

# Philippians: The Book of Joy (Phil. 2:12-18)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning, church. There's always one.

Christians have often been debated and confused, and many pages and much ink has been spilled, pages have been filled, trying to write and discuss just where and how much is God's involvement in one's salvation and sanctification, and how much is our responsibility.

What part is said differently is under God's sovereignty purview, and which part is our human responsibility in response to that. Today's text is going to respond in part to answering and helping us answer that question, but we will not sufficiently answer all of your questions today, but we will be talking about that very topic in our text.

If I had to put a big idea, if you are one who takes notes, the big idea of today's sermon is this. We want to be a people who carefully live our lives so that you can carefully shine your light.

Carefully live your life so that you can carefully shine your light. That would be the big idea of our text today. I would normally do a review of where we find ourselves in the book of Philippians, but our text itself helps us do that, so we're going to just dive into our text, and it will help us give an overview of where we find ourselves in the book of Philippians.

[ 1 : 47 ] If you have a copy of the scripture with you, we're going to read the passage that Ryan gave us, Philippians chapter 2. We're going to begin in verse 12.

The verse opens with the word, Therefore, beloved, as you have always obeyed. In what way does Paul have in mind the church at Philippi has always obeyed?

And it's important to realize that he begins with therefore, so whatever he's talking about in their area of obedience, it occurred in some other previous text that he just wrote to them about.

And so what do we find that the Philippian church has always obeyed them in? Well, we look back in chapter 1, verse 27, and we read, Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

So whether I come to you or whether I'm absent, I hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, in one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

[ 2 : 53 ] And so we see that they have been unified in their identity and in their calling as believers in Christ, that they want to both know Christ and make him known, and they have been obedient in that way.

Going further in chapter 2, verse 3, we see that humility, it takes humility, counting others as more significant than ourselves, as key to understanding that.

And then Paul continues into chapter 2, verse 8, sharing with us that Christ demonstrates that humility to the Father, looking out for the interest of others because it says that he being founded human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death and the cross.

And so we see this church has been obedient in being unified in their identity in Christ and their calling in Christ, that they are called to both know the Lord and make him known, and they've been obedient in that way.

And that's how Paul opens our section. Continuing on, though, we want to think about what it means to carefully live out our lives. And we carefully live out our lives.

[ 4 : 11 ] Paul's going to mention three ways that we are to carefully live out our lives. Live your life. Firstly, we carefully live out our life by working out our salvation.

The word salvation, there are three aspects or three dimensions, one could say, to our salvation. There is a past dimension to our salvation that is called justification.

That is when believers in Christ place their faith in Christ in response to the Father as our Savior and Lord. And for me, I placed faith in Christ when I was 19 years old.

So I was justified when I was 19 years old for me personally. Second, there's a present dimension to our salvation, and this is called sanctification. That is the time in a believer's life between justification, when we were saved, and when we will meet the Lord someday.

And then that future dimension of our salvation is called glorification, when we are indeed with the Lord. And so someone could say, with regard to salvation, yes, we were saved, yes, we are being saved, and yes, we will one day be saved, encompassing all three of these aspects of our salvation.

[ 5 : 31 ] But here in our text, we're called to work out our salvation, so it's more present tense, it's referring to our sanctification aspect of our salvation. And notice it does not say, work for your salvation.

Work out your salvation is absolutely critical. Salvation is a free gift by the grace of God. This is not anything we can do.

We cannot work for one's salvation. This is radically different than most religions or all other religions in this world. Salvation cannot be earned through good works.

Yet once we have obtained it, we are to work out our salvation. The word work out is a verb. It is a command, and it means to have a continued emphasis in it.

So the idea is, keep on working out to completion your salvation. You are not yet unified. You are not fully sanctified.

[ 6 : 37 ] You are not yet yielded to Christ fully. You are not yet fully mature. So therefore, continue to put effort into that.

Work out your salvation. Apparently, a marathon is not long enough, 26.2 miles. And so now, there are people who run ultra marathons.

