

Work Out Your Own Salvation

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Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] The following sermon is made available by Lakeside Bible Church in Cornelius, North Carolina.

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Olympians 2 and verse 12. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure, do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain, yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.

For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me. The content of these verses that we just read really seems to be a summary of this first section of Paul's letter to the Philippian church.

[1 : 48] But of course, these verses aren't meant to be just a summary. They're not meant to just be a summarization of previously stated truth. They still have a very specific purpose for us.

They have a specific purpose for our understanding of the Christian life now that we are moving away from this doctrinal digression that Paul has made in verses 5 through 11.

In the last couple of weeks, we've studied about the person of Jesus Christ as Paul explains it here, and we finish up with the lordship of Christ. Now Paul gets to verses 12 through 18, and he's turning our attention now away from the doctrinal and back to the practical.

So now that he has presented who Jesus Christ is, what he has done for us in salvation, he has in verses 9 through 11 presented him as the Lord that we must bow before.

Now he turns our attention back to obeying that Lord. Because he is our Lord, this is what it means to follow him. And so these verses primarily focus in on this process of sanctification in the life of a believer.

[3 : 01] Sanctification is just a theological term that we use. It refers to the process in which God fashions our hearts, and he fashions our wills, and he makes us more like Christ.

And Paul's drawing the attention of the Philippian believers to this fact. And he's basically saying, once again, you need to be concerned with sanctification.

You need to be concerned with personal obedience to the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that he's just described in verses 9 through 11. The first thing that you can write down in verse number 12 and 13 is that we see the demand for obedience or the demand for sanctification.

Look with me again at verses 12 and 13. Paul says, There is a corrective nature in Paul's words here.

But it's a correction that's communicated with a very loving tone, especially when we see that he uses this word, beloved. Alistair Begg, when preaching on this, Alistair Begg is one of my favorite preachers in the whole world.

[4 : 32] In fact, he probably is my favorite preacher that I have. He said this when preaching on this passage. He said, If we are issuing a challenge or offering a rebuke, we should have earned the right to do so.

Those whom we speak to with forcefulness and with direction will be better able to receive such correction and direction if we can honestly refer to them as beloved or as dear friends.

But what is this loving correction that he's actually making? He's lovingly instructing these Christians to concern themselves with the process of sanctification by working out their own salvation.

Now, again, this isn't to be confused with a method of obtaining salvation through good works. The scripture is clear that salvation only comes through faith by the grace of God, that there's nothing we can do to earn it, that there's no amount of goodness that you could possibly build up that would make you good enough for God.

We're all sinful. We're all unrighteous. So our salvation comes by God's grace as we trust in Christ through faith. What Paul's referring to here is this process of conformity to Christ.

[5 : 57] What he's saying is essentially that there is this work of God in our hearts that needs to be worked out to the outside. That in salvation, at the moment that we come to Christ in faith, we get this indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit where God begins to transform our hearts on the inside.

He doesn't start with the external transformation. He starts with the internal transformation. Salvation is a matter of the heart. It's a matter of the will.

It's a matter of the mind. And God begins to do this work when we come to Christ in faith. And then from there, Paul's saying, you need to let this transformation that God is doing on the inside, you need to let it work out to the outside.

You let it work its way out in demonstration of obedience and demonstration of following the Lord and following his commands in obedience to him.

Again, Alistair Begg is helpful here when he says we don't work up our salvation and we don't work for our salvation. We work out our salvation.

[7 : 10] From the inside out is what really Paul is referencing here. It's not an optional element of the Christian life. This is not something that we are told we have the choice between.

Rather, Paul demands it. And he commands it in this correction to the Philippian church and then to us as well. There's two elements to this sanctifying work that I think is helpful for us to understand here.

One is man's responsibility to obey. And the other is God's inner working to bring about that obedience. Let's look at man's responsibility first. Look at verse 12 one more time.

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

The instruction for working out the salvation clearly indicates that there is a responsibility in the part of the individual in which they will be held accountable.

[8 : 11] In this command, we are held responsible to God for the way that we live our lives. We're held accountable to God for the thoughts that we have. We're held accountable to God for the deeds that we act upon.

And there's two elements to this responsibility here in verse 12. The first is the timing of our obedience. The timing of our obedience. When are we supposed to obey? And the answer is very easily always, always obey.

Look at what he says. Verse 12. As you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.

One of the most common excuses for unbelievers in rejecting Christianity is the church's record of producing rampant hypocrisy.

