

Philippians 2:12-13 "The Fragile Self and the Good News"

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless. Amen. Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, you know the conditions of our lives. You know how fragile some of us are. You know the trauma that some of us have had, maybe recently, maybe well in the past, that still affects us. And so Father, you know that some of us are very fragile, even today right here. Some maybe are feeling very strong and put together. But you know each of us deeply, and you love each of us deeply. And so Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would bring your word deep into our heart, bring the good news of Jesus deep into our heart, that we will become in you more and more anti-fragile, more whole and strong. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated.

People in Canada are very fragile. In fact, probably if there was one persistent mistake that I make in ministry is I think I underestimate too much how fragile most people are.

I'm involved in a couple of other Christian organizations. I'm on the board of the Timothy Trust and the Gospel Coalition Canada and City to City Canada. And so occasionally I get involved in some other things in other churches. And a couple of months ago, I was talking to a man about something that was relatively simple. And as I talked to him several times in the conversation, he broke into tears.

[2 : 45] Just broke into tears. Had to pause and wait. It was on Zoom. Had to pause and wait for him to collect himself. And you know, I listened and at the end of it, I said, you know, we need, I think we need to talk again because there's obviously some real pain there, which is bigger than the particular incident.

And he thanked me for that. And we've had several conversations. You know, a lot of times people just need somebody who will listen with compassion. You don't have to be a brilliant counselor and know what to say. You just need to be able to listen with some degree of compassion and patience. That's what just a lot of people need. And, but people are fragile. On the outside, you would have thought that this was a very successful, competent man, but he was fragile.

And I think of another person whose conversation I had once again, a couple of months ago. On the outside, the epitome of confidence and brashness. Yet in conversation with me, they shared how often they just feel completely torn apart as if there's, I mean, they're not saying that they had multiple personality disorder. They weren't saying that, whatever that exactly is. But they did feel like there were just very, very, very, very different voices in their, in their head, uh, tearing, tearing, tearing him apart. And you would never necessarily know it by talking to him. So people are very fragile.

And you could go on and on probably, and many of you know that. And maybe some of you, when I'm saying this, you know that you're very fragile as well, that there's things in your past, uh, and

even in your presence that make you more fragile. The text we're going to look at that Owen read, because we're preaching through the book of Philippians, is a very beautiful passage for, for, uh, for growth and wholeness.

Um, and it's a text to Christians. Uh, so those of you who are outside of the Christian faith, outside of Christ, you can listen in. And it's a very beautiful passage that talks about growth and wholeness in Christ. And, uh, helping in a sense to put together the Humpty Dumpty. A lot of us are Humpty Dumpties and put us together. So I invite you to turn in your Bibles with me to Philippians chapter two.

[5 : 03] And, uh, we're mainly going to be looking at 12 and 13, but we'll look at some of the other verses around it. But Philippians chapter 12, two verses 12 to 13. And, uh, this is a verse to memorize, uh, by the way. It's a verse that, uh, uh, opens up a big vista about understanding, um, the Bible and understanding the Christian life, especially when, as I, in a moment I'm going to show you the little bit, the other bit that you need to, that really opens up the vista. And here's how the text goes.

