

Character and Characters

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Date: 05 October 2022

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[0 : 00] The Philippines will give our minds to a section we read there in chapter 2 for a short time. Philippines has been a book that was written with Paul encouraging them to work in partnership with one another for the good of the gospel.

He's pleading with them to work together, to show compassion to one another, and to ultimately find out encouragement in Christ. Prior to what we read, you can see if you have the ESV Bible, it titles that section, Christ's example of humility.

And through there it says, maybe the most notable verse that we have within our memories is verse 5. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

One of not doing things from selfish ambition there in verse 3. Out of humility, counting others more significant than ourselves.

All these attributes that we find in Christ are our example to follow in our working together to build up one another and to build up the church of Christ.

[1 : 16] And in this section here, we have that therefore at the beginning, which immediately points us back to what Paul is saying and that example that we have in Christ.

Because of what Christ has done, he says, therefore, look at Christ first. And then, therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, as he talks to the people, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence.

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 in this, what comes through is the character that is built within the people of Christ.

The character that is formed by the work of Christ in their hearts. Paul says, set your mind, pretty much, set your mind on the things of Christ.

Look to Christ. Therefore, then you will be shaped by all that he has done and should be shaped by the character and example that he leaves for us.

[2 : 36] And the character here from verse 12 through. It's a character that will be defined by certain things. It says there.

As you have always obeyed, the people had an obedience. That was what defined them as a people of God. They had an obedience. And it wasn't to Paul. It wasn't to any man, as it says. Much more in my absence. They didn't do it for the admiration of man. They did it because of their heart to Christ. It's like the conscience, when it's awakened by God.

It has that heart desire to obey what Christ teaches us, what God says to us. As that working within us draws us to obedience.

As Spurgeon says that believing and obedience, they run side by side. You cannot separate believing and obedience. We take these things from within our hearts.

[3 : 46] And if we do not listen to it and obey what it speaks to us, then what is our belief without obeying what we are told to believe?

And do we believe? Do we obey what we are told? What is said before us in the word of God? What God wants us to do?

Are we being obedient? To what he speaks to us? To do what God asks of us?

Paul says and continues on in saying, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Not that we contribute to our salvation by our working.

Or we can work out our salvation by work. But work out is maybe better understood as outworking.

[4 : 52] The outworking of the salvation within us. It defines us. It defines us. It defines us. What is in us and comes out of us.

It defines who we are as Christians and our character. It's like we are defined by that salvation that is in us.

That is worked within us. Salvation that draws us to obedience. Things that run side by side. But so also when we are obedient to God and we do the things that are asked of us.

We outwork that salvation that is born within us. As we outwork our obedience. In a sense that itself defines us even more.

By who we are and what we do. And the character of the Christian. And it's like that character is built up step by step. Character is like embroidery made stitch by stitch.

[6 : 02] It is said. It's that building upon the work that is within us. And we do that. And we do have that obedience.

Because there is a reverence there. To God. What he has done for us. What Christ has done for us. To have reverence.

Fear and trembling. What has been asked of us. That we would fulfill the work that Christ has for us. And that salvation that works in us comes out in what we do.

And it may be different for us. We may have different work. God has work for all his people. We are not called to be idle people. And this can vary greatly from person to person.

We're not all called to the same tasks. Obedience is not always doing what we want either. Very rarely even in our own lives. Someone would ask us to do something.

[7 : 10] And we're glad. That's what he asked us to do. It's like, oh yeah, that's good that he asked me to do this. Whereas usually the case is.

We're told to do something. And we just do it out of obedience. If it's an employer or parent or elder or whoever it is.

Obedience is, in this case, trusting and having faith in what is asked of us. But this voice of God speaks to us.

Even when every fiber of our being is. Maybe trying to suppress our voice. Of what has been asked of us.

Or that salvation from. That has worked within us. Maybe we fight. Against it.

[8 : 05] Maybe we kick against it in a sense. Because we're not comfortable with what has been asked of us. Because to be obedient. To what God asks us.

It calls us. It calls to affect every part of us. Our whole life. Our speech. Our manner. Our attitudes. Our work. What we devote our time to. Are we being obedient. To what has been asked of us.

Maybe we doubt the possibility. Why would God ask that of me? How can I do that? Maybe.

We present an image to. To us that. I would say help me. In my doubts. But. And we help you in your doubts.

[9 : 05] That we can. So often. As a child. It's not limited to childhood. It goes into adulthood as well. That we. We do things we shouldn't do.

And then. If we're. Caught. Or. A parent would come and say. Why did you do that? We would point and say. Well he told me to do it. And it essentially takes us back to the garden of Eden.

