

# Obedient in Christ

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Preacher: Rev. Andrew Ong

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Good morning. I'm Melissa Arseniega and I'm part of the El Cerrito Kensington Community Group, an Oikos group, and a deacon.

Today's scripture reading is from Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 2, verses 12 to 30, as printed in your liturgy. A reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.

[ 1 : 19 ] Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.

But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on this sacrifice and service, coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. I hope in the Lord Jesus to send you Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.

I have no one else like him who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father, he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.

[ 2 : 27 ] And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.

For he longs for all of you and is distressed, because you heard he was ill. Indeed, he was ill and almost died.

But God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore, I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again, you may be glad, and I may have less anxiety.

So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honor people like him. Because he almost died for the work of Christ, he risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

This is the word of the Lord. So back earlier in January, our very own David Lopez, he put me onto this guy. His name is Wesley Huff.

- [ 3 : 41 ] Anybody heard of Wesley Huff? A couple of you, thanks. If you haven't had a chance to check out Wesley Huff, I highly recommend him. He's this up-and-coming Christian apologist, incredibly sharp, incredibly articulate.
- He's doing his PhD in New Testament right now at the University of Toronto, and he does this podcast called the AC Podcast. It stands for Apologetics Canada. And I highly recommend that you check him out.
- And he's actually been invited onto some pretty large stages recently. He was invited onto Joe Rogan's podcast. It's like the most widely listened to podcast in the world.
- And then just a month ago, it's this podcast I listened to just this past week. It's Andrew Schultz's podcast. Andrew Schultz is like this big-time comedian. He's got his own Netflix special. And, you know, whatever you think about Andrew Schultz and Andrew Rogan and, you know, kind of the bro-y manosphere thing, at least we can say these are huge audiences that Wesley Huff is getting in front of.
- I mean, President Trump was on both of these podcasts, like, not long before Wesley Huff. So it's pretty interesting, right, to see this Christian getting on this pretty large stage.
- [ 4 : 53 ] And, you know, so I was listening to Wesley Huff and Andrew Schultz and his, you know, kind of crass comedian buddies on this podcast earlier this week. And he said something there that I really think gets at the heart of what Paul's trying to communicate to the church in Philippi and to us today in our passage.
- And what Wesley Huff said was, you know, for Christians, reading the Bible and praying and going to church and, you know, doing all these spiritual practices, these are not the fruit of the Christian life, but they're more like water.
- They're more like how we water the Christian life. And while sure God wants us to water the soil of our hearts, what we will ultimately be judged upon is not simply how well we watered, but whether or not our lives bore fruit.
- See, that's Paul's vision for the church in Philippi. That's our vision here at Christ Church. Not just a well-watered church, but a fruitful church. Not simply a learned church, but a living church.
- Paul doesn't just want the church to accept the gospel of Jesus, but to apply the gospel of Jesus in our everyday lives. Or as he will say here in our text, to work out our salvation.
- [ 6 : 04 ] To work out our salvation. So remember last time we were in the book of Philippians, we looked and marveled at that brilliantly concise summary, that core confession, that amazing statement of Christianity in the beginning of Philippians chapter 2 called the Christ hymn, right?
- The Christ hymn. But today what we find is that Paul is not just sharing it as a creed to confess, but more so as a calling to carry out in our lives. He's sharing it because he wants the church to live a certain way.
- So remember what Paul's doing. He's imploring these Christians living in this patriotic Roman colony. He says in chapter 1 verse 27, to make it their primary aim to be citizens of the gospel of Christ, distinct citizens, right?
- Distinct citizens of a distinct kingdom. A kingdom where the king, God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, took on not just humanity, but slavery and crucifixion and obedience to his eternal father on the way to glory and exaltation.
- And what Paul wants for the church is to, quote, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.
- [ 7 : 08 ] Paul commands the church to live with selfless service and humble obedience just like their maker and their Messiah. And that is what comes right before our passage today, okay?