Therefore, my, oh, and by the way, uh, I think we still have some of these if you would like one. They're ESV, uh, journal Bibles, uh, nice paper, uh, text on one side, clear, uh, free paper on the other side for you to make your own jottings and prayer requests and just whatever. So you're, I'm, that's what I'm reading from. Uh, therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now not only in my presence, but much more in my absence. Uh, so just, just what that means is, uh, what he's about to say is something that he said the 10 or so years earlier when he was with them. So it's not just like some brand new idea he has. Uh, this is part of, I guess, if you could follow him along, his regular teaching wherever he was. So therefore, my beloved, as you've always obeyed, so now not only in my presence, but much more in my absence, and here's the bit, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. I'll read it again. And this is the part, if I were memorizing it, this is the part, in fact, I've more or less memorized. I'm, I'm of that, uh, ancient age that, uh, when I try to, to remember the passages that I've memorized, it's a bit of a mixture of the King James Version, the RSV, the NIV, and the ESV. So it's, if you hear me, uh, recite a text, it's, it's, it's the George, um, put together dog's breakfast version. But, uh, therefore, uh, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Now, this doesn't immediately strike many people as being very helpful. In fact, it sounds a bit, uh, counterintuitive. Like, uh, what's this about fear and trembling? Like, that doesn't sound very hopeful. Uh, you know, fragile people, the last thing fragile people need is more fear. Uh, in fact, what they'd like is to have less fear in their lives, not more. And trembling definitely doesn't sound good. And, um, some people have interpreted this text in such a way that it's as if, uh, what this is talking about is that, you know, you get more of God in you and less of you, and that's how you grow. But that's sort of very frightening to people, especially fragile people, because even though I'm very conscious that myself is very fragile, I actually still like myself and don't want myself to be erased and disappear. Thank you very much. And, and so that's sort of an odd type of thing. And it's not even clear what it means that you're supposed to do for meeting this particular text. So why is it so precious? Well, that's what I'm going to try to show you. I mean, my hope is that by the end of the sermon, you would have decided that you would like to memorize. Therefore, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. And you'd see how precious it is and you want to live it, how beautiful it is.

So the way to begin to understand it is note that very first word that we always jump over, which is the word therefore. And in this particular case, it's not just sort of a little bit of filler. It is really important. It implies that what went on just before this leads to a therefore that leads to this sentence. So what went on just before it? I know this sounds a bit nerdish, but just turn back in your Bibles to verse 5. Now this is the text, 2 Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 to 11, that two Sundays ago, last Sunday we had Steve give us a great sermon on how Jesus speaks to us today. And, but two weeks ago, I preached on this text. So I'm not going to go through all of the technicalities, just a very brief summary of it. If you're curious, you can go and listen to the full sermon. But here's what he says earlier, and that's what the therefore is referring to. Verse 5, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. And just sort of pause.

There's sort of a command that you're to have a type of mind, not only in each person, but communally. And it's a mind that you've already received, but you need to grow deeper into it. And

it comes in Christ Jesus. And this I'll talk more about in a moment. I've talked about it every week, that what it means to be a Christian is that you enter into union with Christ.

[9 : 56] A Christian is one who is in union with Christ, and Christ is in union with them. That's the insignificance of that two-word, two-letter word, in. It's a very important word.

In union with Christ. And then what is it? He goes on in verse 6 to say, who though, this is referring to Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Now, just sort of, and I'll keep reading, therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth, and every, sorry, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Now, there's, as I said two weeks ago, and you can go listen to the sermon, there's lots of very technical language in there, which makes it a bit hard to understand immediately just all by yourself without maybe some other helps, or a minister, or a theologian like Steve to help you with it, but it's communicating a very, very precious view, and what Paul has done is it's like, I don't know how many of you have flown in small planes. We're having missionaries from Angola who are going to be giving us an update about their work with a really important medical missionary work in Angola, and when I went there in 2017, I think it was a long time ago, because I was warned not to go through the main airport, because you had to leave one airport to go to another, nobody spoke English, I would definitely get taken advantage of, and maybe even worse things, so I flew to Namibia, and then in Namibia to a little border community, and then I got picked up by a missionary who owned a plane, and I flew from there to Lubangu, and so I'm just in a very small plane, and you only fly, I don't know how many, 1k, 2k above the ground, so when you're flying, you can see everything, but you have a higher view, right? So that's what this is. This is giving you this bit of a higher view of Jesus, and the higher view of Jesus doesn't begin with him as 30 years old. It doesn't begin with him as a child in the temple. It doesn't begin with him being born within the nativity story. It doesn't even begin with him in the womb of Mary. It begins before that, because it's revealed here, which is all the way through the Bible, that Jesus, that God, the Son of

God, this is this completely counterintuitive story, that God, the Son of God, would willingly set aside his appearance as God, his standing as God, so to speak, in terms of being praised and served and all of that. He would set all of that aside, but he never let go of being God.

