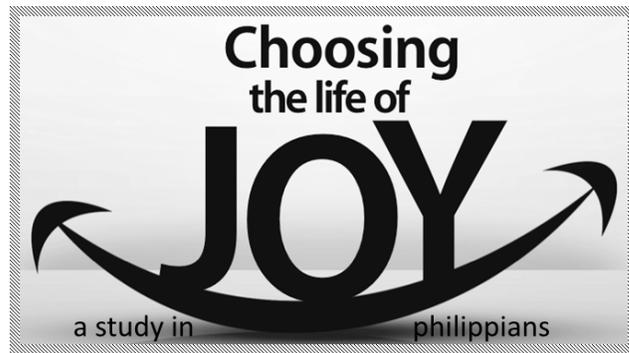


Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, December 12, 2018 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



CHOOSING THE LIFE OF JOY

A Study in Philippians

“The Joyful Ins and Outs of Christian Living – Part 2”

Philippians 2:12-18

Philippians, “a personal manifesto on how to live a life full of joy.” Dr. Warren Wiersbe We began our verse by verse study of the book of Philippians a couple of weeks ago entitled, “Choosing the Life of Joy; A Study in Philippians.” The book is a book of joy, and that is surprising given the circumstances surround the book.

Just for review let’s be reminded of some of the more interesting facts about Philippians that we have been looking at as a background to the book.

5 Important Background Facts on the Book of Philippians: **these may be some things that set the book of Philippians apart from Paul’s other letters and writings*

- 1. The book of Philippians is written by the Apostle Paul** – The apostle Paul wrote the book as clearly stated in Philippians 1:1-2, “¹Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- 2. The book of Philippians is written to believers/Christians at the church at Philippi** – As already stated Philippians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul during his Roman imprisonment to a group of people that were very special to him. These at Philippi had come to know the Lord Jesus through Paul’s witness to them during his “Second Missionary Journey,” and in response to the “Macedonian Call” of Acts 16. Notice who Paul identifies as the recipients of this letter in verses 1-2, “¹Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- 3. The book of Philippians is actually a letter written by Paul to the church at Philippi** – The apostle Paul wrote this as a letter to the Christians in Philippi, from Rome. Paul ministered at

Philippi during his second missionary journey, spending about three months in the city. The ministry at Philippi marked Paul's entrance into Macedonia (Greece, Europe), which came about as a result of a vision he had in the city of Troas, just across the northeastern corner of the Aegean Sea from the port city of Neapolis and its close neighbor Philippi (Acts 16:8–12). During this first stay in Philippi—he later briefly visited the city on his third missionary journey (20:6)—Paul brought to faith in Christ people who would form the core of the burgeoning congregation in the city. Among them were Lydia, a businesswoman who opened her home to Paul and his coworkers (16:13–15), and the Philippian jailer, who was converted under Paul's ministry after an earthquake miraculously broke open the prison (16:22–34).

4. **The book of Philippians was written around A.D. 61/62** – Of the four Prison Epistles, Paul likely wrote Philippians last, near the end of his Roman imprisonment in AD 61 or 62. Paul sent the other three Prison Epistles—Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon—by the hand of Tychicus, as their destinations were near one another. However, the letter to the Philippians was to be delivered by Epaphroditus, who had come to Paul in Rome with financial help from the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:25; 4:18). But during his time in Rome, Epaphroditus took ill, which delayed his return home and, therefore, the delivery of the letter (2:26–27).

Philippians Timeline

A.D. 33/34	A.D. 47-48 <i>1st Missionary Journey</i>	A.D. 48/49-51 <i>2nd Missionary Journey</i>	A.D. 52-57 <i>3rd Missionary Journey</i>	A.D. 61/62
★-----★-----★-----★-----★				
<i>Conversion of Paul</i>		<i>Paul plants Philippian Church</i>		<i>Paul arrested, writes Philippians</i>

5. **The book of Philippians is called a prison epistle, because Paul write the letter while he was imprisoned for his faith in Rome** - The book of Philippians is actually one of four “prison epistles” (or letters) and most likely the last of the four written by Paul. As stated, Paul wrote Philippians while he was in prison in Rome. The four “prison epistles” are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Given the theme of the book it is significant that Philippians was written by Paul at a particularly difficult time in his life... while he was in prison.