Where the blame is passed on to another. And he says. Well he told me to do it. And yet. It's something that we find ourselves. Doing so easily. When a pure voice tells us to do something.

That we know is wrong. And yet we find ourselves. Doing it. With us. On the flip side. When it is.

God that asks us of something. To do. Something good. Something hard. Most likely. And yet. We don't do it.

[10 : 10] What. What would it mean for you. Having been. Directed to something. Or. Having something to be.

Obedient to. Whatever it is. I don't know. And yet we. It's so clear to you. And yet. You kind of kick against it. Because. You're not sure.

If you can fulfill. What is asked of you. And yet. What do you. What. What. What would we say.

When we stand before Christ. And he.

He says to me. He says. To you. Or to me. That. It was me. That told you to do it. It wasn't a poor voice. That you.

A poor voice. That you so easily. Listen to. And would do. To bring you into things. That were. Not good for you. You listen to them voices. But when.

[11 : 10] When. When I spoke to you. When I spoke to you. From my word. With all assurance. To do what I asked you to do. And yet you did not do it.

You were not obedient. I couldn't imagine myself. I couldn't imagine myself. Standing before Christ. Having. The direction.

That I had. And to kick against it. When he would ask. And say to me. I gave you encouragement. Every encouragement. To do. What I asked you to do. And I told you to do. But you listened. To a poorer voice. Which. Could often be our own voice.

Because I cannot do it. Calvin says on that. That. Nothing is more fatal. To us. Than to refuse. To give.

[12:07] Ourselves. In obedience. To God. Nothing is more fatal. To us. Than to refuse. To give ourselves. In obedience. To God. Because then. If we don't have. The obedience.

Where is our belief? Where is our faith? In the one who asks us? But Paul says. And goes on to say.

It is God. Who works. In you. So. The doubts. That you have. Put them to the side. I know you have doubts.

But it is God. Who works in you. It is God. That does that work. Of redefining you. Who. In the beginning. He redefines you.

As. A Christian. Within you. God is at work. In. Your heart. But so. He continues. To define you. Clearly.

[13:04] And with more clarity. Step by step. Stitch by stitch. In that. Almost. Sanctifying. Nature. As we become.

More. Christ like. In obedience. It is God. God. Who works. In you. And there.

We have confidence. Not in ourselves. But in the one. That works. Within us. And see what. Obedience. Brings. There. For it is God. Who works in you. Both to will. And to work. For his. For his. Good. Pleasure. You ask yourself.

Can we please God. Well. We can. If we obey him. And we listen to him. If we obey his will.

[14:03] And do his work. For his. Good pleasure. Pleasing to God. And. It always puts. Before you.

The idea. Being obedient. To God. Is pleasing to God. And yet. Manage to find.

Is to glorify God. And to enjoy him forever. As we. Glorify. God. And what we do. And that. Outworking. Of our salvation.

And being obedient. And giving him. It is glorifying God. And what we're doing. And yet. We ourselves. Have enjoyment. In God. Because of these things.

Also. It's an interesting comparison. To make. But. There's other marks. That distinguish.

[15:00] Define. And distinguish. The people. Of God. They do all things. Without grumbling. Or disputing. Well. That's a challenge.

To us all. We also. Find it so natural. To do these. To do grumble. And dispute things. But he's saying. Don't. Do all things. Without that.

It's like. If you think about. Grumbling. And disputing. It puts like a layer. Of negativity. Into things. It's like. This.

Under. Hidden layer. That just. Does not help. And Paul says. It does. You know. Good. To be grumbling. And disputing.

With one another. Or. At things. That are happening. Within the church. Paul's calling them. To partnership. Together. To work together. For the glorifying.

[15:54] Of God's name. Just. Do things. Without grumbling. Or disputing. Blameless. And innocent. There's high standards.

Being spoken of here. That is asked. Of the Christian's character. We should be blameless. And innocent. Without blemish. In a twisted. Crooked generation. In.

A twisted. And crooked generation. We're not separated. From the twisted. And crooked generation. We live. We live within.

And I'll give you an example. Of that. In a wee minute. And you know. Sometimes it's hard. To live within. To be this character.

Within the twisted. And crooked generation. As it were. To be this light. In the darkness. To shine. You know. Sometimes. People.

[16:52] Can spot. That you are different. It's a distinguishing. Feature about you. And they can ask. Even if they don't know.

Anything about Christ. They can say to you. Well. You don't swear. Like we do. You don't. You don't. Drink like we do. You don't take drugs. Like we do. You don't have relations. With other people.