This is relatively new to me. I think, why would you want to do a marathon to begin with? But there are apparently some who just think 50 to 100 miles is in the category of ultra marathon.

and put 100 miles in your mind. That would be like running from Spokane down to Pullman, the home of the Harvard of the Palouse, and then run back to Colfax on the way back, and that would put you around 100 miles.

Why? I don't know. But, if we think about the metaphor of a marathon, that ultra marathon running that race, the starting line would represent the moment one receives salvation as justification.

[ 7 : 50 ] One is justified in Christ. That's the starting point. And then we have this big race in front of us. There would inevitably be hardships, setbacks, injuries, blessings, second wins.

I would need about 100 second wins on a race like that. All while striving to finish the race, or in our case, all the while using this marathon, ultra marathon metaphor, all the while working out our salvation.

All the while striving toward maturity in Christ is another way of saying it. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9 of a similar metaphor of running this race.

He writes it this way. Do you not know that in a race all runners run, but only one receives a prize? So run that you may obtain it.

Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable wreath. So I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air, but I discipline my body, keeping it under control, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified.

[ 9 : 09 ] Everything in life takes effort. Let me just share with you one area of my life that over the course of recent years, more recent years, that I have been putting deliberate effort into into my own maturity and sanctification.

I don't know what it looks like in your life, but I want to put some tangible example to these words. We know that we are to rejoice with those who rejoice, and yet I have found in my life historically that to be a very difficult task.

Why? Because perhaps like you, I may be given to envy or I may be given to jealousy or I may be given to man, I want that for my life, whatever it is.

So you can imagine someone comes to you and says, I got, I just got a job. I got that job and it's your dream job. I finally met someone and now I'm engaged.

I'm going to be married. We had our third child. I found to be pregnant. We're going to have our third child. I received that promotion at work.

[ 10 : 31 ] We just purchased our first home. The doctors came back and I'm clear. My diagnosis is clear with a clean bill of health.

And there are intangibles, things like the Lord has worked in me in such a way where now I have peace. And you're like, I want peace. Or perhaps someone is able to travel or go on a vacation and you're like, man, I want to go on that vacation.

Or perhaps it's even more subtle of like, my wife and I just enjoyed a meal out and you're like, I wish I had someone to go eat out with and share a meal together.

Whatever it is, this area of rejoicing with others who rejoice has been hard. And so, I have striven to delight in others as the Lord delights in others.

The Lord delights in me and I want to delight in other people and demonstrate that delight in practical ways. And one way that I can delight in what God is doing in others is just to rejoice with them.

[ 11 : 45 ] And that takes selflessness and a discipline to do that when I receive good news that another person is rejoicing and I can say, I am so excited for you.

Genuinely, from a heart that is genuinely grateful for you and I see what the Lord is doing and to delight and even engage them in conversation that is selfless saying, tell me about what the Lord is doing.

That's what it may look like for me to work out my salvation. This is just a specific area of maturity in my life that has been a labor for some time. I don't know what it looks like for you.

but it takes intentional effort to grow as a Christian, to live a life holy, fruitful, maturing, pleasing to the Lord, to work out your salvation.

It's constant work and effort necessary to finish the task or to finish the race. Work out your salvation. And we're told even how to do it.

[ 12 : 49 ] We're to do it with fear and trembling. have this reverential awe for the Lord. Fear is the beginning of wisdom. And I think about the verse in Isaiah 66 that reads this that says, all these things my hand has made so that all these things came to be declares the Lord.

But this is the one to whom I will look. He who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. I want to be a person who works out my salvation with fear and trembling and is someone who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at God's word.

That I want to take him at his word of what he declares to be true, right, and good. This word that the Lord has given us is qualitatively different than any other book you would read.

It is the only book that is inspired by God. God breathed. And so, I want to be a person that trembles at his word and works out my salvation with fear and trembling.

So, what is the Lord asking of you right now? What circumstance or relationship has he placed in your life? What response to that circumstance or person would be pleasing to the Lord?

[ 14 : 15 ] How do you need to trust the Lord with a circumstance or person? How does your thinking need to change to be increasingly in alignment with the Lord's heart and will with regard to your circumstance or with regard to that person?

How can you be grateful in identifying with Christ in your present circumstance and in the relationship with any person? And how does the use of your language need to change using words that give life?