Perhaps you've invited somebody to come to church or maybe you've shared your witness of Jesus Christ with somebody that you work with and maybe a response that you've heard or that they have indicated is I don't like to go to church.

[9 : 16] There's just too many hypocrites. Too many hypocrites that are putting on a show and they're just pretending to really love the Lord. They're just pretending, but really, I know what their life is like.

And of course, it's not necessarily an invalid excuse. Of course, in response to that, we urge our friends and our family to look to the one that we follow rather than his followers.

We look to Christ first who perfectly exemplified this morality that they refer to. But nonetheless, there is great damage that's done to the preaching of the gospel when those preaching it don't always act like Christians.

We all remember times when we were in school, especially middle school and high school, because this is when you really started to figure it out. When the teacher had to go to the office for a few minutes. Do you remember that?

One of the schools that I grew up in, I went to a couple of different schools, but one of the schools that I grew up in in my younger years, some of my classes were in a building that was several yards like on the other side of campus from where the office was.

[10 : 24] And if my teacher came in one particular day and was unprepared in some way and had to go make copies or something like that, she would have to go all the way to the other side of campus to the office which gave us about 20 minutes to do whatever we wanted to do.

You know what I'm talking about? The teacher leaves the room, heads to the office, goes off to do whatever it is. Maybe she gets a phone call or whatever. And while the teacher is in the room, there's great obedience and there's order and there's structure to what's going on.

But as soon as the teacher leaves the room, all chaos ensues, right? And this is exactly how Christians treat their walk with Christ. whenever the spiritual authorities in their life are around, whether that be a parent or whether it just be a spiritual mentor in your life or whether it be a pastor or whatever it is, whenever they're around, whenever they're investing in our lives, whenever we know that they're going to see what we're doing, we do whatever we need to do and we do it the best way that we can.

But as soon as we get to a point where the accountability is gone, how many of us tend to now let go of that element of obedience to the Lord? And our obedience becomes less about pleasing the Lord and it becomes more about pleasing whoever our authority is in the area at that particular moment in time.

The problem with this is this level of hypocrisy is not only sinful, this level of hypocrisy does great damage to our efforts in the gospel. How many children have grown up and abandoned the church because they saw this hypocrisy exemplified in their parents?

[11 : 52] where mom and dad were one way when they were at church and they're a completely different way when they're at home. How many church members have been hurt and maybe left a church because this was exemplified in their church body, their church membership?

Where they were hurt in one way or they saw this hypocrisy and maybe a blind eye was turned toward the hypocrisy. They were hurt by it and it did damage to the church. How many communities have we heard about?

That the damage to the gospel witness that a church may have had was prevalent because of a revelation of sin in the pastor's life and hypocrisy there.

Paul sets up right here at the beginning of this passage, he says, not only are you to concern yourself with obedience but you're to concern yourself with it all the time. When are we to obey the Lord? When are we to exemplify this sanctifying process?

We're to do it all the time in all places with all people. There's also a tone here for our obedience.

[13 : 02] In addition to the timing, there's a manner in which he says that we're to obey. He says we're to work out this salvation with fear and trembling.

Now, living obediently in fear of God is not having a constant anxiety about God pouring out sudden judgment.

Think of the person that is afraid to do a particular thing because they're worried about the lightning bolt that may come and strike them dead in that moment, right? There's people that view God that way.

And that's not the picture that we have of God in the scriptures. God's not sitting on the edge of his throne watching every step that you make, making sure that the moment that you mess up, man, he can nail you with something.

God is a God of love and mercy and grace and joy. That's not the picture, the right picture of God. But there is a tone for our obedience that we should have.

[14 : 00] It's not fearful of what he might do. It's reverential fear for who he is. So obedience has more to do with who God is than what he might do.

MacArthur is helpful here. He says, this is not a fear of being doomed to eternal torment. It's not a helpless dread of judgment that leads to despair. It's rather a reverential fear, a holy concern to give God the honor he deserves and avoid the chastening of his displeasure.

There's a difference between fearing a punitive judge and fearing a loving father. If we were to break the law today and be taken before a judge, we might plead for mercy or grace, but we're probably going to face that judge with fear because they have all the authority and there's no relationship there for which they can dole out that punishment.

But for a loving father, the fear is present, but it's completely different. I would much rather go before my father than an authority that I don't know because I know what I'm getting from my father is love.

I know there's probably going to be correction, but it's going to be correction with a purpose and it's going to be a correction that's with the intent of building up, not tearing down or just punitive action in that way.