Like we do. You are. Distinguished. From us. In many ways. It can be quite clear.

How we're distinguished. Even if they don't know. About Christianity. They spot. The. Working of salvation.

And thinking. Coming out of. Even in these small things. Other times. People don't pick up on it. And they.

[17 : 48] And that's far. That's way harder. When you're a Christian. Living within the twisted. And crooked generation. People do not pick up. That you're a Christian. And.

And they're expecting. The same things of you. To be. Living. As they live. Almost to be. As the same family. As they are. And you've got.

We've got to tell them. Who we are. It's hard. And. And. It seems to be. Lights in this world. And to shine. It's not just to be our light.

But. To shine. To. Let people know who we are. Without being ashamed. To. Give out. The light. Of Christ. That has been worked within me. Do we not. If we put off telling people. It just makes it harder.

[18 : 43] And actually. You know. We may. Spend time with. People. Two. Three. Four. Five times. And then tell them. It. It. It. It doesn't do any good.

Because they. They don't. They would prefer. To know who you are. And they maybe. Feel ashamed. Of the things. That they've said. And it's far better. Just to be that light.

That Paul tells us to be. To shine. Amongst people. But to plug in. It says. To be lights in the world. Holding fast. To the word of life. But we. Continue. To have that. Illuminating effect.

In a sense. By the words. That we read. By the word of life. That we. Come to every day. And encourages us. And prepares us.

[19 : 36] And strengthens us. And we find strength. From that. Word of life. That gives us life. That we are a people. That hold on to it.

Don't let go of it. I want to read. Just in conclusion. Something that we had to read. For college. I thought it was. It was. It was.

Encouraging. It's one of the. First. Apology. Christian. Apologetic. Writings. So this was written. In 125 AD. This is. Old. Old. Just after the apostles. And it's a letter. To someone. Called. If I can say it right.

Dionitas. So the letter. To Dionitas. It's about. Someone say. To this man. About the mystery. Of this.

[20 : 37] New people. The character. Of. Christianity. They call themselves. Christians. And so this.

Comes across. As a strange. Character. Of the Christian. Someone from. The twisted. And crooked. Generation. Someone outside. Trying to understand. What is.

The Christian. Character. Let me read. This for you. But Christians. Cannot be. Distinguished. From the rest. Of human. Race. By country.

Or language. Or customs. They live. Within. The people. They're not. Distinguished. Outwardly. You can't go into London. And say. He's a Christian.

He's a Christian. He's a Christian. By what they wear. They appear. They cannot be. Distinguished. By the rest. Which is. They live. In. Greek. And barbarian.

[21 : 31] Cities. Alike. They follow. The customs. Of the country. And the clothing. And the food. Etc. The daily living. They live. In their own.

Countries. But only. As aliens. They have a share. In everything. As citizens. And endure. Everything. As foreigners.

Every foreign land. Is their fatherland. And yet. For them. Every fatherland. Is a foreign land. This guy. Is trying. To understand. These Christian.

People. They marry. Like everyone else. And they beget. Children. But they do not. Cast. Out their offspring. They share. Their board.

With one another. Their homes. But not their marriage bed. It is true. That they are. In the flesh. But they do not live.

[22 : 26] According to the flesh. They busy themselves. On earth. But their citizenship. Is in heaven. They obey. The established laws. But in their own lives.

They go far beyond. What the laws require. They love all men. And by all men. Are persecuted. They are unknown.

And still. They are condemned. They are put to death. And yet. They are brought. To life. They are poor. And yet. They make many.

Rich. They are completely. Destitute. And yet. They enjoy. Complete. Abundance. They are dishonored. And in their very dishonor.

Are glorified. They are defamed. And are vindicated. They are reviled. And yet. They bless. When they are affronted. Yet.

[23 : 23] They still. Pay respect. When they do good. They are punished. As evildoers. Undergoing punishment. They rejoice.

Because they are brought to life. They are treated. By the Jews. As foreigners. And enemies. And are hunted down. By the Greeks. And all the time. Those who hate them.

I find it impossible. To justify their. Enmity. Towards them. This man. Is looking at these people. And going. Who are these people?

The characteristics of them. Is there grappling with them? What has been worked. Within their hearts.

And we know it is a salvation. That Christ has given them. And their obedience. To follow the example.

[24 : 19] That Christ has left for them. I just found that quite encouraging. That the character of the Christian. Was there right from the beginning. And so may it continue.

To be. With each of us. I pray these would be. Thoughts. That we were blessed. And encouraging. Cheers. We'll conclude by. Singing to.

Thank you.