We can understand the difference between appearance and nature if we just think of human beings for a moment. For a human being, I mean, right now when you think of human beings, you think of people like me.

[13 : 06] Well, you probably think of somebody, you know, younger than me and better looking and all that type of stuff, but you think of people like us that we can see, but the fact is science has shown that with that egg, that fertilized egg connected to your mother's womb, that has all of the DNA that you have right now, and that is just as human as you are right now, but it doesn't look human, right? It doesn't look human, but it's human. That's how I began. And so all of the nature of George was in my mother's womb, but it doesn't look like George. So we sort of understand that. And so God, the Son of God, sets aside his glory, his prerogatives, the worship that is due him, but he remains God.

He humbles himself by, in a sense, stepping off of his throne. And he humbles himself even more by being taken and taking human nature into himself and becoming human, fully God, fully man, but one person, Jesus Christ. And he humbles himself even more by actually being in a womb. And he humbles himself by being born of what we would probably now call an upper, like a working class family in a conquered people, because the Jewish people were a conquered people under the Romans. And he enters into the Jewish people as a Jewish man, and he lives a Jewish life. And he would have had his mother and his brothers and sisters, and he would have buried his father. And he begins a ministry, and he would have been hungry and thirsty, and he's humbling himself. He suffers the temptations you and I suffer only without sin. He performs miracles and mighty teaching, but he continues to humble himself even to dine on a cross. And he humbles himself to the point of death and tasting all there is to taste of death, whatever that is. And we don't understand death with all of its shame, but whatever it is, he humbles himself and humbles himself and humbles himself.

And that's what's being described here in verses 6 to 8. And then verse 9 describes that Jesus not just rises from the dead, defeating death, defeating sin which causes death, defeating hell and all hostile spiritual powers, but it's not just an act of him having a resurrected body, but it's an act of exaltation. And so you see here everything from leaving the throne to returning to the right hand of God from 2,000 feet in the air, or 2k up in the air, 1,000, whatever it is, 1,000, 1k up in the air, you get this beautiful picture of the humbling of

Christ all out of love for you and me and making us right with God. And that's what I described two weeks ago, is that in a sense when we just do here what's in verses 9 to 11, when I bow my knee, figuratively speaking, to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I confess that he is in fact the Lord and the Savior, that he is God, the Son of God, he is the Messiah, the Christ, who has come to save me. And would you be my Messiah?

Would you be my Savior? Would you be my Lord? And when we bow our knees and acknowledge that, there is this profound mystery that only God can do, where all of who I am is brought into union with Christ, and Christ is brought into union with me. Now to understand the therefore in the text, you need to understand something else. We tend to think of ourselves, I don't know how many of you can see this. I don't know how many of you can see it. It's the bookmark, and it's shiny. I wish I'd picked something which wasn't very shiny, because most of us aren't very shiny. But we think of life as sort of, you know, one moment after another, and we live our lives, and we have a bit of a memory of the past, and bits and pieces of the past, and some hopes and fears for the future. But we live our lives going from moment to moment to moment to moment. And so when we think of being in union with Christ, we think, and it's correct to think like this, that the George right now, standing on his hind legs, speaking to you, is in union with Christ. And that's the right way to think about it. But that's not the complete way to think about it. Because George isn't just George right now.

And so what you need to understand, it's part of why it is that Jesus didn't just God, the Son of God, didn't enter into human race as a 30-year-old man. He's fully human. He comes as a zygote in his mother's womb. And so in a sense, George, let's say I'm right here, and I don't know if my end is going to come really close, or if I have lots of space, but I only know, but this is George right now. From the beginning of that to right now, that's George. All my height, all my depth, all the length of my life, all the way to my conception in my mother's womb, that's me. And when Christ is in union with me, he doesn't just take that part which is from the beginning to now. Let's just say I'm going to be very optimistic and think I have lots more time left. That whole string, even though if I'm only at this part of it, all of that is taken by Christ and is in union with Christ. All of that.

