as described in Hebrews 10:36 and James 1:3 [Koinonia House](#).
- **To silence the enemy** — Trials can expose and counteract the schemes of Satan, as seen in Job 1–2 [Koinonia House](#).
- **To glorify God** — Through our endurance and response, we can bring Him honor, as in John 9:1–3 and 11:1–4 [Koinonia House](#).
- **To conform us to Christ's image** — Trials shape our character, making us more like Jesus in humility, love, and obedience [Koinonia House](#).
- **To enlarge our ministry** — God often uses suffering to expand our capacity to serve others, as in 2 Corinthians 1:3–7 [Koinonia House](#).
- **To reveal and address sin** — Trials can expose our own sinfulness, prompting repentance and transformation (Hebrews 12:5–9) [Koinonia House](#).
- **To test our love for God** — In moments of crisis, God may allow circumstances to reveal whether our devotion is genuine, as in Genesis 22 and Judges 2:20–23 [Koinonia House](#).

Missler's Theological Emphasis

Missler often frames trials as **God's refining fire**—similar to the metaphor in Hebrews 12:10. He teaches that while trials can come from personal sin, the sins of others, or the schemes of the devil, they are ultimately **God's means to draw us closer to Him**. The goal is not just endurance, but **transformation**—a heart that is more Christlike, more obedient, and more committed to God's purposes.

In short, for Missler, trials are **not punishment but preparation**—a divine process to purify, test, and equip believers for greater service and deeper intimacy with God. [YouTube](#)

The Bible Says

Philippians 2:12-16 Meaning

Paul has just described the mentality of Jesus, and exhorted his Philippian partners in the gospel to make an intentional decision to adopt the same mentality. That might be summarized as "Obeying God, no matter what, is the path to our greatest fulfillment, even when it would be easy to think otherwise." Paul continues this theme, and transitions to application with the bridge of So then, my beloved. The So then connects what is about to be said with Paul's admonition to adopt Jesus' attitude of radical obedience. Jesus left the most comfortable and desirable situation imaginable, to take on a task that was, by comparison, horrific, because He knew obedience to the Father is always the best possible path to take. We are asked to believe the same way.

Paul calls these Philippian believers my beloved because of their participation in the gospel, both through their example of obedience as well as their financial support of Paul (4:15-17). Paul now admonishes them by adding just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. The Philippians had already demonstrated a pattern of obedience. They had obeyed the commands of Jesus in Paul's presence. Paul admonishes them to obey now much more in his absence from their presence. This would certainly be the natural choice for them, if they indeed adopted Jesus' example by choosing the same perspective He adopted (verses 5-10).

Paul adds an instruction to work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. The word translated salvation means "something is being delivered from something." It is translated "deliverance" in verse 19, where it appears Paul was asking the Philippians to pray for him for deliverance from the temptation to be afraid, which would cause him to fail at boldly proclaiming the gospel. What is being delivered from what in this context? The first thing to note is that the deliverance being addressed must be "worked out." And this "working out" should be done with fear and trembling. Further, the deliverance being contemplated connects the "working out" that must be done by the beloved Philippians in fear and trembling with the work of God, who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

It seems a good way to connect all these things is as follows:

- Paul is exhorting the Philippian believers to have fear and trembling that they will miss out on living in such a way as to gain His good pleasure. The worst outcome in life is to live it in such a way as to

miss out on the opportunity to please God with our deeds, and miss out on the rewards He desires to give us.

- Therefore, the salvation, or deliverance in view is from the terrible outcome of missing out on the amazing opportunity to live a life that is pleasing to God.
- This is directly connected to the attitude Jesus had, that Paul desires the Philippian believers to adopt. Jesus viewed the immense cost of obedience to the Father as being well worthwhile.
- The work they are being asked to do in order to have salvation or deliverance from squandering their life opportunity to gain the rewards of obedience is actually to allow God's work in them to flow through them.
- The goal of life is to live for God's good pleasure. This was demonstrated in verses 5-10 by Jesus being willing to leave heaven to come to earth and learn obedience, to take on the sins of the world in obedience to His Father. If Jesus believed such radical obedience was worth it, then so should we.

Luke 1:71 uses the word translated salvation in verse 12 in the following context:

"As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—
Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES,
And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;"

(Luke 1:70-71)

In this case, the verse is speaking of Israel being delivered from the hand of its enemies.

While scripture uses the Greek word “soteria” (often translated “salvation”) to mean “something is delivered from something” and context determines what is delivered from what, in many Christian circles the word “salvation” is assumed to be a technical term where it always means “being saved from hell to heaven.” Due to this, readers might assume any time “soteria” is translated to English as “salvation” that it automatically means “from hell to heaven.” But taking salvation of verse 12 to mean “deliverance from Hell to heaven” is problematic on many fronts, and does not fit the context. Taken that way, it would require the way to heaven to include works of obedience, when the Bible makes clear that we get to heaven solely through faith. Paul stated clearly that no human could obey sufficiently to be justified in the presence of God (Romans 3:23-24; 4:1-5). Paul made it clear that justification in the sight of God comes only by grace, through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). When we are justified in the sight of God through faith, we are fully accepted because of what Christ did for us on the cross.

Of further note is that in 2:15, Paul calls the Philippian believers "children of God." And in chapter 1, Paul addressed this letter to the "saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi." So a sudden addition of a requirement of "working" to get to Heaven does not fit the context.