Along with these essential background facts surround this letter written by Paul, we have also sated these interesting fact about the book/letter of Philippians:

5 Interesting Facts about Philippians:

- 1. The book of Philippians has no Old Testament quotes** – This is distinction that not only sets it apart from Paul's other writing in the New Testament where Paul is said to have quoted the Old Testament as many as 500 times, just not in Philippians. The Old Testament is quoted more than 1,000 time in the New Testament with half of those being found in Paul's writings. The lack of Old Testament quotes in Philippians could be as simple as Paul's purpose in writing. It is a more practical letter.
- 2. The book of Philippians contains little historical or theological material, and is primarily a practical (*relevant, everyday, pragmatic, useful*) letter** - The only exceptions to this are the historical biographical material contained concerning Paul's life in prison during his Roman imprisonment. And Philippians, chapter 2 that describes the humiliation and exaltation of Christ in theological terms. Philippians is the only of Paul's letter that was not written primarily to address doctrinal, theological issues. The apostle Paul did not write Philippians in response to a crisis (caused by false teachers and false teaching), as he did with Galatians and Colossians. And, in fact, it may be the most practical of Paul's 13 New Testament books/letters. What do we mean by practical? We mean that of all of Paul's letters, Philippians in it purpose and content is the most

pragmatic and common every-day letter he wrote. We will get more into this as we progress through our study, but suffice it to say that the very reason Paul wrote the letter is simple, every-day in its application.

3. **The book of Philippians is essentially a thank you letter** – This itself sets Philippians apart as the most unusual of Paul’s letters. Instead of writing to correct doctrinal matters, he writes a “thank you” letter to the church at Philippi that had been so generous in supporting him over the years. He primarily wrote to express his appreciation and affection for the Philippian believers. More than any other church, the believers in Philippi offered Paul material support for his ministry. Paul’s affection for these people is clear through the letter as he encouraged them to live out their faith in joy and unity.
4. **The book of Philippians contain the word “joy” in some form at least 16 times** – With the common occurrence of this word in some form repeated throughout the letter, it makes it clear that this is the theme of Paul’s letter to the Philippians and to us. And as stated above this theme of “joy” is particularly astounding given the fact that it is a prison epistle, written while Paul was incarcerated and being persecuted for his faith.
5. **The book of Philippians was written to a church and Christians that represent the one of the most important advancements of the Gospel to the west, particularly Europe** - Paul’s “Macedonian Call” in Troas during Paul’s 2nd missionary journey led him to his work in Philippi and the planting of the church there. Philippi was located in Macedonia, in northern Greece, on the continent of Europe. So the “Macedonian Call” and the planting of this church in Philippi through Paul’s second missionary journey, and Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi are very significant because they represent the advancement of the gospel further west, into Europe and ultimately to the entire world through Europe. It is not to be missed that the first converts on the continent of Europe were Lydia and her household, a demon possessed girl, and a Philippian jailer.

Having established the preeminent role Christ plays in our minds, we need to see how all that works its way out in our lives as believers. Which brings us back to the little letter Paul wrote his friends in Philippi. In verses 12-18 of Philippians 2, Paul spells out the importance of keeping ourselves balanced as we take on the challenges of life, while living what ought to be the joy-filled life of a believer. Paul has just presented Jesus Christ as our great example in the exercise of having the mind and heart of Jesus. We read it, and we agree with it, but how do we flesh that out? How do we go about practicing it? How could a mortal man ever hope to achieve what Jesus Christ achieved? It seems almost presumptuous even to try! Doesn’t it? Here we are trying to develop humility, and are we exercising pride by daring to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ.

The problem is really not that difficult. Paul was not asking us to “reach for the stars,” though the higher the goal the more we ought to achieve. Rather, he was setting before us the “divine pattern” for us to follow, and that can only be accomplished through Him. “... It is God that works in you...” (Phil. 2:13). It is not by imitation, but by incarnation... “Christ liveth in me (Gal.2:20). The Christian life is not a series of ups and downs. Rather, it is a process of “ins and outs.” God works “in” us, and we work “out.” We cultivate the living out of what He has called us to be, to become, to do, to think, to have the mind and heart of Christ in how we live and behave, and treat others, etc... all of this by responding to the divine provisions God makes available to us.