Where he writes in verse 12, we can look down at that now. Therefore, my dear friends, or in the Greek, therefore, my beloved. Therefore, meaning because, or as a result of what God has revealed to us in Christ, crucified and exalted, as a result of what God has shown us about who he is as God and what it means to be ideally human.

Therefore, my beloved Philippians, verse 12, as you have always obeyed, like Christ obeyed, and not only in my presence when I was with you, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

He's saying, I saw you obey when I was with you, when we all lived together in the same household, and even now when we are apart, I've been very pleased to see and hear about you all grown up and off to college, no more parents in the house, and you're still obeying great.

But hey, as your spiritual father, this is still my command to you, keep continuing to obey. Or to give it even more texture and meaning, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

[ 8 : 19 ] So in one sense, he's not saying anything new, obey. But in case you're tempted to, you know, just kind of check out here, of course this pastor's gonna come up and preach a sermon about obeying God.

Just hang in there with me, okay? And let's try to catch the nuance. It's not just obey, but it's continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. So the question to ask is, what is Paul trying to get at with this more specific language, work out your salvation?

Why does he say it that way? Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Well, let me start by clarifying what this doesn't mean, okay? When Paul says to continue to work out your salvation, it's very important to distinguish working for your salvation from working out your salvation.

Remember, this is the same Apostle Paul who's written elsewhere in his other letters that salvation, being restored into a right status and relationship with God, it isn't earned by good works of merit, but received by grace through faith.

Paul isn't departing from this core truth of the good news about Jesus. He's not telling them to work for or earn their salvation. So the question is, okay, what does he mean when he says work out your salvation?

[ 9 : 27 ] Well, let's define salvation. What is salvation? You see, for many of us, salvation is simply about what happens when I die. Do I go to heaven or do I go to hell? And yes, the scriptures do teach that heaven is real and hell is real and eternal life is real and judgment is real, but these truths never constitute the core essence of what salvation is and what it means to be saved.

See, according to the scriptures, according to Jesus, Jesus said this, I have another slide in, oh, sorry, in John chapter 17. Can you pull that up for us, Ben? Jesus said this, and this is eternal life.

Not that you go to heaven. And this is eternal life that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. So see, according to the scriptures, the essence of salvation is not about destination.

It's about relationship. Paul confirms this as well, Romans chapter five, 2 Corinthians chapter five, Colossians chapter one, that to be saved is to be rescued from alienation from God and to be restored into communion with God.

Salvation is reunion with the starting point and the sustainer of all of life, the maker of our souls. That's what salvation is. So again, salvation is about so much more than the day you die. It's about the life you live in union with the life giver.

[ 10 : 47 ] And if this is true, if this is true that salvation is not primarily about your future, eternal destination, but about your union with God, then that means that salvation can be spoken of as something that's past, present, and future all at the same time.

So if you look at Paul's letters, you can find him talking about how we were saved in the past, like before the foundations of the earth, Ephesians one, or at the cross, before we were even born, Colossians chapter two, or at the time of our conversions, Titus chapter three.

But Paul also talks about how we are being saved presently, 1 Corinthians chapter one, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and then how we will be saved in the future. Romans chapter five, Romans 13, Philippians one, he who began a good work and you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

It's kind of like marriage, okay? I was married, I am married, and Chelsea willing, I will be married, all right? All that to say here is when Paul is saying continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, he's getting at the present, the present aspect of salvation, the present aspect of being in a dynamic and ongoing relationship with God.

He's calling the church to presently and continually live out their renewed and ever deepening union with their infinite and eternal God. He's saying don't just receive salvation, don't just receive some past salvation, and don't just hope and wait for some future salvation.

[ 12 : 18 ] He's saying live in it now and forever, work it out in your life today. And not just casually, he says, but with fear and trembling because this isn't just any kind of casual relationship, it's a relationship with the thrice holy God, right?

The great I am. And maybe this gives some of us pause, this idea of fear and trembling in our relationship with God because, you know, so much of our soft, secular, heavily therapeutic Western culture tells us that healthy, loving, safe relationships should not involve any kind of fear or trembling.