What does that look like? How does I don't know how you are working out your salvation with fear and trembling. I gave you an example in my life.

What does it look like in yours? I pray that we would all have an area areas in our life that we're mindful where we're deficient and we want to place effort into that.

Okay, so we say carefully live out your life. Well, how do we do that? By working out our salvation. Secondly, that's our responsibility part, but what is God's sovereignty part?

[ 15 : 19 ] What is his participation in your sanctification? The second one's going to answer that. So carefully live out your life by working out your salvation and entrusting yourself to God's work is the second point.

Entrusting yourself to God's work and this is what God is doing. For it is God, verse 13, who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Notice, there's kind of a play on words. We are to work out your own salvation, we're told in verse 12, because it is God who works in us.

There's play on words there. Nobody, nobody wants and does more than the Lord for your sanctification than God.

Nobody does more to want and does more for your salvation or your sanctification than the Lord himself. He is the one who works in you both to will and to do or to work for his good pleasure.

[ 16 : 22 ] I want to show you a photo, I believe, of the 21-year-old Scott in China and you can ignore the fanny pack. What I want to draw your attention to is the two icons or the two idols that sit there.

How is this so staggeringly different? For it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. God is so unlike the other deities and false religions of this world and let me just point out to you this example.

When I was reading the passage today, this memory of this came to me as I was studying. These two idols that you see here are figurines that people have made and painted and they sit them in this basically I'm in a one car garage size shelter for these two idols.

They are representations of real demons though. There are demonic hosts. I'm in southern China north of Vietnam in that area where the minority people groups of the Miao people, the Yi people, and the Kajah people are.

They're up in the hills in this region of China. And in this region those people groups are terrorized by demons.

[ 17 : 52 ] and so they have made these two idols to sit in this shelter and you can see the chicken blood that is dripping from the line there.

Right before I went in here this lady came in and she cleaned out all of the apples and fruit and other things that they had sacrificed to these idols or had given to the idols.

And there's incense burning in front of them and all this kind of thing. They're making because they're terrorized and they're fearful. So many of the false religions are motivated by worshipers out of fear and superstition.

Those demons control the people there and they're terrorized and so to appease the demons they burn incense or they will bring fruit or they will sacrifice a chicken or an animal.

They will do all of these things because they're terrorized by these demons. And their response, their worshipful response is an appeasement of the deity trying to assuage the deity's anger and thus avoid problems and positively gain good health and prosperity and power and so they visit this site to do those things.

[ 19 : 09 ] But how is that unlike the God of the Bible? How is that unlike God? God is not remote. He is present.

God is not impersonal. He is personal. God is not indifferent. He died to demonstrate his love and continues to work in your life for your good and his glory.

Nor is God reactive. He initiates. Look at our passage. God is not good. For it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Oh, our God is unlike all other gods. Notice he says to will and to work. So notice he gives you the motivation.

He provides the will. God gives you the will to do what is right before God. God gives you the inclination of your heart to do what is right before him. God gives us a holy discontent, a humble recognition that one's life always falls short of God's standard of holiness.

[ 20 : 24 ] And God gives you a holy aspiration before God and instills a genuine hatred of sin and a cultivation of genuine desire for righteousness. That is what God is doing in the life of each of us.

He is at work for your sanctification. He is active in his will toward you. Secondly, giving you a will, giving you the motivation.

Secondly, giving you the ability, the work. He is energizing us for his good work. So he's giving you the motivation and he's giving you the ability, energizing you.

to bring about your maturity or your sanctification. Hebrews, I find it interesting, affirms this very same truth in Ephesians 13 verses 20 and 21.

It reads, I'm just going to skip down to verse 21 for this time. It says, equipping you for every good thing that you may do his will.

[ 21 : 28 ] So, that we may do his will. That's our part. And then it says, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Christ. So it is God who is working in us as we work out our salvation.

For it is God who works in both to will and to work. And it says, for his good pleasure. For his good pleasure. For God's glory or for his good pleasure.

And you think, well, is God some kind of egotistical God that he needs to do, energizes for his good pleasure? No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Let me illustrate it this way.