Our unconditional acceptance in Christ as "saints" and "children of God" is completely independent of works. That is why God's Spirit comes to indwelling believers upon their initial belief. Clearly Paul had no doubt that the Philippian believers to whom he wrote were justified in God's sight. He writes here that *God who is at work in you*, likely referring to the work of the Spirit in the lives of the Philippian believers. Paul will say in the next chapter "we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God" ([Philippians 3:3](#)). In this statement, Paul makes it clear that he lumps himself together with the Philippian believers as being the "true circumcision," by which Paul means the spiritual chosen of God ([Romans 2:28-29](#)).

Therefore, it seems clear that Paul's desire is that his *beloved* brethren in Philippi do the difficult work of obedience, following the same spirit of Christ, so that they will receive the great rewards of Christ. Paul testifies in a number of places how he himself embraced suffering because of the rewards he believes he will gain for his obedience ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#); [2 Timothy 4:8](#)). Paul admonishes believers throughout his writing to live "this day for that day," speaking of the Judgment Day ([1 Corinthians 3:11-17](#); [2 Corinthians 5:10](#); [Romans 14:10-11](#)). Here Paul is urging the Philippian believers to exert their most strenuous efforts to gain the greatest of prizes. To accomplish such a great thing requires *salvation* or deliverance from worldly attitudes. It requires us to *work out* adopting perspectives that are true, and real. It takes exertion to accomplish choosing the right attitude, to choose perspectives that align with that of Jesus. And in adopting those perspectives, it will lead us to *work for His good pleasure*. The motivation needed is to have *fear and trembling* of missing out on such greatness. To do so is to miss the great opportunity of living on earth. This life will be the only time in our existence where we will be able to live and know by faith. This is apparently such an enormous benefit that the angels in heaven are watching us closely to try to gain understanding themselves ([Ephesians 3:10](#); [1 Peter 1:12](#)).

It is likely that many of the Philippian believers were retired Roman soldiers. Roman soldiers were renowned for being able to endure hardship. One of the things that made them so formidable was the ability to go on long marches and still be able to fight. A small example of this can be seen in [Acts 23:23-32](#), where a group of Roman soldiers march all night to deliver Paul to Caesarea, then return to Jerusalem the next morning. It seems Paul is giving the Roman soldiers a vision of extreme hardship toward a great cause. Adopting Jesus' attitude toward obedience, and living in courageous obedience, as Jesus did, will result in the greatest possible outcome for life.

Paul continues with his admonition to live a life of obedience, adopting an attitude that "it is worth any price" by commanding them to *Do all things without grumbling or disputing.* Paul exhorted them to enthusiastically embrace hardship. But when hardship comes, it is human nature to grumble and complain. The children of Israel gladly fled slavery in Egypt, but soon turned to grumbling when they endured hardship. Paul encourages his *beloved* partners in the gospel to do *all things without grumbling or disputing.* The reason is *so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.* Again, Paul notes here that these Philippian believers are already *children of God.* They became *children of God* when they believed the gospel, and trusted in Jesus.

But Paul is admonishing these *children of God* in Philippi to go beyond mere spiritual birth, and *appear as lights in the world.* Just as Jesus was the light of the world, and displayed God's glory through His obedience, so Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to do. By living a life that is *above reproach,* contrasted with the culture around them that is *crooked and perverse,* they will *appear as lights* shining in darkness.

By living in this manner, being *blameless, innocent* and *above reproach,* the Philippian believers, who are *children of God,* will be *holding fast the word of life.* The word translated *hold fast* could also be translated as "take heed of." The idea is that by living a life of truth, love, and service, the Philippian believers will be holding true to the word of God. They would be living in obedience, just as Jesus lived in obedience.

Paul now connects the reward that the Philippians could gain with his own reward in the Day of Judgment. Paul notes that he desires that the Philippian believers live faithfully *so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.* Again, Paul does not pretend humans can act apart from self-interest. By instructing us to love others as we love ourselves, the Bible makes clear that humans have a built-in desire to seek self-interest. Paul simply desires that the Philippian believers act from a position of enlightened self-interest. By seeing reality truly, it becomes apparent that radical obedience to Christ is the path to our greatest self-interest, while self-seeking leads to self-destruction.

In Paul's case, he is transparent in his desire. He desires to *glory* in the *day of Christ,* when all things are judged. And the particular *glory* he desires is to glory because his Philippian disciples gain glory from Christ for their faithful obedience. It is like a proud parent at their child's graduation, recital, or competition. The parent glories in their child's glory. Paul is the same. He is rooting for his spiritual children to win at life by having the same attitude and action Jesus did. If they win, he wins. If the Philippian believers live faithfully, then Paul's work is complete. If they do not, then Paul has *run in*

vain. His toil on their behalf would be in vain. Paul would still be rewarded for his faithfulness. But it seems that Paul places greater emphasis on his opportunity to glory in the success of his spiritual children than in that of himself.

We have no knowledge that Paul had a wife and children of his own. It seems however that he adopted a very paternal attitude toward his spiritual children, and had great fervor to see them succeed in life by living in obedience to Jesus. It is likely that Paul's occasion to write this letter was to thank the Philippian believers for supporting him financially in his need, while living under house arrest in Rome at his own expense ([Acts 28:30](#); [Philippians 4:15-17](#)).

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You can access the original article here: [Philippians 2:12-16 Meaning](#)

Matthew Henry Commentary on Philippians 2

Chapter 2

The apostle proceeds to further exhortations to several duties, to be like-minded, and lowly-minded, which he presses from the example of Christ ([v. 1-11](#)), to be diligent and serious in the Christian course ([v. 12, 13](#)), and to adorn their Christian profession by several suitable graces ([v. 14-18](#)). He then concludes with particular notice and commendation of two good ministers, Timothy and Epaphroditus, whom he designed to send to them ([v. 19-30](#)).