And so much of the American church with its, you know, Jesus is my homeboy, come just as you are, his arms are open wide, authenticity over everything, self-expressive individualism, so many popular therapeutic versions of American Christianity go out of their way to downplay the fear of God as if it were incompatible with the love of God.

But let me try to dissuade you of this false dichotomy, this wrong-headed way of thinking that runs counter to the teachings of Jesus and the Scriptures. Now, some Christians want to say fear and trembling here is just about reverence and respect.

And sure, that is definitely a part of working out our salvation with fear and trembling, but I think he actually means fear and trembling here. Let me try to illustrate that. So, for example, you know, I personally find gorillas like fascinating, glorious, like amazing creatures.

[ 13 : 39 ] And many of us, we have Oakland Zoo passes and we can get like really close to these huge, majestic, grizzly bears, right? And on the one hand, these creatures are marvelous and they awe us and they shock us.

Like think of the intelligence of a silverback gorilla, right? So intelligent, it could communicate with sign language, it could be so gentle, it could pick those little flies, right, off of its baby, it could unpeel a banana with its fingers, incredible dexterity, it's amazing, right?

And it's even endearing, right? It's heartwarming, right? This massive gorilla. But then at the very same time, this silverback could also rip my arms off, right?

It could. If I step beyond my boundaries, then interact with the gorilla in a rightful and natural way. So even while we can and should marvel at and enjoy a silverback or a grizzly within a properly ordered relationship, it is also right of us to fear and tremble before these creatures that we at the same time adore, love, and honor.

Think about maybe a cliff, right? The cliffs of Moor in Ireland or the edge of El Capitan in Yosemite, these majestic cliffs of such great beauty and splendor that fill our hearts with wonder and awe that we hope to preserve and we fight to preserve and honor.

[ 14 : 54 ] And yet, is it not also true that at the very same time that we marvel, standing atop these cliffs, we also stand at the edge of these cliffs with rightful fear and trembling because we know that there is a right, good, beautiful, and natural way to interact with these cliffs or like with a grizzly bear.

And then there are wrong, dangerous, and unnatural ways to interact with them. Fear and trembling are right, natural human responses in the presence of greatness and power. So if fear and trembling are appropriate in the presence of a silverback, how much more appropriate are fear and trembling in the presence of the holy maker of the silverback, maker of our souls?

It really makes complete sense to work out our salvation, to live out our relationships with God with fear and trembling. And it is actually the enemy that would whisper into our ears not to fear.

You just do you. Choose your own way. Go ahead and cross that boundary between the creator and the creature. There is nothing to fear for you will not surely die. No, it makes complete sense to fear and tremble at the prospect of not relating to God Almighty as we were naturally meant to relate to Him, as His obedient creatures, as His obedient children.

It's like the Psalms and the Proverbs say, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And you know, the beauty of the gospel is that while we have every reason to fear and tremble before this holy God against whom we have all rebelled and gone our own way time and time again, the beauty of Christianity is that this God before whom we ought to fear and tremble, He also loves to lay His strong yet calming hand upon us.

[ 16 : 37 ] He loves to come near to us to be more than a fearful, frightening presence in our lives, but also a kind, gentle, calming, empowering, and ever-present presence in our lives.

It's like what was said of Aslan. You remember what they said of Aslan? It's like, no, for heaven's sake, he isn't safe, but he is good. He is good. In Christianity, the fear of God and the enjoyment of God go hand in hand.

I have another slide. I want you to see what the prophet Jeremiah says, what God says through the prophet Jeremiah to his people. They've gone astray again and again, yet he promises to restore them.

He says, behold, I will bring it to health and healing and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel and rebuild them as they were at first.

I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me and this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them.

[ 17 : 44 ] They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it. So the fear and enjoyment of God can and in fact do go hand in hand because God doesn't just insist on His way but He also makes it happen.

He assists us in His way. Look with me at verse 13. See, Paul doesn't just call the church to work out their salvation with fear and trembling like go ahead, keep on trying, good luck guys.