[15 : 28] That's how we obey the Lord. This fear that we have of God, it's not we're worried about him as our judge. He's forgiven our sin. That penalty of sin as a believer, that's already been abolished for you.

Christ took that for you. He took the whole payment for that for you as far as your eternity is concerned. You don't have to worry about that. We fear God now as believers as a loving father.

We don't want to face the chastisement of his displeasure. We want to obey him. We want to follow him because of his love for us. We want to follow him because of his concern for us.

So there's man's responsibility in this demand. And then quickly, there's God's work in this demand. God's work in it. Look at verse 13. Paul says that it's our responsibility to concern ourselves with this in verse 12.

But then in verse 13, he says, for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

[16 : 31] What's God's role in all this? The truth is, he's the one that initiates it all. He is working in you, Paul says.

And he's working in there, in you, to affect your will and to affect your actions in order that they may please him.

It's not his will that he's affecting. It's not his actions that he's affecting. He's working in you to affect your will and to affect your actions. There's a wonderful truth in this. That for those that come to Christ in faith, we are guaranteed the promise of God's work in us from there.

He doesn't leave us on our own. How awesome is that? We have this struggle with sin in our lives. We have this struggle with sin in our flesh and God says, unless you come to me in faith, the result of that sin is going to be eternal death in a place called hell.

And then he saves us and instead of leaving us to ourselves to figure it out, he says, now I'm going to help you and I'm going to help you by giving you my Holy Spirit that's going to indwell you and he's going to fashion your will and he's going to fashion your actions in order that your life will please me and accomplish my purposes.

[17 : 43] What an awesome promise from God. Just like it's impossible for us to be saved apart from God's work, it is impossible for us to obey him apart from his work.

He does this work in us. It's a progressive work and it's an awesome work and it's a guaranteed work in this passage. That those who know Christ, God will work in you to make this obedience and sanctification happen.

It would be impossible for an unbeliever to continue in a feigned obedience for an extended amount of time. The reason is because we desperately need God's work in our lives to obey him.

At the same time, it would be impossible for a true believer not to demonstrate fruits of righteousness and repentance because we are guaranteed that God works in the will and actions of a believer to bring about his glory and his pleasure.

It's not that those works save us. It's that this working of God is an evidence that we have been saved, that we have come to faith.

[19 : 02] And someone who's just putting on a show, they've got nothing but mere outward conformity. They've not truly believed, their heart has not truly been engaged in a walk with Christ.

eventually, that outward conformity will be torn away and the hypocrisy will be revealed. But for that person that has truly come to Christ, can I tell you, you may not look completely different on day one.

But day by day by day, God's going to fashion your will and you can't help it because that's what God does for us. That's what's so awesome is our sin separates us from him and then when he saves us, he keeps drawing us in and drawing us closer and fashioning us better and better and better and better until one day we get to heaven and he raptures us home or we lose or we die in this life and we go to heaven and then he glorifies us completely and he brings this great work to completion where we are now sinless, we are now perfect and we can now worship him in new bodies and with a new nature, with a new spirit.

How awesome is that? Posers will eventually be exposed but those who have truly been saved, those who are true believers, they can't hide the fact that they have been saved because God will prove it as he works that salvation into outward action and into external obedience on their part.

The distinctive qualities of sanctification is the second thing. We see it in verses 14 to 16. The demand is seen in 12 and 13 but what does this sanctification look like?

[20 : 43] In a practical sense, what does it mean we're supposed to do? And how are our lives supposed to look? Let's look at verse 14.

Do all things, Paul says, without murmurings and disputings that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom you shine as lights in the world holding forth the word of life.

Paul doesn't provide here an exhaustive list of do's and don'ts. What he gives to us instead is a progression, a general progression of what happens in this sanctifying process.

There's three stages to it. It starts with our attitude toward obedience. It is continued with the evidence of a blameless life and it results in a faithful witness.

Let's look at each of those three things quickly. Number one, write down a proper attitude. A proper attitude. We see this in verse 14. Do all things without murmuring and disputing.

[21 : 52] Paul says here, a distinctive mark of this sanctifying process begins with having a proper attitude. Murmuring refers to an emotional rejection and is related to complaining.

Disputing here refers to questioning and it's related to criticisms. It's argumentative in nature. Both of them come from a general spirit of rebellion.

And these kind of attitudes, as you know, are infectious. They spread and they expand and they intensify. As we read earlier, the Israelites were notorious about this.