Chuck Smith Sermon Notes for Philippians 2

I. PAUL'S DESIRE WAS FOR THE UNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST. THAT THEY BE LIKEMINDED AND OF ONE ACCORD AND OF ONE MIND. vs 2

A. The basis of the appeal.

1. If there be any consolation in Christ.
2. If there be any fellowship of the Spirit.
3. If there be any bowels and mercies.

a. The ancients believed that the bowels or the stomach area of man is where the deepest feelings of man were experienced.

b. The experiences in the head were rather shallow.

c. The heart was the seat of deeper emotions.

d. But the bowels were the deepest part of a man's emotional being.

4. Fulfill ye my joy.

B. Things that bring division.

1. Strife and vain glory.

2. Selfishness, "Look not every man on his own things."

C. The cures.

1. Esteem others better than yourself.

2. Look after the needs of others.

D. He speaks of lowliness of mind.

II. CHRIST IS OUR EXAMPLE OF LOWLINESS OF MIND. "LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS."

A. Who being in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

B. He made Himself of no reputation.

C. He took upon Him the form of a servant.

D. Was made in the likeness of man.

E. He humbled Himself.

F. Took upon Him the form of a servant.

G. Was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

1. From the form of God to the form of a servant.

2. He said that He did not come to be ministered to but to minister.

3. He said to His disciples, "You call Me Lord, and that is correct, but if I being your Lord, wash your feet, then you ought to wash each others feet."

H. The result of His emptying Himself.

1. God has also highly exalted Him.

a. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, but he that exalteth himself, shall be abased.

b. He that would be great among you, let him become the servant of all.

c. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time. ¶

Pet. 5:6

2. Given Him a name that is above every name.

3. That at the name of Jesus.

4. Every knee shall bow.

a. Of things in heaven.

b. Things on earth.

c. Things under the earth.

5. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

6. To the glory of God the Father.

III. PAUL'S DESIRE FOR THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

A. Paul was absent from them, he is to be absent for an indefinite period of time.

1. He is not certain that he will ever see them again.

2. While he was with them, they were obedient to his exhortation. Now that he is absent, he is trusting that they will be even more diligent in their obedience.

B. Because he was absent, they were to learn to work out their own salvation. How was this to be done?

1. For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

2. God promised the day would come when He would no longer write His laws on tables of stone, but on the fleshly tablets of their hearts.

3. It is God that gives me the desires, and then the capacity to fulfill the desires.

C. Do all things without murmurings and disputings.

1. You are murmuring against God.

2. You are in a dispute with God.

D. The glorious results.

1. You will be blameless and harmless.

2. The sons of God.

3. Without rebuke.
 4. In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.
 5. Shining as a light in this world
 6. Holding forth the word of life.
- E. This will bring joy to the heart of Paul for he will realize that he did not run in vain or labor in vain.
- IV. PAUL'S REALIZATION THAT HE MIGHT BE NEARING THE END OF THE RACE.
- A. If I be offered on the sacrifice of your service and faith.
1. If I am called upon to sacrifice my life because of the service I have rendered you, and the faith that I have brought you to.
 2. I joy and rejoice with you all.
 3. His desire was that they also joy and rejoice with him.
- B. If I give my life as a sacrifice, rejoice and joy with me. For I will be rejoicing in the presence of the Lord.
- C. His plan to send Timothy to them shortly so that he could bring back a report to Paul of their state.
1. I have no man likeminded who will naturally care for your state.
 2. It is so difficult to find a man who is likeminded to the apostle.
 3. So many seek their own state. They put themselves first. They minister down to the people. They cannot say as Jesus I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.
 4. You know the proof of him that as a son with the father he has ministered with me in the gospel.
 5. I plan to send him just as soon as I see how things are going to go with me.
 - a. He would soon be standing before Nero, to give his defense of the gospel.
 - b. As he stands before Nero, you can be sure that he will be laying a heavy witness upon him.
- D. His hope was that he might also be able to come himself.
- E. Epaphroditus.
1. His brother and companion in labor.
 2. A fellowsoldier.
 3. Your messenger and a minister to my wants.
 - a. It was Epaphroditus who had brought to Paul the gifts from the Philippians.
 4. He had become very sick and almost died.
 - a. It was for the work of Christ that he almost died.
 - b. He did not regard his own life, that he might bring to Paul their gifts.
 5. He was sad that they had heard the news of his illness and longed to return to them that they might know that he was well.
 6. Paul was sending him back to them probably with this letter that they may rejoice in his being with them again.
 7. Paul is asking them to honor him in the Lord.

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David Guzik

Study Guide for Philippians 2

HUMBLE LIVING IN LIGHT OF JESUS' HUMBLE EXAMPLE

A. How Paul wants the Philippians to live with each other.

1. (Philippians 2:1) The basis of Paul's exhortation to the Philippians.