THE PURPOSE TO ACHIEVE (Philippians 2:12, 14-16)

There is a purpose to achieve, a reason for our life as believers. There is something behind Paul’s words in verse 1-11 calling Christians/believer to have, reflect, be like, imitate Jesus when he said in **verse 5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”** What is our purpose as believers? God’s Word, the Bible gives us some help here:

5 Biblical Passage That Direct Us To Our Purpose as Believers:

1. **John 13:15-17**, ¹⁵“For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” What is our purpose? To do what Jesus did. To be like Him. To conform to Him.
2. **Romans 8:28-29**, ²⁸“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” What is our purpose? To be conformed the image of His son, to reflect Jesus, to be looking more and more like Jesus.
3. **Romans 12:1-2**, ¹“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” What is our purpose? To be not conformed to this world, but be transformed... changed, to look less and less like the world, and more and more like “good and acceptable and perfect will” for us... to be like Him.
4. **1 John 3:2**, ²“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” What is our purpose? To be like Him.
5. **Philippians 2:5**, ⁵“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” What is our purpose? To have the mind of Christ. To be like Him. To think like Him. To look at and treat the world as He treated it. To ultimately be conformed to the image of Jesus... like Him.

So, ultimately our purpose as believers is to be being conformed to the image of the Son, Jesus... to be becoming more and more like Jesus. As we said last week, that is an extremely high calling... one to which we will inevitably feel very overwhelmed. So it begs the question how may we do that? Paul give us at least 5 important directives that may help us achieve this purpose. Here are Paul’s words in Philippians 2:12 and 14-16;

¹²“Therefore, my beloved, as you 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... ¹⁴Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” – Philippians 2:12, 14-16

5 Important Directives in Achieving Our Purpose and Calling as Believers/Christians”

1. **Work out your salvation** – Here is Paul again verse 12, ¹²“Therefore, my beloved, as you 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.” I think it is important to establish right off what Paul is not saying with his directive to “work out your salvation” in vs. 12.

What Paul is not saying when he says to “work our your salvation”:

- (1) **Paul is not contradicting himself with what he said elsewhere in Scripture** – For example, elsewhere in Scripture, like in Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul has stated, ⁸“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Or in Titus 3:4-7 Paul would say, ⁴“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the

Holy Spirit, 'whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 'that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' Or in Galatians 2:16, where Paul would say, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." These are just three examples on Paul's strong insistence and teaching that we are not saved, justified, made right with God by "works." So now in Philippians 2:12, we have what appears to be a contradictory statement by Paul. On the one hand he says we are not saved by works, and now he is saying "work out our salvation." A basic hermeneutical presupposition or principle in rightly interpreting Scripture is that "Scripture does not contradict itself," therefore, when you find an "apparent" contradiction it is not Scripture that is reading it wrongly, but us reading Scripture wrongly. So you have to look deeper to see what is really being said in the text that poses the apparent contradiction, as is the case here. The question has to be, "Since I know that what Scripture does not contradict itself, and the bulk of Scripture (even Paul himself) has stated that we are not saved by works, what does Paul mean by "work out your own salvation?"

(2) **Paul is not saying we are saved by works** – How do we know that?

How do we know that Paul is not saying we are saved by works in Philippians 2:12:

- **Because, first of all this same Paul has told us that our works cannot save us -**
- **Second, Paul is speaking to people who are already saved here -** He would not be telling those who are already saved to be saved again, and by a different way. He is speaking to Christians here. Notice **verse 12**, Paul is addressing the **"beloved."** Who are the "beloved?" Believers in the church at Philippi to whom Paul is writing.

"Work out your own salvation" (Phil.2:12) does not suggest, "Work for your own salvation." To begin with Paul was writing to people who were already saved (saints) (see Phil.1:1), which means they had trusted Christ and had been set apart for Him. The verb "work out" carries the meaning of "work to full completion," such as working out a problem in mathematics. In Paul's day it was also used for "working in a mine," that is, getting out of the mine all the valuable ore possible; "working a field" so as to get the greatest harvest possible. The purpose God wants us to achieve is "Christlikeness, "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom.8:29). There are problems in life, but God will help us to "work them out." Our lives have tremendous potential, like a mine or a field, and He wants to help us fulfill that potential. One of the wonderful things about being a Christian is the knowledge that God has a plan for our lives (Eph.2:10) and will help us to work it out for His glory and our good.