[18 : 34] All of the height, all of the depth, all of the length, all of the breadth, all of the shame, all of the sin, all of the mess, all of the fragility, all of the brokenness, and all of the good, and all of the strong, is all taken and is in union with Christ.

That's what is so profound then about this particular text of scripture. That the therefore is going to be, therefore work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

That's this profound, profound truth that the whole length of my life, from my conception to now, every part of that is taken into Christ and is in union with Christ.

Every part. And this is profound comfort. It means that, you know, God forbid, in five months I do something horrendous that really hurts my wife and hurts my family.

And that will be very hard, and I shouldn't do it, and I pray I won't do anything like that in five months' time or five years' time. But if that happens, Christ knew that when he accepted me.

[19 : 53] That also was paid for by him. And it means, it's the grounds, and this is where we can start to see how it's a profound help for those of us who deal with fragility and with trauma in our past.

It means that if one day, let's say, in counseling or therapy, you realize that there was something that happened to you as a child that was horrendously wounding, and not just as a moment, but you maybe come to realize that that's just not normal to be treated that way, that that was actually quite horrible, and it's quite shocking to you.

To know that Christ, when he takes you as his own and receives you, knew that too, means that you begin to have, as that becomes more precious to you, you have a secure place spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually to look at it, and you don't just look at it by yourself, you look at it with Christ.

And because the text within all of this is a plural, it's both speaking to each of us as individuals, but as us as a collective, it implies as well that there's the body of Christ, that there will be people around us that we can process that with.

And even more horrendous than that is if in therapy or a therapy of a loved one, you realize that you were the one who for years did something very, very horrible to others, and it now comes home to you in a real way, and it wants to completely and utterly unmake you, because you were the victimizer, not the victim.

[21 : 35] Christ knew that too when he accepted you. And you have a mature and secure place with Christ to pour out your heart in repentance and tears of shame and embarrassment and horror at what you had done.

And he already knew it. He receives it. And you have the security to now look at that and in prayer begin to say, how can I make amends for that?

How can I make sure that doesn't happen? You start to see how this begins to be something that it's why after Paul writes all of this, he says, And the word fear and trembling in that text isn't talking about you necessarily being terrified of him.

It really could also be taunted with a type of awe and reverence. Because, in fact, it is quite something of awe to understand when you realize something completely horrible about yourself, or you realize how more fractured and fragile you are than you ever realize.

There is something awe-inducing to realize that Christ knew every part of that, and still he loved you so much that he died for you.

[23 : 08] And when he accepted you as into himself and came into you, all of that came into him as well. All of that came into him as well.

You see, here's the profound truths within all of this, this whole story of his descent and his exaltation. Jesus humbled himself so that the humiliated you can be lifted up to God.

Jesus was despised and rejected so that you would be loved and accepted by the triune God.

Jesus was shamed by human beings so that you in Christ could be honored by the triune God.

That is the gospel. That is the importance of him being your substitute and in him this profound exchange. My shame, my sin, dealt with by him in my place.

His right standing with God, his being brought right up into the very presence of God, mine given to me as a gift in him.

[24 : 26] One other thing about this text, which is so beautiful, and we'll just say, and then the other parts will be relatively quick, I think, but it's significant.

So one of the problems we have when we're very fragile and very, like, broken, it's hard to humble yourself. It's hard to humble yourself.

It's hard to acknowledge that you've done something wrong. Because, you know, you're just trying the best you can to try to hold everything together, and you acknowledge that you've done something wrong, and you really have done something really, really wrong, and you just think that's the beginning of letting everything of your life go to pieces.

And that's why, you know, time and time again in our culture, people's apologies aren't apologies.