Therefore if **there is** any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

a. **Therefore**: This draws back to what Paul has built on in [Philippians 1:27-30](#), telling the Philippians how to stand strong for the Lord against **external** conflicts. Now he tells them how to act against **internal** conflicts in the body of Christ.

b. **If there is any**: This introduces the **basis** for Paul's exhortation to unity, humility and love among believers. The idea is that if the Philippian Christians have received the things he mentions, then they have a responsibility to do what he is about to describe.

i. "It is extremely difficult to give the force of these expressions; they contain a torrent of most affecting eloquence; the apostle pouring out his whole heart to a people whom with all his heart he loved, and who were worthy of the love even of an apostle." (Clarke)

c. **If there is any consolation in Christ**: Paul asked this as a rhetorical question, knowing of course that there was great **consolation in Christ**. Every Christian should know the **consolation** of **Christ**.

i. [Luke 2:25](#) says that one of the titles for Jesus as the Messiah is **the Consolation of Israel**. Paul could say in [2 Corinthians 1:5](#), *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ*. In [2 Thessalonians 2:16](#), Paul says that God **has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace**. Of course there is **consolation in Christ**!

ii. "The Holy Spirit consoles, but Christ **is the consolation**. If I may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the Physician, but Christ is the medicine." (Spurgeon)

d. **If there is any... comfort of love**: This is Paul's second rhetorical question in this passage, affirming the great **comfort of love**. Every Christian should know what it is to have Jesus give him the **comfort of love**.

i. [2 Corinthians 1:3](#) says that God is the **God of all comfort**. There is no way He cannot comfort us and no circumstance beyond His comfort. But this is more than comfort; this is the **comfort of love**.

ii. The word **comfort** in this passage is the ancient Greek word **paraklesis**. The idea behind this word for **comfort** in the New Testament is always more than soothing sympathy. It has the idea of strengthening, of helping, of making strong. The idea behind this word is

communicated by the Latin word for **comfort** (*fortis*), which also means “brave.” The love of God in our life makes us strong and makes us brave. Of course there is **comfort of love**!

e. **If there is any... fellowship of the Spirit**: This is Paul’s third rhetorical question in this context. Paul knew and valued the **fellowship of the Spirit**, and every Christian should know what it is to have the **fellowship of the Spirit**.

i. **Fellowship** is the ancient Greek word *kononia*. It means the sharing of things in common. We share life with the Spirit of God that we never knew before. The Holy Spirit fills and guides and moves in our lives in a powerful and precious way. Of course there is **fellowship of the Spirit**!

ii. “The Lord doth usually and graciously water the holy fellowship of his people with the dews of many sweet and glorious refreshings; so that they have a very heaven upon earth.”
(Trapp)

f. **If there is any... affection and mercy**: Paul’s final rhetorical question assumes that every Christian knows something of the **affection** of God and of the **mercy** of God.

i. Paul mentioned these things in a manner that suggests to us that they should all be obvious parts of the Christian’s experience. To make his rhetorical point, he could have just as easily said, “If water is wet, if fire is hot, if rocks are hard,” and so forth.

ii. Each of these gifts — **consolation in Christ**, **comfort of love**, **fellowship of the Spirit**, **affection and mercy** — are communicated to us both in a direct, spiritual way from Jesus, and from Jesus *through His people*. But there isn’t any doubt that these are real gifts for Christians to really experience.

2. (Philippians 2:2-4) The specifics of Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians regarding love and humility among believers.

Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

a. **Fulfill my joy**: This speaks of a personal request. Part of the reason Paul wanted the Philippians to take heed to his word was because they should know that it would make the founding apostle of their church happy.

b. **By being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind**: These together all speak of the same idea: a deep, abiding, internal unity among the Philippians.

i. This unity is the goal. What follows in [Philippians 2:3-4](#) are descriptions of how to achieve and practice the unity mentioned here in [Philippians 2:2](#).

c. **Let nothing be done through selfish ambition**: This is the first step to this kind of unity. In the flesh, we are often motivated by **selfish ambition** or **conceit**. Much of what we do is not done out of love for others, but out of our own desire for “advancement” or “promotion” (**selfish ambition**).

i. Paul found it important to say **selfish ambition**. Not all ambition is **selfish** ambition, and there is a **good ambition** to glorify God and serve Him with everything we have.

d. **Let nothing be done through... conceit**: This is the second step to this kind of unity. **Conceit** is thinking too highly of one’s self, of having an excessive self-interest and self-preoccupation. It could be more literally translated “empty glory.”

i. A dictionary definition of **conceit** is “An excessively favorable opinion of one’s own ability, importance, wit,” and so forth. When we live with the feeling that we are so important, or so able, or so talented, we are out of God’s will. We are working against the unity Paul pleaded with the Philippians and all Christians to have.

e. **In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself**: This third step to the kind of unity described in [Philippians 2:2](#) is completely contradictory to the attitude of the world, because **lowliness of mind** is about the least attractive thing to the thinking of this world.

i. The ancient Greeks considered **lowliness of mind** to be a fault, not a virtue. “The pagan and the secular idea of manhood is self-assertiveness, imposing one’s will on others; when anyone stooped to others he did so only under compulsion, hence his action was ignominious [disgraceful]. The Christian ethical idea of humility could not be reached by the secular mind; it lacked the spiritual soil.” (Lenski)

ii. “In pagan writers generally, the word had a bad meaning, ‘abject, grovelling.’ But when it comes into the New Testament, its meaning is ennobled.” (Wuest)

iii. “The apostle knew that, to create concord, you need first to beget lowliness of mind. Men do not quarrel when their ambitions have come to an end.” (Spurgeon)

f. **Esteem others better than himself**: This rebukes much of the culture’s concept of self-esteem. The Bible knows nothing of the idea that we should — and must — carry with us an attitude of confident superiority in every situation, and knows nothing of the idea that this is the foundation for a healthy human personality.

i. While we recognize the intrinsic value of every human life, we can’t deny that the low self-esteem of some is **justified**, and based in **reality**. When we are in rebellion against God, it is fitting for us to have a low self-esteem.

ii. As we **esteem others better**, we will naturally have a concern for their needs and concerns. This sort of **outward** looking mentality naturally leads to a unity among the people of God.

iii. If I consider you above me and you consider me above you, then a marvelous thing happens: we have a community where everyone is looked up to, and no one is looked down on.

g. **Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others**: Here the thought is completed. As we put away our selfish ambitions, our conceit, and our tendencies to be high-minded and self-absorbed, we will naturally have a greater concern for the interests and needs of others.

i. Paul doesn't tell us that it is wrong to **look out** for our own interests, but that we should not **only** look out for our own interests.