My father taught me to ride a bike. And it was his desire for me to be able to ride a bike. And I wanted to ride a bike because I knew that that would be just a thing.

If my dad is into riding bikes, I better ride a bike. So my dad sets me on a bike and we live on a gravel road. I guess road rash with gravel in it helps you learn faster.

[ 22 : 33 ] So we're there and my dad is pushing me from behind. He's holding and stabilizing and helping me balance with his arm on my shoulder as I'm trying to ride this bike.

And I remember the first time I got it. I went a little bit of distance free without falling. And it was the first time I kind of got a sense, oh, this is how it's done. This is now balancing on my bike.

And I could hear my dad from behind me cheering me on and I can hear my mom from the porch cheering me on. And so I got to ride my bike so my dad's pleasure I heard.

But who is benefiting from my dad's pleasure? I am. So it's, I'm benefiting from my dad's pleasure. He is the one who is at work to will and to do for his good pleasure.

He's energizing me for that. My dad is helping me do that and he is pleased and I benefit. I learned to ride the bike. I received the benefit and it pleased my father that his son could finally ride a bike.

[ 23 : 45 ] So it is with our sanctification we receive through work and the benefit of God's initiation and his effort and the father is pleased. Oh, what an amazing God we have.

so we are to carefully live out our life. We do that for working out our salvation. We entrust ourselves to the Lord and thirdly, we do so by ceasing to complain.

Look with me in verse 14. Do all things without grumbling and disputing. Do all things without grumbling and disputing. In western society, we are by far the most prosperous culture and history of mankind.

except for the very poor, people have all the needs met and much of what they want. Yet many are seldom satisfied and arguably we are the most discontented society ever.

So we must guard against discontentment with gratitude. We must guard against dissatisfaction with a grateful heart. We must guard against being self-indulgent where our primary concern is just me.

[ 24 : 53 ] Discontentment breeds impatience. An unfortunate scene that happens in Spokane every day is this.

There will be a line at a grocery store or pick a line somewhere and whoever the customer service person is working at the cashier will not make a mistake or do something.

There is a computer system will shut down or whatever and now the line is just waiting. And just watch the frustration in the line. There will be people who will dramatically shift their weight from one leg to another in their frustration.

They are trying to contain it but it is obvious. They are communicating how long is this going to be and then there is going to be the catching of the other people in line like are you getting this? And there will be the catching of the eyes and the rolling of the eyes and all of this stuff.

And I am thinking what is the big deal? Are you that important? And so I have when that happens I have just pleasantly now just engaged people in conversation.

[ 25 : 57 ] Hey, and I'll introduce myself. My name is Scott. What's your name? Looks like we might be here for a while so let me just get to know you for a minute. We both have nothing to do and so instead of demonstrating our frustration why can't we turn this into an opportunity to love one another?

that's not often how everyone responds. What's even more fun is watch for one's flight to get canceled and then oh boy everyone has to deboard the plane and find other alternatives.

That's fun. Watch the complaining. Watch the grumbling. It's very unfortunate and we're given to it all the time. It didn't start with us it started with Adam.

He blamed his circumstances on the Lord. The woman you gave me it's God's fault apparently. Cain complained bitterly to God. Moses complained to the Lord and the wandering wilderness generation with Moses complained deeply for wandering for 40 years.

Paul writes of that generation in 1 Corinthians 10:9-10 it says this let us not try the Lord as some of them did speaking of the wandering wilderness generation and they were destroyed by the serpents nor grumble as some of them did and they were destroyed by the destroyer.

[ 27 : 20 ] In Judges chapter 16 we read this that grumblers and finding fault follow after their own lusts. They complain arrogantly and flattering people for the sake of their own gain.

Complaining and grumbling is easy to give into and yet Paul here says hey do all things without grumbling and disputing all things. Every complaint that a believer makes is a sin ultimately against the Lord and is one of the ugliest sins.

Sadly complaining can be one of the most socially acceptable sins one can ever commit. Complaining demonstrates a lack of trust and submission to God's providential will.