No, he says work out your salvation with fear and trembling for or because it is God who works in you both to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose.

See, Paul isn't calling them to an onerous solo grind but in honoring shared grace. This is a God and Father in heaven who demands the highest standard from His children and who at the same time provides for the fulfillment of that standard by coming near and uniting Himself to us to work out within us what He demands of us.

It's like St. Augustine once said, grant what thou dost command and command what thou wilt. God isn't a father standing afar off with His hands on His hips waiting for us to perform and attain to His standards.

[ 18 : 58 ] No, He is a father who is intimately involved and interested in us fulfilling His perfect purposes and not just at the level of our actions but at the level of our wills.

It says, it is God who works in you both to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose. This is a God who changes hearts. He changes our hearts to want what He wants.

He strengthens our hands to do what we were made to do. This is a Father who wants to see us crush it in His perfect plan and who will never leave us nor forsake us to have to go it alone. And isn't that good news?

Isn't that good news? Now, I know I've spent most of my time here this morning in these first two verses but this is just so important. And I imagine that this is, you know, a multifaceted word to all of us this morning.

Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you both to will and to act for His good purpose. So maybe for some of you this morning God's word to you is that word continue.

[ 20 : 02 ] You have been living a life on mission, a life of service toward God, love toward God, service toward others, love toward others, not a perfect life but a faithful one, a long obedience in the right direction.

And your Father in heaven, maybe He wants you to hear that He sees you. Maybe He wants you to know He sees you. He sees you in your moments of wanting to quit, your moments of doubt when you're trying to be faithful but you wonder is life in relationship with God really supposed to be this hard?

Is there any point in faithfulness and obedience? Will salvation ever come for my health, for my trauma, for my marriage? God's word to you this morning is to not grow weary in doing good.

Continue to work out your salvation for God is at work in you and He has not left you to yourself. Maybe for others of us, God's word to you today is that it is God who needs to work in you both to will and to act according to His good purposes.

You've been trying this Christian life thing but you are weary and you are tired and you feel so unmotivated. What if God's word to you this morning is not try harder but seek God's work in you both to will and to act?

[ 21 : 11 ] What if God is not so much challenging you this morning but inviting you into a collaborative relationship? What if your next step isn't stricter spiritual disciplines, right, to kind of self-manufacture fruit in your life but what if He's asking you to just ask Him?

Ask Him, see what I will do. See what I will do. What if God's word to you this morning is that He is just as much for you and in fact even more so than you are for yourself? That He is more committed to His good and perfect purposes in your life and in this world than anyone else and you're His workmanship, His masterpiece created in Christ Jesus for good works which He has prepared beforehand that you should walk in them.

What if God's word to you this morning is that even you cannot get in the way of God's good and perfect purposes for you and the world? Can you hear Him? Can you hear Him speak that word to you this morning, these words of invitation, these words of comfort comfort in the sovereign power and ability of God?

But now maybe others of you need more of a word of challenge today or maybe you need both. Perhaps for you though today your word is to work out your salvation like now and with fear and trembling.

Maybe some of us have been tempted to view salvation as something I secured in the past and I'll enjoy in the future and in the meantime I'm going to live however I want because I have my salvation card, my get out of hell free card.

[ 22 : 40 ] But might God be challenging you this morning, convicting you to work out your salvation even today and every day with fear and trembling remembering that your life is not your own.

You are living your life in the very presence of the holy God of the universe. Do we live with that kind of earnestness and gravitas? Are we working out the implications of who God is and what Christ has done in our everyday lives, in our workplaces?

Does the story of Jesus have any bearing on how we manage our staff? Does the story of Jesus have any bearing on how we develop or pursue or market that product or in our relationships?

How we go into our relationships with our spouses, our children, our parents, our neighbors? How are we showing up every day as people who have been saved by and united to the divine suffering servant and Lord, Jesus Christ?

How are we showing up? Are we showing up as servants of the suffering servant or are we showing up as those who are living unworthy of the gospel, unworthy of the citizenship that he has granted to us in Christ?