B. Jesus, the ultimate example of humility.

Many regard [Philippians 2:5-11](#) as a hymn of the early church that Paul incorporated into his letter. Some commentators go so far as to suggest stanza and verse arrangements for the "hymn." This is possible, but not a necessary conclusion; Paul was capable of such inspired, poetic writing himself (example: [1 Corinthians 13](#)). For reasons which we will examine later, this passage is often known as the kenosis passage.

1. ([Philippians 2:5](#)) Paul applies the lesson before he states it.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

a. **Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus**: Paul will, in wonderful detail, describe for us the **mind** of Jesus in the following verses. But here, before he describes the mind of Jesus, he tells us what we must **do** with the information.

i. "Paul does not give all that is in the mind of Christ in these verses. He selects those qualities of our Lord which fit the needs of the Philippians at that moment... This lack of unity among the Philippian saints became the occasion for perhaps the greatest Christological passage in the New Testament that sounds the depths of the incarnation." (Wuest)

b. **Let this mind be in you**: It is all too easy for us to read the following description of Jesus and admire it from a distance. God wants us to be awed by it, but also to see it as something that we must enter into and imitate. **Let this mind** means that it is something that we have **choice** about.

i. Remember also that this **mind** is something granted to us by God. [1 Corinthians 2:16](#) says that *we have the mind of Christ*. But **let this mind** shows us that it is also something we must **choose** to walk in. You have to **let** it be so.

2. ([Philippians 2:6a](#)) Jesus was **in the form of God**.

Who, being in the form of God,

a. **In the form of God**: This describes Jesus' pre-incarnate existence. We must remind ourselves that Jesus did not begin His existence in the manger at Bethlehem, but is eternal God.

b. **Being**: This is from the ancient Greek verb *huparchein*, which "describes that which a man is in his very essence and which cannot be changed. It describes that part of a man which, in any circumstances, remains the same." (Barclay)

i. "Paul, by the use of the Greek word translated 'being,' informs his Greek readers that our Lord's possession of the divine essence did not cease to be a fact when He came to earth to assume human form... *This word alone is enough to refute the claim of Modernism that our Lord emptied Himself of His Deity when He became Man.*" (Wuest)

c. **Form**: This translates the ancient Greek word *morphe*. It "always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it... the words mean 'the being on an equality with God.'" (Kennedy)

i. "*Morphe* is the essential form which never alters; *schema* is the outward form which changes from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance." (Barclay)

ii. "God' has a form, and 'Jesus Christ' exists in this form of God." (Lenski)

iii. Wuest explains that the ancient Greek word translated **form** is very difficult to translate. When we use the word **form**, we think of the *shape* of something; but the ancient Greek word had none of that idea. It is more the idea of a *mode* or an *essence*; it is the essential nature of God, without implying a physical shape or image. "Thus the Greek word for 'form' refers to that outward expression which a person gives of his inmost nature."

3. ([Philippians 2:6b](#)) Jesus did not cling to the privileges of deity.

Did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

a. **Did not consider it robbery**: The ancient Greek in this phrase has the idea of something being grasped or clung to. Jesus did not cling to the prerogatives or privileges of deity.

i. Wuest defines the ancient Greek word translated **robbery** as, "A treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards."

b. **To be equal with God**: It wasn't that Jesus was trying to **achieve** equality with the Father. He **had it**, and chose not to cling to it. Jesus' divine nature was not something He had to seek for or acquire, but it was His already.

i. Lightfoot wrote that it was not "a prize which must not slip from His grasp, a treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards." Jesus was willing to let go of some of the prerogatives of deity to become a man.

4. (Philippians 2:7) Jesus made Himself of **no reputation**.

But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

a. **But made Himself of no reputation**: The more common (and well-known) translation of this is that *He emptied Himself*. From the ancient Greek word **emptied** (*kenosis*) came the idea that Jesus' incarnation was essentially a self-emptying.

i. We must carefully think about what Jesus **emptied** Himself of. Paul will tell us plainly in the following verses, but we must take care that we do not think that Jesus emptied Himself of His deity in any way.

ii. Some develop the *kenotic theory* of the incarnation to the point where they insist that Jesus divested Himself of many of the attributes of deity — such as omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and even suffered the elimination of His own divine self-consciousness. Yet Jesus did not (and **could** not) become "less God" in the incarnation. No deity was **subtracted** (though he did renounce some of the rights of deity); rather humanity was **added** to His nature.

iii. "During his humiliation, as God and equal with the Father, was no encroachment on the Divine prerogative; for, as he had an **equality** of **nature**, he had an **equality** of **rights**." (Clarke)

iv. "His condescension was free, and unconstrained with the consent of his Father... the Son of the Highest can, at his own pleasure, show or eclipse his own glorious brightness, abate or let out his fullness, exalt or abase himself in respect of us." (Poole)

v. "Even as a king, by laying aside the tokens of his royalty, and putting on the habit of a merchant, when all the while he ceaseth not to be a king, or the highest in his own dominions." (Poole)

b. **Taking the form of a bondservant**: This describes **how** Jesus emptied Himself. Though he took **the form of a bondservant**, Jesus did not empty Himself of His deity, or of any of His attributes, or of His equality with God. He emptied Himself **into** the form of a **bondservant**, not merely the form of a man.

i. **Taking** (the ancient Greek word *labon*) does not imply an **exchange**, but an **addition**.

c. **Coming in the likeness of men**: This further describes how Jesus emptied Himself. We can think of someone who is a servant, but not in the **likeness of men**. Angels are servants, but not in the **likeness of men**. In fairy tales, Aladdin's genie was a servant, but not in the **likeness of men**.