Constantly complaining about their condition, constantly murmuring about what God was doing. And if they had just obeyed and submitted and endured, think of how much sooner they would have been able to reap the blessings that God had promised.

But because of this attitude, it led to sinful behavior, which actually led to many of them not experiencing the promise at all. But what is Paul actually referring to when he mentions this murmuring and disputing?

[23 : 14] It could be that he is talking about a specific form of murmuring among the people at Philippi. Now, he's already talked about extensively the fact that this is a great church.

As we study the Philippians, there's not a lot there that we can pick apart like we can the Corinthian church or the Galatian church. There's not a lot of issues in this church. It's a good church.

If there's a weakness we can point out, it's the fact that Paul alludes several times in this letter to the potential for disunity. That they're not living humbly! They're not living humbly with one another, but rather in their pride and in their selfishness, there's discord and he even corrects a specific group of ladies in chapter 4.

He deals with this quite often. So it could be that Paul's point here is that the believers were missing out on demonstrating a blameless life in verse 15 specifically because of this one sin and this one weakness.

There certainly is no doubt that murmuring and disputing in the church is a problem, but there's always a heart level sinfulness in the attitude of a Christian that is constantly complaining and criticizing the church's people and processes.

[24 : 28] And we can't read this verse without examining our own spirit. What is our spirit towards others in the church? What is our spirit towards the church as a body, towards leadership?

And is my actions and my attitude showing a blameless quality or is it actually hindering the unity of the church? That could be what Paul's dealing with here and it's worth our note.

It could be that he's talking about a murmuring! and a disputing with God. Now it would make sense after he's just talked about in verses 9 through 11 he's talked about Jesus Christ as our Lord that we will bow before him, we will confess him, as Lord and then commands us in verse 12 that we are to obey him as Lord.

It makes sense then that he might interject the statement that indicates that we might resist this submission. After all, our nature is rebellious.

Our nature is tending toward sinfulness. It's like when you're a kid and you were given a chore to do at home. Perhaps your chore was to take the trash to the curb every Wednesday when the trash was supposed to be picked up.

[25 : 42] You knew that was your job to do. You know it was your responsibility but you hated to do it. For whatever reason that was the thing that you hated to do the most. And every Wednesday morning when mom comes around and says, Jared, it's time to go take the trash out.

You might have obeyed but the spirit with which you obeyed was less than helpful or encouraging. Maybe you argued and complained against your mom.

Maybe you fussed and represented a spirit that was irritated that you had to do this chore over and over and over. You obeyed but the spirit with which you obeyed wasn't with fear and trembling.

Maybe that's the idea that Paul's putting out here. Yes, obey the Lord. Obey His word. Stay faithful to Him but do it with a right spirit. Don't dispute against Him.

Don't murmur against Him. If you murmur against Him, if you resist this, you certainly won't live this blameless life in this progression. I really think that both circumstances apply.

[26 : 44] They're even intertwined together here. If a Christian is at peace with God and faithfully submitting to God's will, that's going to be seen in the way that they interact with others.

A professing Christian that is constantly at war with others and argumentative in their spirit always has a deeper issue in their relationship with God.

So I really think it could apply both ways and both ways are worth our attention. So the first thing we see is this proper attitude. The second thing then is a blameless record.

A blameless record. Verse 15. Look with me. That you may be blameless and harmless. The sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.

The main idea here is that Christians would live a life that is above reproach. There's a few terms that Paul mentions. One is blameless, without blame.

[27 : 49] One is innocent or harmless. The other is without blemish or without rebuke. It all points to a life that is above reproach.

It doesn't insinuate perfection. It certainly isn't an example of a prideful piety. But it is the general character of a person that is so righteous that it's difficult to accuse them.

That's the mindset that Paul's getting across here. He's not giving us specific sins to avoid. He's saying that our life and this progression should begin with a right spirit towards God and others and then that will be evidenced in a blameless life.

A life that is above reproach. A life that's not easily accused. The progression is indicated here in the word that.

Do you notice that in verse 15? Do all things without murmuring and disputing that you may be blameless. As if the blameless quality is a direct result of the proper attitude that he mentions in verse 14.

[29 : 02] The college that I attended, I went to a small school, really small school actually in Raleigh, just outside of Raleigh in a town called Wendell. It was a very, very small school and it was a very, very conservative school and it had lots of roles and those roles went in a lot of different directions.

Jared hasn't always been great about keeping his mouth shut when he was in disagreement with something. In fact, my mom used to always say I wasn't a bad kid. It was always my mouth that got me in trouble.