They say something like, not, I did something really, really bad, and I shouldn't have done it, and it's wrong, and it hurt you.

Sorry. They say, I'm really sorry you're upset. That's not an apology. You haven't said, you're just sorry somebody else is upset.

[25 : 40] You're not taking responsibility for the fact that I shouldn't have called you all those names, and I shouldn't have acted in a way and slandered you so you didn't get the job. All of those things are wrong. You know, I should have, like, people don't apologize.

It's because we're so, you know, we're so fragile. And that's one of the reasons why, you know, one of the main stories that we tell ourselves about getting better is that people are to get in touch with the real them, and the authentic them, and they are to embark on an inner search and be able to say, this is the authentic me.

And then basically, our culture says, you know, nobody else has a right to tell me who the authentic me is. I figure out my authentic me all by myself, and then all of you folks owe me the encouragement for me to have the autonomy I need to become the authentic person that I really should be, and I am owed your applause.

In a sense, they want verses 9 to 11 of Philippians of being exalted with God, but they don't want the part that went from 6 to 8. And in fact, if that's your view of how you're going to get better, the idea of humbling yourself to serve another person, humbling yourself to give your place to another, humbling yourself to acknowledge that you've done wrong, those things will unmake you.

But here's the big problem. The other thing that our culture wants, that we think will heal us of our fragileness and our brokenness, is love. And there is no love without humbling yourself.

[27 : 29] There is no love without humbling yourself. I've told the story before. It's a great story. There is a man who used to be part of the congregation, Lebanese man, a great guy, but he was very, very, very, very, very, very un-Canadianly direct.

Just one example, when I told him that we were expecting our ninth child, he directly asked me if I understood how birth control worked and implied that if I was smart, I wouldn't have any other kids. And so he was very, very blunt, very direct in lots of ways. It took a while to get used to it, but once I got used to it, that's just the way he is. That was just the way he is. That was fine. Anyway, so one day we were out for lunch. I've told this story before, but I'll tell it again.

We're out for lunch, and we're just making conversation. He asked me how my day was, and I said, well, you know, I did this the other day, and, you know, it was sort of wrong. I think I said sort of wrong. And I said, no, no, it's not sort of wrong.

It was wrong. And so I, you know, just before I came here, I apologized to my wife, and he looked at me and said, I would never have apologized to anybody for what you had just done.

[28 : 33] You shouldn't have apologized. I would never apologize. I was a bit taken aback. And then I said, well, maybe that's why you're divorced twice and currently single, and I'm still married.

And he was taken aback, and then he said, you're probably right. You're probably right.

You see, you can't be in a marriage. You can't even be in a good friendship if you don't at times humble yourself to acknowledge you're wrong. And that's even separate from humbling yourself to serve the other person or to not have your way in things.

So you see, we're caught in this fragility. Humbling is just going to make us more unbroken. I mean broken. And yet we think that the autonomy and love will solve us, but our quest for autonomy and our quest for love are at war with each other and mean that we won't get it.

And the thing which is so beautiful about this text is how the two of them are together in one story of Christ. He humbles himself so that you will be exalted.

[29 : 45] He humbles himself, and God exalts him. And when I am in union with Christ, he dies my death on the cross. He tastes my shame.

And that story of Christ and the person of Christ, I am in union with him. And that is, therefore, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God at work in you to will and to work for his good pleasure.

It is the story of the gospel becoming more real to our hearts in union with Christ that we start to see the place of humbling and exalting, not just as an abstraction, but in the concrete stories of Jesus, and not just a story, but he is alive.

And he walks with me and he talks with me. Steve quoted that psalm last week. And that's the beauty of this text. Now, let's just read it again, verse 12 and 13.

If you could put it up on the screen. Therefore, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

[31 : 05] Like, what on earth does that mean? Like, George, like, how is it? Well, here's the way that I was taught it when I was a kid. And it's actually well-meaning but quite destructive.