(3) **Paul is not suggesting that our salvation is maintained by works** – We do not have to "work" to keep ourselves saved and more than we have to "work" to save ourselves. This is an idea (perhaps even false teaching in my opinion) that may be proposed and propagated by those who teach that a Christian/believer may lose his or her salvation.

3 Claims That Must Be Made By Those who Teach/Believe You May Lose Your Salvation: (also known as falling from grace)

Claim #1 by those who teach/believe it is possible to lose one's salvation: Salvation must be conditional – That is based on something that we do or have done... our good works, our deeds and religious upkeep

Rebuttal: Scripture teaches that salvation is “unconditional” in nature and indeed doesn’t depend on anything that we do or have done.

Scripture: (1) **Ephesians 2:8-9** - *“⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”* (2) **John 3:16** - *“¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (3) **Romans 6:23** - *“²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Claim #2 by those how teach/believe it is possible to lose ones salvation: Man must maintain salvation - Since God has saved us, we will maintain our salvation as we continue to match up with God’s standards. If we fall to match up at any point we lose our salvation

Rebuttal: Man could never match up or be good enough to match up to God’s standard according to Scripture.

Scripture: (1) **Isaiah 64:6** - *“⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”* (2) **Romans 3:10, 23** - *“¹⁰ As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one’ ... ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (3) **Matthew 7:21-23** - *“²¹ ‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

Claim #3 by those how teach/believe it is possible to lose ones salvation: Salvation is based on a works-righteousness perspective - The teaching that one can fall from grace must always insist that salvation should be seen from a works-righteousness perspective.

Rebuttal: This claim would be in direct violation of Scripture. Scripture clearly teaches that we are “not” saved by works.

Scripture: (1) **Ephesians 2:8-9** - *“⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”* (2) **Titus 3:5-7** - *“⁵ He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”*

Okay, we’ve hashed that one out pretty good. Let’s move on to Paul’s second directive at how we may work toward achieving God’s purpose in our life... namely to reflect, be like, have the mind of Christ.

2. **Do all thing without complaining and disputing** – Here is what Paul write in **verse 14**... look at it... he says, *“¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing.”* A grumbling and complaining, disputing spirit in a person always reveals something on a deeper spiritual level within the individual. Did you hear me? Let me say it again, and please hear it, *“A grumbling and complaining, disputing spirit in a person always reveals something on a deeper spiritual level within the individual.”* I know Christians, and have known Christians in every church I have ever been in... and I must confess that I have at time found myself with this degenerate tendency. It

always is revealing something spiritual. If it is a continual and ongoing characteristic of the individual it may in fact be a tell-tale sign that that individual is indeed not a genuinely saved no matter what they may profess. And if it is present in the life of an individual that knows beyond a doubt of their salvation, it may at least be a sign that they are not where they need to be spiritually in their relational walk with God/Jesus.

In Philippians 2:14-15, Paul contrasted the life of the believer with the lives of those who live in the world. Unsaved people complain and find fault, but Christians rejoice... are joy-filled. The Greek word for “complaining” is a term that actually sounds like what it means. Its pronunciation is much like muttering or grumbling in a low tone of voice. It is an emotional rejection of God’s providence, will and circumstances for one’s life. The word “disputing” is more intellectual and here means “questionings,” or “criticisms” directed negatively toward God and His work.

Let me just tell you what I think Paul is saying the simplest of terms for us... in common everyday language we can all understand. Here it is... what I think Paul is saying with this directive...

Practical Advice = “Watch your attitude and spirit!”

A bad attitude reveals itself from two sides:

2 Sides of a Bad Attitude: *both of these joy stealers need to be exposed

1. **Something we do alone = grumbling** – What exactly is grumbling? It is not loud, boisterous grousing, but rather low-toned, discontented muttering. It is negative, muted comments, complaining and whining.
2. **Something we do when we are with others = disputing** – Disputing, however, is vocal, ill-natured argumentation... verbal expressions of disagreement that stir up suspicion and distrust, doubt and other disturbing feeling in others.

I love good old Dr. J. Vernon McGee and his great old “Thru the Bible” radio broadcast. I still listen to him occasionally on podcasts of that old radio program. Dr. J. Vernon McGee says this, and it think his is quite correct and on to something. “Don’t accept an office in the church or in the Sunday School if you have to grumble about doing it. That absolutely wrecks more Christian work than anything else. Do all things without grumbling or disputing.”