In fact, she would say that my mouth is in drive but my brain is in neutral. That's what mom would always say was my problem growing up. There was this one rule at our college that I absolutely hated.

And you're going to think this is silly that I put so much effort into hating this rule because it's not really that big a deal. But it was a lost and found rule. We had a small campus and the custodians were students and the custodians just got tired of having to pick up people's stuff that they would leave laying around campus.

And of course, I understand their frustration with that. The problem in the rule was whenever you left something on campus, they would take it to the school bookstore, which was also run by students. And in order to get your stuff back, you didn't have to just go and claim it and describe your item.

[30 : 12] You had to pay them a dollar per item to get your stuff back. Anybody go to a school like that or you've been in a situation like that? Isn't that ridiculous? I'm getting irritated about it now already, just talking about it. And so anytime I left something or if there was something going on, I did everything I could to try to get it back before it made it to the lost and found so I wouldn't have to take my precious college money and buy my own stuff again.

And there was this one weekend, we had this basketball tournament at our campus. I was helping with the tournament. I was on staff at the school at the time and I was doing something with the basketball tournament. I had a jacket. It was in January or February.

Around this time. High school basketball tournament. I had taken my jacket off and put it on the back of my chair and then being on staff for the school, I was traveling all weekend promoting the college and I was running late so I had to go jump on a bus.

When I went and jumped on the bus to go represent the college, I left my jacket in the gymnasium. And as soon as we got on the road, I realized what I did. And I started calling my friends, please go get my jacket.

I don't want to pay a dollar to buy my own jacket back. Except none of my friends were good enough friends to go get my jacket for me. It stayed there. And somebody put it in the lost and found. Well, I had let plenty of people know in this small campus of only about 150 students how much I hated that role.

[31 : 31] And I let them know that a lot. And I wasn't very quiet about it. I had a very poor attitude about this role on campus. And so when I got back, I was frustrated.

I was complaining about it. But I went to the bookstore. I remember it just like it was yesterday. I went to the bookstore. I had a fistful of change is what I gave the guy. And another student was working the desk. His name was Steve Schreiner.

And I put the change on the desk. I said, that's my jacket. I need to buy my jacket back. And he took my change. And I took my jacket and it was all over. The next day I was wearing my jacket on campus because it was cold. And another one of the students that had actually picked it up knew that it had been in the lost and found, saw me wearing my jacket and just assumed that I had stolen it out of the lost and found.

She didn't ask me about it. She just assumed because I had run my mouth so much. This is so stupid, isn't it? I had run my mouth so much about this lost and found rule that she just assumed that I had gone into the school's bookstore and stolen my own jacket, if that's even possible to do.

Next thing I know, I've got a note in my box at school that I got to go before the administration of the school. I didn't even know what it was about. I literally sit in an administrator's office of our school.

[32 : 47] I have no idea what it's about. And she looks at me and she says, is that your jacket? I said, yes, Miss Morris, that's my jacket. Where did you get it?

The lost and found? When did you get it? Yesterday? How did you get it? Gave my money to Steve Schreiner. And then she proceeds on. She didn't believe me. She proceeded to accuse me of stealing that jacket.

Steve Schreiner, who was working the desk, told her that I didn't actually pay for it. He at least said that he couldn't remember whether or not I had paid for it.

And they just assumed that meant guilt. And there was this whole just ordeal about it. And eventually everything was okay, but there was this whole ordeal about it. Here's the problem. The problem wasn't so much with the rule.

And there were certainly some issues with the way that they tried to get me in trouble. The problem was Jared wasn't a very blameless person. Why wouldn't they expect me to have stolen my jacket in that moment?

[33 : 47] After all, I had spent several months whining and complaining and running in my mouth about how I'm never paying money to get my stuff back. And even though I was willing to obey the rule in that moment, my attitude insinuated that I was guilty.

And even though I hadn't actually done anything wrong, I didn't live a life that was above reproach. That's a really silly illustration that applies greatly to Christians.

Because when we go through this process of murmuring and disputing and arguing with God and with his word and with spiritual leaders in our life that help us in this Christian life when it comes to spiritual obedience and obeying Christ, when our attitude is constantly murmuring and disputing and frustrated and irritated and questioning and disrespectful to the Lord or to anyone else, why wouldn't anybody suspect that we were just as hypocritical as anybody else?

And therefore, our life isn't above reproach. In this progression, a holy attitude leads to a blameless life, but the opposite works as well.