- i. The word for **likeness** here *may* refer to merely the outward form of something. While Jesus did have the outward form of humanity, the outward form reflected His true humanity, which was added to His deity.
- ii. "It was a likeness, but a real likeness, no mere phantom humanity as the Docetic Gnostics held." (Robertson)

5. (Philippians 2:8) The extent of Jesus' self-emptying.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

a. **He humbled Himself and became obedient**: Jesus **humbled Himself** when He **became obedient**. This was something that Jesus could only experience by coming down from the throne of heaven and becoming a man. When God sits enthroned in heaven's glory, there is no one He obeys. Jesus had to leave heaven's glory and be **found in appearance as a man** in order to become **obedient**.

- i. One key to Jesus' obedience on earth was the endurance of suffering. This again was something He could only learn by experience after the incarnation. As it is written: *though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered* (Hebrews 5:8).
- ii. Indeed, **He humbled Himself**.

- He was humble in that he took the form of a man, and not a more glorious creature like an angel.
- He was humble in that He was born into an obscure, oppressed place.
- He was humble in that He was born into poverty among a despised people.
- He was humble in that He was born as a child instead of appearing as a man.
- He was humble in submitting to the obedience appropriate to a child in a household.
- He was humble in learning and practicing a trade — and a humble trade of a builder.
- He was humble in the long wait until He launched out into public ministry.
- He was humble in the companions and disciples He chose.

- He was humble in the audience He appealed to and the way He taught.
- He was humble in the temptations He allowed and endured.
- He was humble in the weakness, hunger, thirst, and tiredness He endured.
- He was humble in His total obedience to His Heavenly Father.
- He was humble in His submission to the Holy Spirit.
- He was humble in choosing and submitting to the death of the cross.
- He was humble in the agony of His death.
- He was humble in the shame, mocking, and public humiliation of His death.
- He was humble in enduring the spiritual agony of His sacrifice on the cross.

iii. We can imagine that it was possible for the Son of God to become man and pay for the sins of the world without this great humiliation. He might have added the humanity of a 33-year old man to his deity. He might have appeared before man only in His transfigured glory, and taught men what they needed to hear from Him. He might have suffered for the sins of man in a hidden place of the earth far from the eyes of man, or on the dark side of the moon for that matter. Yet He did not; **He humbled Himself**, and did it for the surpassing greatness of our salvation and His work for us.

b. **To the point of death, even the death of the cross**: This states the extent of Jesus' humility and obedience.

- Crucifixion was such a shameful death that it was not permitted for Roman citizens (such as the people of Philippi). A victim of crucifixion was considered by the Jews to be particularly cursed by God ([Deuteronomy 21:23](#) and [Galatians 3:13](#)).
- Robertson called the **death of the cross** "The bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God. Jesus came all the way down to the most despised death of all, a condemned criminal on the accursed cross."
- Even the death of the cross** shows that there is no limit to what God will do to demonstrate His love and saving power to man; this was and forever will be the ultimate. "What must sin have been in the sight of God, when it required such abasement in Jesus Christ to make an atonement for it, and undo its influence and malignity!" (Clarke)

iv. “The lower he stoops to save us, the higher we ought to lift him in our adoring reverence. Blessed be his name, he stoops, and stoops, and stoops, and, when he reaches our level, and becomes man, he still stoops, and stoops, and stoops lower and deeper yet.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Even the death of the cross**: All of this was a great display of the power of Jesus. Remember that because of Paul’s past experience among the Philippians, they were tempted to think of God’s **power** as being expressed only in exaltation and deliverance and not in terms of glorifying God through humble service and endurance.

i. In this, Paul reminded the Philippians that his current place of humble circumstances (his Roman imprisonment) could still show forth the glory and power of God, even as Jesus did in His humility.

C. Jesus, the ultimate example of exaltation after humility.

1. (Philippians 2:9) The exaltation of Jesus Christ.

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

a. **Therefore God has also highly exalted Him**: This is the general heading for the material in the next three verses. These words describe how God has exalted Jesus. Indeed, **highly exalted** could also be translated “super exalted.”

i. “The Greek elegancy imports superexalted, or exalted with all exaltation.” (Poole)

ii. “Now, just pause over this thought — that Christ did not crown himself, but that his Father crowned him; that he did not elevate himself to the throne of majesty, but that his Father lifted him there, and placed him on his throne.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Given Him the name which is above every name**: This goes beyond giving Jesus the Divine name Yahweh. When we consider the Hebrew concept of **the name**, it also implies that God declares that Jesus has a **character** and **person** above all.

i. This verse, with its clear statement of Jesus’ deity, is powerful ammunition against those who deny the deity of Jesus Christ. There is no higher name than Yahweh, and Jesus has that **name**.

2. (Philippians 2:10-11) The subjection of the whole creation to Jesus.