Here is some good advice from Paul on this kind of grumbling and disputing spirit. Paul writes in Galatians 5:15-16, “¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! ¹⁶ I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” This grumbling and disputing spirit destroy others, it destroy us, and it can destroy the work of God... both in us and around us. But the Holy Spirit can help us overcome a grumbling and disputing spirit within us. Yield it to Him!

READ: Philippians 4:10-13 – What is the key help for a grumbling and disputing spirit within us?

3. **Become blameless and harmless** – Okay, let go on. Paul give us a third directive in our pursuit of our purpose and calling as believers. Let’s get it context... notice verse 14 again and the first of verse 15, “¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation...”

Did you see it? We are to be blameless and harmless. We are to prove we are different, so to speak. Paul identifies two startling differences between those who know Christ and those who don't. These two descriptive words make all the difference in the world unlike our unbelieving friends, we are to be...

2 identifying differences between those who know Christ and those who don't:

- (1) **Blameless** – This word suggests purity of life that is both undeniable and un-hypocritical... free of defect. "Blameless" describes a life that cannot be criticized because of sin or evil.
- (2) **Harmless** – This word means unmixed and unadulterated... inexperienced in evil... untainted by motive... possessing integrity. "Harmless," which can also be translated "innocent," describes a life that is pure, unmixed, and unadulterated with sin, much like high quality metal without any alloy

***Paul essentially summarizes the idea behind these two words with the phrase "children of God without fault."**

Here is what Jesus said in Matthew 18:3... listen close to this, "*And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*" What do you think Jesus could be saying here? What do children have that we need, that is so important for us in becoming who He has called us, saved us to be? Maybe blamelessness and harmlessness... innocence, purity in this crooked world.

Jesus words to his followers/disciples in Matthew 10:16 were "*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves (in to a crooked and perverse world). Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*" He is not telling us to "venomous" like a snake. He is telling us to be smart, keen, sharp, aware and at the same time to be... there is Paul's word "harmless"... innocent, blameless, pure, untainted, possessing integrity. That is something we are to work at!

4. **Shine as lights in the world – Here is the fourth directive that Paul gives us to achieve our purpose and calling as believers. Verse 15, "¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.**" We are to "*shine as lights in the world.*" Actually the term used here means "luminaries," meaning we are to shine like stars surrounded by darkness. In fact, Paul goes on to say that as we shine like stars we "*hold fast the word of life.*" We'll look more at that one in moment. Where did we pick up the mistaken idea of "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine?" We are never called "little lights" in the Bible... we are "stars." Bold, blazing, light-giving stars! This aching, hurting, confused world of lost humanity exists in dark rooms without light. Let it shine, fellow star! Why? Jesus answers that question in the sermon He delivered on the mount in Matthew 5:16, "*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*" Society around us is twisted and distorted, but the Christians stands straight because he measures his or her life by God's Word, the perfect standard. The world is dark, but Christians shine as bright lights.

Listen to Paul words in Ephesians 5:1, 8-11, "*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. ³ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things*"

the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”

Paul, once again says, we are to “imitate God”... be like, conform, be becoming more and more like Him. And he even tell us that is reflected in what our daily walk looks like... a walk of love and a walk of light. What does a “walk of light” look like? What could Paul have in mind when he said we are to “shine as light in the world.” Perhaps this passage in Ephesians give us some insight.

How to shine as light in the world:

(1) Know the Light of the World (Eph. 5:8) –

(2) Produce the fruit of Light (Eph. 5:9) –

(3) Grow in knowledge of the Light (Eph. 5:10) –

(4) Let your light shine in the dark world (Eph. 5:11) -

- 5. Hold fast the word of life** – Here is our passage one more time in Philippians 2:14-16 with it directive to us as believers in achieving our purpose which is how to be conforming to the image of Jesus... here it is... *¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”* Whatever could Paul mean by “holding fast the word of life.” That is interesting language. A slightly different translation – “holding forth” – more accurately reflect the verb in the original text. Here it refers to believers’ holding out or offering something for others to take... namely “the word of life.” What is that? The gospel, which when believed, produced spiritual and eternal life. Listen we are most fulfilling our purpose and calling as believes when we are reproducing our faith life in others.