[ 23 : 52 ] Alright. So, you know, I've totally not budgeted my time well with these first two verses and we won't have time to go verse by verse through the rest of this passage.

But I want you to look with me at verse 14 to see how Paul commands that we show up in our day-to-day lives, how we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. This is what it looks like when God is at work in us to will and to act in fulfillment of his good purposes.

Verse 14 says, do everything without grumbling or arguing. Okay? A tough one, right? Who of us can stand up to this? And notice the command here isn't thou shalt not grumble or thou shalt not argue.

The command is do everything without grumbling or arguing. This is a totalizing command. Paul's divinely inspired words here are laying a claim on the whole of our lives. Everything we do and he is commanding the whole manner of our lives.

We are to do everything as obedient servants of Christ. Everything we do falls under the umbrella of the working out of our salvation. And we are to work out that salvation with fear and trembling but without grumbling and arguing.

[ 25 : 01 ] So that, verse 15, you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation among whom you will shine like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.

And you know, this is another sermon in and of itself about grumbling and arguing but good thing, you know, American Christians don't struggle with that, right? But my question is, of all the things that Paul could have named as antithetical to Jesus' way, why does he say do everything without grumbling and arguing?

Why not like do everything and don't murder, don't rape, don't steal, do everything without hating and fighting? Well, if you are an astute reader in Philippi, you would catch a connection Paul is making here when he uses the words grumbling, arguing, warped and crooked generation and shining like stars in the sky.

He's actually alluding to Israel in the wilderness. In Exodus chapter 16 and 17, the people of Israel are characterized by just that, grumbling and arguing.

And in Deuteronomy chapter 32, Moses rebukes the people of Israel for being a crooked and twisted generation. And then hundreds of years later, the prophet Daniel, he prophesies that even though the people of Israel have strayed again and again and again as grumbling, argumentative and crooked people, God would still one day redeem some of them and make them shine like stars in the sky.

[ 26 : 27 ] So basically, Paul is using the ancient Israelites as a negative example of grumbling and arguing, as an opposite example to Jesus in the Christ.

And Paul is basically laying out two ways to live. The pure and blameless Jesus way of humility, service, obedience, fear, and trembling, a way that will bring light and bear witness in our dark and twisted generation or the crooked wilderness way of grumbling and arguing the way that we experience in this world every day, right?

And why Paul singles out the grumbling and arguing of Israel in the wilderness is not so much that grumbling and arguing are the worst imaginable sins that one could commit but because of the hearts from which grumbling and arguing come from.

You see, the sin of grumbling isn't simply about breaking the thou shalt not grumble rule, all right? And my children, like, they break that all the time, right? But you know, when my daughters grumble, especially when I ask them to do things that they're not excited about, what do I tell them?

Stop grumbling? Well, yeah, I do say that a lot. But the best version of me says, hey, you gotta trust me, you gotta trust mommy, you gotta trust what I'm telling you to do.

[ 27 : 43 ] This is for your good, it's for the good of the family, it's better for our world, and if you keep insisting on doing otherwise, you're gonna regret it.

See, the grumbling of Israel was so twisted because it reflected their entitlement and their defiance of the authority of God, their lack of faith in His goodness and His promises. It came from a place of them thinking they deserved better and that they also knew better than God.

God, staying in Egypt as slaves would have been so much better than wandering in the wilderness with you, having to trust you every day for our daily bread. We grumble because we don't trust God's word and His ways.

Paul is saying, no, verse 16, hold firmly to God's word of life instead. Hold firmly to His word, believe it, trust it, it's good, it's true, especially as those who believe that Christ is risen, especially as those who believe that yeah, Christ did suffer the wilderness experience of obedience unto death on a cross, but God exalted Him, that's the gospel, that's the word of life that you must hold firmly to.

God exalted Christ and He will exalt His sons and daughters as well. And in verses 16 to 18, Paul talks about how this is His ultimate boast, this is what He wants for everyone, the whole church, everyone that He is sacrificing for, laboring for, ultimately He wants their joy in Christ at the last day.