What people would tell me when I was a kid and a young person, and even in my early years as a Christian, in my late teens and early 20s, they'd say, well, what this means is there needs to be more of God and less of you.

Very simple. Sounds smart. But as I said, I don't know. Like, I'm the only me I have. I don't know. I want to be erased. And what does it mean? Like, so it begins with, like, it's 99% me and 1% God, and then it moves to 90-10 and 50-50.

Is it, like, what does it mean? In a sense, what they say is they're using an analogy as if you were to take some wine. Imagine you're a glass of wine, and you pour God's oil, you know, the oil of anointing.

[32 : 07] You use the image of that Old Testament image of the oil of anointing. And this other image, it's also an Old Testament image of wine, right? So it's as if you're a glass of wine, and then

you become a Christian, so God's oil gets poured into you.

But what happens when oil gets poured into a full glass of wine? Well, the oil goes right to the bottom. The wine goes to the top. It means that the wine falls out of the glass. And eventually, if you just keep pouring, there's only oil in the cup, and there's no wine.

Is that the type of picture? No, it's not the picture that's being painted here. Remember, the whole thing, remember, this is all about love. So what you need to think of is this. Imagine somebody comes to you.

Imagine it's me. I come to you. Louise and I come to you for some marriage counseling. And we say, listen, I don't know. Our marriage is in trouble. We don't know what's going on. We understand it has to be 100%. And so for a while, we tried that on weeks that begin with odd numbers, George would give 100% towards the marriage.

And weeks that begin with even numbers, Louise would give 100% towards the marriage. And that wasn't working at all. So now we're trying that every week, every day, I give 50% and Louise gives 50%.

[33 : 15] And that's not working at all as well. And you'd all go, duh, you give 100%, George, and Louise, you give 100%.

Right? That's the text. You're in union with Christ. Now, here's the wonderful thing about this thing, this image. You know, Louise and I are fallen human beings trying to become more Christ-like, trying to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work within us to will and to work for his good pleasure.

And that means that we get tired, we get grumpy, we get selfish, all of those types of things. And as we all know, because many of us have had problems in relationships, sometimes it just gets to that point that you have to break them off.

But here's the thing, Christ never tires. He's never grumpy. His love towards you is unending. And that means in relationship with him you have hope. It's worth it to get on your knees and repent. It's worth it to try to amend your life again.

[34 : 29] It's worth it to try to get back to trying for 100%. Because you can be absolutely guaranteed his 100% never wanes, never wavers, never fades, never weakens.

That's the beauty of, therefore, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work within you and to will and to work for his good pleasure. But what is it you do?

I mean, there's a problem here with this whole text. It says, okay, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. But it doesn't tell you what to do. What am I supposed to do?

Well, I mean, just very, very briefly, I want to get to the bigger thing, but very, very briefly, if you look at verses 14 to 16, it says, do all things without grumbling or disputing or questioning.

And the word there just means, we all know there's a difference between asking an honest question and asking malicious questions. And disputing is referring to malicious questions. That you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.

[35 : 38] I don't have time to explain why we all actually agree. Actually, you want to know why we all agree with this, our own generation being described as twisted and all? Because whenever other generations we think of, like 300 years ago or 200 years ago, 100 years ago, we look at them, we think, how on earth could they put up with all those terrible things they did?

And just remember, 200 years from now, we're going to say that about our generation. How could they be like that? They're all going to say that. But anyway, and among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.

And so what this whole thing is saying here, holding fast to the word of life, and I can keep on going. And what it's just basically saying is that you need to read the Bible and study the Bible, but you study the Bible in light of Philippians 2, 6 to 11.

That's the lens by which you read the Bible, which is light and life. And then you understand Philippians 2, 6 to 11 in light of the Bible. And that, in a sense, is still going to not tell you exactly what you have to do.

Or does that mean now that I'm looking for all the rules in the Bible to figure out what to do? No. This text is vastly more beautiful than this. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work within you, too willing to work with his good pleasure.