The world has nothing to offer, but the Christian holds out the Word of life, the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, as we allow God to achieve this purpose in our lives, we become better witnesses in a world that desperately needs Jesus. Apply these characteristics of Jesus and you will see that He lived a perfect life in an imperfect world. It is important to note that this purpose is achieved “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation” as Paul says in verse 15. Paul did not admonish us to retreat from the world and go into a spiritual isolation. It is only as we are confronted with the needs and problems of real life that we can being to become more like Christ. The Pharisees were so isolated and insulated from reality that they developed an artificial kind of self-righteousness that was totally unlike the righteousness God wanted them to have. Consequently, the Pharisees forced a religion of fear and bondage on the people (see Matthew 23), and they crucified Christ because He dared to oppose that kind of religion. It is not by leaving the world, but by ministering to it that we see God’s purpose fulfilled in our lives.

THE POWER TO RECEIVE (Philippians 2:13)

Philippians 2:13 says, *¹³ For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”* The principle Paul laid down is this: “God must work in us before He can work through us.” This principle is seen at work throughout the Bible in the lives of men like Moses, David, the apostles, and others. God had a special purpose for each man to fulfill, and each man was unique and not an imitation of somebody else. For example, it took God forty years to bring Moses to the place where He could use him to lead the people of Israel. As Moses tended sheep during those forty years, God

was working in him so that one day He might work through him. God is more interested in the workman than in the work. If the workman is what he ought to be, the work will be what it ought to be.

Too many Christians obey God only because of pressure on the outside and not power on the inside. Paul warned the Philippians that not his presence with them but their desire to obey God and please Him was the important thing (see Philippians 1:27 and 2:12). They could not build their lives on Paul because he might not be with them very long. It is sad to see the way some ministries in the church weaken or fall apart because of a change in leadership. We have a tendency to please men and to obey God only when others are watching. But when you surrender to the power of God within you, then obedience becomes a delight and not a battle.

The power that works in us is the power of the Holy Spirit of God (see John 14:16-17 & 26, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Our English word “energy” comes from the word translated “works” in Philippians 2:13. IT is God’s divine energy at work in us and through us. The same Holy Spirit who empowered Christ when He was ministering on earth can empower us as well. But we must recognize the fact that the energy of the flesh (Romans 7:5) and of the devil (Ephesians 2:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:7) are also at work. Because of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, God’s divine energy (work/power) is available to us (Ephesians 1:18-23). The power is here, but how do we use it? What “tools” does God use, by His Spirit, to work in our lives? There are three tools...

3 Tools God Uses to Work in Our Lives:

1. **The Word of God** – Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, *“³For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”* God’s divine energy is release in our lives through His inspired Word. The same Word that spoke the universe into being can release divine power in our lives. But we have a responsibility in this... in how God’s Word may affect and have this powerful effect on our lives.

3 Responsibilities That Are Yours As a Believer in Regard to the Word of God:

- (1) **We have a responsibilities to appreciate the Word of God** – As a believer, you have a responsibility to appreciate the Word of God, and not to treat it the way we treat the words of men. How do we treat the words of men? Casually, take it or leave it, that is just your opinion... Do we ever treat God’s Word that way? Casually? Take it or leave it? Optional Opinion? The Word of God is unique... it is inspired, authoritative, and infallible. I love how Paul says it in 2 Timothy 3:16, *“¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for ¹⁰instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* If we do not appreciate the Word, then God’s power cannot energize our lives.
- (2) **We have a responsibility to appropriate the Word of God** – We must also “appropriate” the Word... that is we must “receive it.” This mean much more than just hearing/listening to it, or even simply reading and studying it. To “receive” (appropriate) God’s Word means to welcome it and make it part of our inner being. God’s truth is to be to the spiritual man with food is to the physical man. It feeds us, nourishes us, sustains us, strengthens us, keeps us healthy, etc. We cannot have the power, work, energy of God without it! Can’t!
- (3) **We have a responsibility to apply the Word of God** - Also, it... the Word of God, must be applied. It works only in those who believe. When we trust God’s Word and act on it, then God’s power is released in in our lives. The angel’s promise to Mary in **Luke 1:37** (that we

looked at Sunday) *“For with God nothing will be impossible”* – is translated *“For not word from God shall be void of power”* in the American Standard Version (1901). God’s Word has the power of accomplishment in it, and faith releases that power.