[ 29 : 07 ] And then He closes with two more positive examples, okay, of people living as citizens of the gospel having the same mindset as Christ, Timothy and Epaphroditus. And this could be another sermon too, but just very briefly, look at how He describes Timothy in verse 20.

I have no one else like Him who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks for their own interests, right, that's that whole warped and crooked generation, everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

We are called to be a different kind of generation with a different kind of citizenship. Paul says, but you know that Timothy has proved himself to be different, right? This guy Timothy, he genuinely cares about you, he genuinely cares about the things of Christ more than himself.



And then in verse 29, look, Paul says to honor people also like Epaphroditus, who, verse 30 says, almost died for the work of Christ, right? He risked his life for the things of God, for the things that exalt Christ.

Another Christ-like example in real life, in the flesh, in the church. And the point is, we all have our roles and it is all in service of Christ. We all have an opportunity and a calling and a command to live like Christ, carrying on God's work in the world, whether as a teacher or an apologist, an assistant pastor and evangelist like Timothy, or as just a messenger and a care package transporter like Epaphroditus.

[ 30 : 30 ] Regardless of what we do or what happens to us, God sees and God honors such people, just as he honored and exalted Jesus, risen and ascended into heaven. So just to tie all this up, the question is, will we or won't we pursue this life of honor and work out our salvation with fear and trembling and ultimately with life-giving service?

Timothy and Epaphroditus had no idea that they were going to end up in this record that we'd be reading about 2,000 years later, honored as Christ-like servants in the gospel? What will be our stories?

Right? I think of that Hamilton song, Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story. How will they tell it? I have another slide that I want to share. It's my last slide. It's something that's really stuck with me over the past couple years.

It was written by David Brooks. He's a recently converted New York Times writer. He wrote this book, The Second Mountain. I highly recommend it. The Second Mountain, The Quest for a Moral Life. And he basically says that there are First Mountain people and there are Second Mountain people.

Or another way he puts it is that there are resume virtue people and eulogy virtue people. Resume virtue people focus on individual achievement, career, wealth, and personal happiness.

[ 31 : 45 ] They're motivated by external validation and societal expectations. Their values are success, status, and personal pleasure. And their approach to the world is self-centered and focused on individual goals and achievements.

But eulogy virtue people, they focus on meaning, purpose, commitment, and contributing to something larger than themselves. They're motivated by a desire for deeper fulfillment and connection.

Their values are community, service, love, and moral joy. And their approach is others-centered and focused on building relationships and making a positive impact. Now you can easily guess the kind of person David Brooks suggests we become.

But the more important question is will we? And how? Will we and how? So God's word to us this morning is to consider Timothy, is to consider Paphroditus, consider ancient Israel, consider all the people you most abhor and all the people you most admire, and then above all consider the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and ask yourselves, what kind of person do I want to be?

And what kind of life do I want to live? What is my ultimate salvation? Is it knowing Christ? Is it knowing the God of the universe who went to the cross for me and whose spirit is still at work within me to will and to act according to his perfect purposes?

[ 33 : 03 ] God invites us this morning simply to work out what he has worked for and what he has committed to working in us. Salvation, union with God Almighty.

And that's good news. It's a challenge but it's an invitation that he extends to us in love and gentleness and confidence that he will bring it to completion.

Let's pray. Oh God, fill us with that fear and trembling in your presence and at the same time fill us with that joy, comfort, and security.

and let us work out our salvations. Let us work out our union with Christ. Let us enjoy that. Live dynamically in that as your people so that we might be bright and shining children of God.

Bearing witness, shining like stars in this dark and crooked generation, oh God. Beacons of hope. An alternative way to live for this world, this self-centered, broken world, oh God.

[ 34 : 13 ] In our union with Christ, help us to live out selflessness and sacrifice and servanthood and humility and bring glory to yourself, Lord God, as your people seek to follow their Savior, Jesus Christ.

In his name we pray. Amen.