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and **that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ **is** Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

a. **That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**: Not only is Jesus exalted by the Father, but the whole world is brought into submission to the Son.

i. "Paul does not imply by this a universal salvation, but means that every personal being will ultimately confess Christ's lordship, either with joyful faith or with resentment and despair."
(Kent)

b. **Those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth**: This conveys the absolute totality of all creation recognizing the superiority of Jesus Christ.

i. In this, Paul draws on the idea of [Isaiah 45:23](#): *I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.* Notice that in Isaiah, it is to Yahweh that all knees bow and tongues confess. In Philippians it is to Jesus, showing that Jesus *is* Yahweh.

ii. **Those under the earth**: "Either the dead, who are hid in the earth, and shall be raised by the power of Christ... or, devils, and wicked souls." (Poole)

c. **Every knee should bow... every tongue should confess**: The combination of **tongues confessing** and **knees bowing** gives evidence that the idea is a complete submission to Jesus, both in word and in action, and one that is required of all.

i. The totality of this recognition of Jesus' deity and exaltation has caused many to envision this happening in a formal way after the final judgment, when every creature in heaven and hell is required to bow their knees and make the confession **that Jesus Christ is Lord**.

d. **That Jesus Christ is Lord**: From this we can say that there is a sense in which Jesus *returned* to heaven with more than He had when He *left* heaven. Not only did He return with His humanity still added to his deity (although a resurrected humanity), He also returned with the recognition planted among men of who He was and the worship He deserved — something unknown until the Incarnation and the full revelation of His person and work.

i. "He has always (in Paul's view) shared in the Divine nature. But it is only as the result of His Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection and Exaltation that He *appears to men* as on an equality with God, that He is *worshipped by them* in the way in which Jehovah is worshipped." (Kennedy)

ii. "He might have used the miraculous powers inherent in His Divine nature in such a way as to compel men, without further ado, to worship Him as God. Instead of that He was willing to attain this high dignity by the path of humiliation, suffering and death." (Kennedy)

iii. All this must be seen in reference to the humiliation described in [Philippians 2:6-8](#); our tendency is to long for the exaltation, but to forsake the humiliation.

e. **Jesus Christ is Lord**: The confession of Jesus Christ as **Lord** reminds us to consider the great significance of this word **kurios**, especially as it was understood by the early church, who used the LXX as their Bible — where **kurios** was consistently used to translate the tetragrammaton, standing for the name **Yahweh**.

- i. We also should not miss the significance that at a later time in the Roman Empire, all residents of the Empire were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the Emperor, declaring that **Caesar is Lord**, and burning a pinch of incense to an image of the emperor. Though the Roman state saw this only as a display of political allegiance, Christians rightly interpreted it as idolatry — and refused to participate, often paying with their lives.
- ii. Paul has no doubt who is really Lord — not the Caesar whom he will stand trial before; **Caesar** may be a high name, but it is not the name above all names, the name which belongs to Jesus Christ!

f. **Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father**: Remember that Paul did not give this description of Jesus in **Philippians 2:5-11** simply for the theological education of the Philippians.

- He gave it to equip them to endure the hardship they were experiencing.
- He gave it to help them to understand Paul's hardships.
- He gave it to help them to practice real Christian unity in the midst of hard times.

- i. This picture of Jesus has helped them to understand how to assess the ministry of Paul, which seemed weak at the present time.
- ii. This picture helped them to understand the context of God's revelation of power — how God delights to show His power through humble actions.
- iii. This picture has equipped them to act in a way towards each other that will promote unity in the body of Christ.
- iv. This picture has shown them how to follow Jesus' pattern of patient, humble obedience — something Paul will call them to continue in the following verses.

D. Paul's exhortation to the Philippians.

1. (Philippians 2:12**) Working out your own salvation.**

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

a. **Therefore... as you have always obeyed**: We should not miss the connection between the obedience **Jesus showed** (**Philippians 2:8**) and the obedience **Paul expected** of Christians as followers of Jesus (**Philippians 2:12**).

b. **Work out your own salvation**: We know that Paul did **not** mean “work so as to earn your own salvation.” Such a statement would contradict the whole of Paul’s gospel. What Paul **did** mean is to call the Philippians to put forth real effort into their Christian lives. This is not to **work** their salvation in the sense of accomplishing it, but to **work out** their salvation — to see it evident in every area of their lives, to **activate** this salvation God freely gave them.

i. Therefore, “These words, as they stand in the New Testament, contain no exhortation to all men, but are directed to the people of God. They are not intended as an exhortation to the unconverted; they are, as we find them in the epistle, beyond all question addressed to those who are already saved through a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Work out your own salvation**: There is a sense in which our salvation is complete, in the sense that Jesus has done a complete work **for** us. Still there is also a sense in which our salvation is incomplete, in that it is not yet a complete work **in** us.

i. “The believer must finish, must carry to conclusion, must apply to its fullest consequences what is already given by God in principle... He must **work out** what God in His grace has **worked in**.” (Muller)

ii. “Some professors appear to have imbibed the notion that the grace of God is a kind of opium with which men may drug themselves into slumber, and their passion for strong doses of sleepy doctrine grows with that which it feeds on. ‘God works in us,’ say they, ‘therefore there is nothing for us to do.’ Bad reasoning, false conclusion. God works, says the text; therefore we must work out because God works in.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “He exhorts as if he were an Arminian in addressing men. He prays as if he were a Calvinist in addressing God and feels no inconsistency in the two attitudes. Paul makes no attempt to reconcile divine sovereignty and human free agency, but boldly proclaims both.” (Robertson)

d. **Your own salvation**: This tells us to give attention to our **own salvation**. Sometimes we show great concern for the work of God in others, and not enough for His work in us. We should care about the souls of others, but this care must begin with our own soul.

e. **With fear and trembling**: Paul’s idea was not that we should live our Christian lives with a constant sense of fear and terror, but that we should live with a fear of failing to **work out your own salvation**.

i. We work out our salvation with **fear and trembling**; but it doesn't have to be the fear of hell or damnation. It may instead be the righteous and awe-filled reverence of God every believer should have. It doesn't have to be the **trembling** of a guilty sinner; it should instead be the joyful **trembling** of an encounter with the glory of God.

f. **Now much more in my absence**: In context, Paul asked for this Christian **work** ethic (not a **works** ethic) to be promoted all the more because of his **absence**.