[36 : 53] You have all the weakness you need for God to work in you. It's not about your strength. I'll use two fancy words, the normative principle and the regulative principle.

And when we say, well, what exactly is it you have to do? We're thinking within terms of the regulative principle. And I think that fundamentally that's not a biblical idea. And I'll give you an example. If there's a park out there, let's just imagine that there's a big park out there.

And we don't know if we can go into the park, whatever. And so what we want is we want there to be a book of rules. And we want to open up the book to the book of rules.

And we want to say the first rule is, number one, go into the park. I'll go into the park. Second rule, walk 100 yards into the park and sit at the second bench on the right.

I'll do that. Sit in that seat for 15 minutes. Then I'll do that. Then walk 200 yards further into the park and sit at the bench on the left.

[37 : 58] And you do that. Now chew gum for 25 minutes. Okay, I'll do that. Now leave the park. That's what we want. But what does the Bible say?

There's a huge park out there for you to enjoy. Just a couple of simple rules. Don't bring firearms. Don't play loud music. And if you bring a dog, pick up the poop.

Well, what am I going to do in the park? Play Frisbee? Pretend you're all Harry Potter people and play whatever that game is, running around on broomsticks, chasing some little ball?

Do handstands? Write poetry? Have a nap? Dance? Just go. So work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, too willing to work for his good pleasure.

You have a whole... What's so brilliant about this? This is just as true... I almost said my age. It doesn't really matter how old I am. For old George as it was for 18-year-old George. It's just as true if you are a subsistence farmer in southern Angola as it is if you live in Rockcliffe and are a billionaire.

[39 : 18] It is just as true if you are a man or if you are a woman. It is just as true if you are poor or if you are rich. It is... You are all of who you are.

The real you is in union with Christ. Work out being in union with him to become more like him. And for some of you, it's going to mean right away you've got to deal with your idolatry of money and become more generous.

Maybe for some of you it's going to be about your idolatry for wanting power and you have to be willing to turn the other cheek. For some of you it's going to be that you can't do relationships because you always get angry and you need to have some help with all of that type of stuff.

And it's going to be about your money, your sexuality, your art, your creativity, how you think, how you work, how you play, how you relate to other people. Work out your salvation in all of your life. Christ is with you.

You are in him. Work it out. And have fun, too. Like dance dances. Write poetry. Build decks.

[40 : 27] Go out for coffee. Run a half marathon. I think that's where some of our people are. Do all those things. The Christian life is not a whole pile of rules that you have to follow.

It is think of what Christ has done for you. Give your life to Christ and be in union with him. And therefore work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who is at work within you to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Amen. Let's stand and pray. Amen. Amen. Father, some of us are terrified with the freedom that you desire us to have.

Because, Father, we'd really like it better if there were just a whole pile of rules that we could just tick off every day and know that we were really excellent at them. And, Father, you know that that only creates proud, self-righteous people.

So we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would bring us to your word, your word in light of who Jesus is, that your Holy Spirit would bring us to Jesus in light of what your word says about him is true, and that as we, Father, have who Jesus is brought ever closer to our heart and more formative of who we are, that we would work out our salvation, becoming more like Christ in our day-to-day life, that we would work on that, knowing, Father, that however much we try, you cheer us on and give all of the work and all of the, you do way more.

[42 : 06] Help us to know, Father, we have all the weakness we need for you to work through us in a powerful way, and that that's a good thing. And so, Father, we ask that you have us to be so enamored with Christ and so trusting of who he is in the depths and in his words and his works.

We will work on that in the areas of our money and our sexuality and of power and of class and of anxiety and fears and fractured self. We work on all of these things, knowing that you desire us day by day to become more like Christ, and that when we die, the first and final word that you will say to those of us in Christ is, welcome, child.

I am so glad that you are here. We ask all these things in Jesus' name and all God's people said, amen. Amen.