An unholy attitude often leads to sinful life. It may not just be that you're below accusation, but eventually you may actually fall into that very sin.

[35 : 14] And it starts with that proper attitude. And then the third thing, what it results in, is a faithful witness. Look at the end of verse 15. That you are children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.

All right, remember, this is a progression he's talking about. He's not giving us specific things here. He's talking about this progression in generic terms. The first stage of it is a proper attitude, fear and trembling towards God, having the right spirit towards God, having the right spirit about obedience towards God and towards his word.

And what that does is it flows into a life that is blameless and that is innocent and it is above reproach, hard to be accused. Somebody brings up an accusation, most people aren't going to believe it right away.

It doesn't mean you're perfect. It just means that your life exemplifies righteousness. Nine times out of ten, you're going to do the right thing. Because you love the Lord, you're going to be obedient. All right, that characterizes your life. What then does that do? It causes your life to shine as a light in the midst of a dark, sinful, crooked, perverse world and culture.

And then he says the way that it shines is because you're holding forth this word of life. Believers hold fast to the word in that they stand firm on sound truth and they obey the Lord and they follow him.

[36 : 44] And in holding fast to God's word in obedience, they end up as their life is displayed holding forth that same word that gives life to all who will believe.

So then we see that God's desire for our obedience isn't just for obedience sake. There's a purpose and an intention in this sanctifying process.

Ultimately, that he would receive glory and that our lives would be used for his gospel purposes. So Paul says work out your salvation, a proper attitude, gratitude, a blameless life so that you can shine as a light in this dark world, holding forth the word that can give life.

Your behavior matters in that. And then finally, quickly, we see the demand, we see the distinctive qualities of it, and then we see the delight.

Verse 16, Paul says that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain. And if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.

[37 : 59] For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me. And here, once again, this theme of joy is interjected in this letter. Except here, the joy comes from our obedience.

obedience, and it comes to three people. First, it comes to spiritual leaders. See what Paul said in verse 16? Do all of this so that I can rejoice and be glad when I stand before Christ.

It's kind of like a mother who works and works and works at trying to teach their kids to obey, and then finally they see them obey when they don't know that mom is looking, and the pride and the encouragement that wells up in that moment.

This is Paul as a loving spiritual father looking at this church and saying, it makes me so glad. I rejoice when I see that your life is in obedience to God and his word. This is the case for all spiritual leaders.

Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 17. Obey them that have the rule over you as those that will give an account to the Lord, that they watch for your souls, that they may do it with joy and not with grief.

[39 : 08] There, it's given as a motivation. This joy for spiritual leaders. It's also a delight for persecuted saints. Verse 17. Paul says, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you.

The if statement there is similar to the if statements at the beginning of chapter 2. It's referencing not a question as to if something would happen. It's a reference to something that is already certain.

He's referencing his own imprisonment. Why is Paul in prison for preaching the gospel? Who was affected by that preaching of the gospel? The Philippians were. And he says, even if my life has to be hindered in comfort and in wealth, if I have to be in prison for four years for preaching the gospel, but that gospel saves your soul and it's exemplified in this obedient living, he said, I'll rejoice in my imprisonment.

Persecuted saints rejoice in this. And then finally, the believer themselves rejoices in this. Verse 18. For the same cause, Paul says, for the same reason, you should rejoice.

There is great joy that comes with obedience. It's not that we're proud of ourselves. It's not that we pat ourselves on the back.

[40 : 34] It goes back to this process of the evidence that God is at work in us. Paul wasn't rejoicing in the righteous actions themselves so much as he was rejoicing in what those actions gave evidence to.

And that was their genuine conversion. It wasn't that he wanted them to conform to a set of rules. So many people make that mistaken judgment about the Christian life.

It's not about a set of rules. It's about who is affecting that change. And for them to follow the Lord in obedience meant that the Lord was at work in their lives.

And he rejoiced in the fact that God was working. And when you find yourself falling in obedience in a way that you hadn't done previously, rejoice in that, not because you did something good, because it really wasn't you that did it.

It was God fashioning your heart and working in your will and working in your actions in order to accomplish his purposes. And in that moment, we rejoice at the fact that God would help us.

[41 : 46] Rejoice in the fact that God is helping you and he's helping me. How awesome is that? What a God is that?

That not only is he the Lord and judge, but for those that belong to him, he's the helper. And he's the encourager. And that certainly is worth rejoicing in.

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We meet every Sunday morning at 10 a.m. in the gym at Cornelius Elementary School. We'd love to meet you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[42 : 48] Thank you.