2. (Philippians 2:13) God's work in you.

For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

a. **For it is God who works in you**: Paul here gave the reason **why** Christians must **work out their salvation with fear and trembling** — because **God** is working in them.

i. We take comfort in it: **God who works in you**. "Grace all-sufficient dwells in you, believer. There is a living well within you springing up; use the bucket, then; keep on drawing; you will never exhaust it; there is a living source within." (Spurgeon)

b. **God... works in you**: The idea is that since God has done and is doing a work in the Christian, the Christian therefore has a greater responsibility to work diligently with fear and trembling regarding his own salvation and walk with the Lord. God's work in us **increases** our responsibility; it doesn't **lessen** it in any way.

i. Those that take God's sovereignty and working and use them as an excuse for inaction and lethargy are like the wicked and lazy servant of **Matthew 25:24-30**.

ii. Those that are really God's servants use their understanding of His sovereignty and omnipotence as a motivation for greater, more dedicated service to Him.

c. **Both to will and to do**: God's work in us extends to the transformation of our **will**, as well as changing our actions (**to do**). Yet in light of the original exhortation to **work out your own salvation**, this is not a passive transaction.

d. **For His good pleasure**: This is the motive behind God's work in our life. He does so because it gives Him **pleasure** to do it.

3. (Philippians 2:14-16) Practical ways to obey Paul's exhortation.

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

a. **Do all things without complaining and disputing**: There is a good deal of dispute among commentators as to if this **complaining and disputing** refers to problems among the

Philippians (such as mentioned in [Philippians 2:1-4](#)) or if this refers to their attitude towards God. Perhaps they resented God because of their present conflict ([Philippians 1:27-30](#)).

i. Because Paul specifically used terms that were used to describe Israel's complaining towards God during the Exodus, it is probably best to see the **complaining and disputing** as including their attitude towards God. Spurgeon gives three examples of things we must not murmur against:

- The Providence of God.
- One another.
- The ungodly world.

ii. In this command, the emphasis falls on the words **all things**, which is actually the first word of the verse in the ancient Greek text.

iii. "Dispute not with God; let him do what seemeth him good. Dispute not with your fellow Christians, raise not railing accusations against them. When Calvin was told that Luther had spoken ill of him, he said, 'Let Luther call me devil if he please, I will never say of him but that he is a most dear and valiant servant of the Lord.' Raise not intricate and knotty points by way of controversy." (Spurgeon)

b. **That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault**: Through the display of a non-complaining spirit, we show ourselves to be true followers of God.

i. **Harmless** can have the thought of "pure" or "unalloyed." But the translation as **harmless** is also justified (it is the same word used in [Matthew 10:16](#)).

ii. "Be ye blameless **and harmless**," says the apostle. The Greek word might be translated 'hornless,' as if ye were to be creatures not only that do no harm, but **could not do any**; like sheep that not only **will not** devour, but **cannot** devour, for it were contrary to their nature; for they have no teeth with which to bite, no fangs with which to sting, no poison with which to slay." (Spurgeon)

c. **In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation**: This seems to refer back to [Deuteronomy 32:5](#): *They have corrupted themselves; they are not His children, because of their blemish: A perverse and crooked generation.* Paul meant that modern Christians should not be like rebellious Israel, who were constantly **complaining and disputing** with God during the wilderness sojourn.

d. **Among whom you shine as lights in the world**: This is not an encouragement to do something; it is a simple statement of fact. Christians **are lights in the world**; the only question is, "How brightly do they shine?"

i. “Not **lights** merely, but **luminaries**, *heavenly bodies*. But this can hardly be satisfactorily given in an English version.” (Alford)

ii. We are to fulfill our place **as lights in the world**:

- Lights are used to make things evident.
- Lights are used to guide.
- Lights are used as a warning.
- Lights are used to bring cheer.
- Lights are used to make things safe.

iii. Paul knew that the lights were in a bad place. Instead of excusing the lights for not shining, Paul knew that their position made it all the more important that they shine. Being in a dark place is a greater incentive to shine.

e. **Holding fast the word of life**: The phrase **holding fast** could also be translated *holding forth*. Both meanings are true and Paul could have meant it in this dual sense. We *hold fast* — in the sense of holding strong — **the word of life**, and we also *hold forth* **the word of life**.

f. **So that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain**:

The idea that Paul’s work might some how end up to be in vain was a troublesome thought to him. He knew that his work really abided in *people*, so that if those people did not continue on strong with the Lord, there was a sense in which his own ministry was **in vain**.

g. **In the day of Christ**: Paul looked forward to **the day of Christ**, and on that day he wanted to see and to know that his work was fruitful. This was something he could only be assured of if the Philippians continued to walk with the Lord.

i. This is the true heart of a shepherd: to have few burdens for one’s self, but many for others; to not be content with one’s own relationship with God, but also longing to see others walking with the Lord.