Just as the thorn in the flesh was a nuisance to Paul and he asked the Lord to remove it three times he finally embraced God's providential will and he concluded God's grace is sufficient.

Paul embraced God's providential will God's boundless grace God's infinite wisdom and love. Probably because of weather George and Joanne are not here today.

[ 28 : 35 ] George is the gentleman who usually sits in a wheelchair here sitting by his good friend Joanne who often sits here. And George and Joanne when I first was getting to know them Joanne said to me something that I'll never forget about George.

So here's George he has suffered a stroke he has paralysis on one side of his body he is wheelchair bound and he lives in a retirement center.

Those things are obvious I could go on. As I look at George there would be some things that I might be tempted to complain about and yet this is what Joanne said about George she said there's something you need to know about George Scott oh what's that she said I have never once heard him complain wouldn't that be great for that to be said of you may contentment gratitude patience thanksgiving praise increase on our lips not complaining not grumbling so we are to carefully live out our life Paul has given us three things so far by looking out for your salvation by entrusting yourself to God by ceasing to complain and then there's there's motivations for why not complain that

Paul lists here for us the first one is found in verse 15 there's three reasons I'm going to name them for you and then we're going to look at them we're going to cease to complain that we're going to give them five or three motivations for your sake for the world's sake and for your pastor's sake let's look at all three of them yeah so the first one is for your sake verse 15 look with me here that you verse 15 may be blameless innocent children of God without blemish!

stop complaining so you would be the kind of children that God would have you to be he's working out your salvation part of it is to be a blameless innocent people who are without complaint children without blemish be holy and blameless before your God as Ephesians would say stop complaining for your own sake if you will is Paul's argument the second one stop complaining for the sake of the unsaved world you are to be this children of God without blemish look with me again in 15 the latter part of 15 in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world the second motivation for not complaining and working in concert with the Lord for your salvation and for sanctification the second reason is the negative impact on the unsaved

[ 31 : 43 ] Paul is saying listen there is a generation out there that is perverse and crooked who do not know me and when you are given to complaint you are acting just like them!

to the whole generation out there that needs the Lord and complaining sinks your witness quicker than anything because he says among whom you shine as lights in the world again what was my big idea in this message is carefully live out your life so you can carefully shine your light and then verse 16 we read holding fast the world life we get into the pastor's sake so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain and labor in vain let's take a time out and say who is speaking here

Paul is to the church at Philippi and he's like stop complaining work in concert with the Lord for your sanctification and trust yourself to him why because I want in the day of Christ when the Lord returns the apostle Paul is saying that I want to be proud that I did not run in labor in vain and in part it's your responsiveness to the Lord church at Philippi that is in part my reward when I meet the Lord even if I am poured out as a drink offering among the sacrificial offerings of your faith I am glad and rejoice with you Paul is excited for the church there at Philippi but there is this aspect that he's like I didn't birth this church God birthed the church but Paul planted the seeds through his witness and we remember the first sermon being introduced to those who were at Philippi Lydia the seller of purple the

Philippian jailer the possessed slave girl we've met those people and Paul those people are fresh on Paul's mind he knows those people he testified it to the gospel to those people they came to faith in Christ and he said I want you blameless pure before the Lord mature so don't complain don't give into your flesh don't do that I want to be proud that I did not run in vain and I stirred up what is right in you don't give into your flesh so church let us carefully live our lives so that we can carefully shine our light and would you pray with me Lord I thank you for a day when we can consider what your word says Lord I thank you that you care so deeply for our sanctification for it is

God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure God thank you for your initiation in our lives to work in concert with you for good works and thank you for giving us instruction as well and with responsibility that we are to work in concert with you by working out our salvation with fear and trembling thank you Lord for your initiating work and thank you for our responsibility Lord I pray that we would be a people who would be blameless and innocent before you without blemish that we would shine as lights in this world your heart is for the nations as ours is as well your heart is for our neighbor as ours is as well your heart is for our friends and family roommates colleagues workers and ours is as well thank you

[ 36 : 47 ] Lord that we are to live carefully that may we carefully shine our light as well we love you Lord may we be faithful in proclaiming the gospel and it's in your name we pray amen