We see this truth operating in the life of Jesus. he commanded the crippled man to stretch out his hand, and the very command gave him the power to obey and be healed in Matthew 12:13. He commanded Peter to walk to Him on the water, and the command enabled Peter to do so, as long as he exercised faith in Matthew 14:22-23. It is faith in God’s promises that releases God’s power. His commandments are His enablements. The Holy Spirit wrote down the promises for us in the Word, and He gives us the faith to lay hold of these promises. As Paul said it in 2 Corinthians 1:20, *“For not matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoke by us to the glory of God.”* (NIV)

2. **Prayer** – So if we want God’s power working in us, we must spend time daily with the Word of God. But we must also pray, because prayer is the second tool God uses to work in the lives of His children. Paul said it in Ephesians 3:20, *“Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”* The Holy Spirit is closely related to the practice of prayer in our lives (see Romans 8:26-27). The book of Acts make it clear that prayer is a divinely ordained source of spiritual power (Acts 1:14, 4:23-31, 12:5 &12), and the Word of God and prayer go together (Acts 6:4). Unless the Christian takes time for prayer, God cannot work in him and through him. In the Bible and in church history, the people God used were people who prayed.
3. **Suffering** – God’s third tool is “suffering.” The Spirit of God works in a special way in the lives of those who suffer for the glory of Christ. The Apostle Peter’s word in 1 Peter 4:12-19 have always touched me, and stirred me... Peter writes, *“¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are ¹⁴reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a ¹⁵busybody in other people’s matters. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this ¹⁶matter. ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ Now “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?” ¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”* The “fiery trial” has a way of burning away the dross and empowering the believer to serve Christ. Paul himself had experienced God’s power in that Philippian jail when he was beaten and thrust into the stocks in the inner prison, for he was able to sing and praise God in spite of his suffering (see Acts 16:19-33). His “fiery trail” also enable him to forgive the jailer. It is not the earthquake that brought conviction to the man; the earthquake almost led him to suicide! It was Paul’s encouraging word, “Don’t do it! We are all here!” (The Living Bible). This kind of love broke the man’s heart, and he fell before Paul asking how to be saved.

<p>READ: Acts 16:19-22</p>

The Word of God, prayer and suffering are the three tools that God uses in our lives. Just as electricity must run through a conductor, so the Holy Spirit must work through the means God has provided. AS the Christian read the Word and prays, he become more like Jesus, and the more he or she becomes like Jesus, the more the unsaved world opposes him. This daily “fellowship of his suffering “ (Philippians 3:10) drives the believer back to the Word and prayer, so that all three tools work together to provide the spiritual power he needs to glorify Christ. If we are to have the “mind of Christ” and the joy that goes with it, we must recognize that there is a purpose to achieve (God’s plan for our

lives), and there is a power available to us as believers (the Holy Spirit), and there is a promise believe and hold onto... and God never goes back on His promises.

THE PROMISE TO BELIEVE (Philippians 2:16-19)

Notice the promise in verses 16-18 of our passage in **Philippians 2**, *“¹⁶ Holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”* What is this promise? That joy comes from “submission.” The world’s philosophy is that joy comes from aggression... fight everybody to get what you want, and you will get it and be happy. The example of Jesus is proof enough that the world’s philosophy is wrong. He never used a sword or any other weapon, yet He won the greatest battle in history - the battle against sin and death and hell. He defeated hatred by manifesting love; He overcame lies with truth. Because He surrendered He was victorious! And you and I must dare to believe His promise, *“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11).*

There is a twofold joy that comes to the person who possess and practices the submissive mind and heart according to our passage:

Two-fold Joy for the Believer who Practices the Mind of Christ: (a submissive mind/heart)

- 1. A joy hereafter (Philippians 2:16)** – Paul says it in verse 16, *“¹⁶ Holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”* In the day of Christ (see Philippians 1:10), God is going to reward those who have been faithful to Him. *“... Enter into the joy of your Lord”* spoken of by Jesus, Himself in **Matthew 25:21**, is going to be a part of that reward. The faithful Christian will discover that this suffering on earth have been transformed into glory in heaven. He will see that his work was not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). It was this same kind of promise of future joy that helped our Savior in his sufferings on the cross. **Hebrews 12:1-2** says it, *“¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the ^{1a}author and ^{1b}finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*
- 2. A joy here and now (Philippians 2:17-18)** – But as believers, we do not have to wait for the return of Christ to start experiencing the joy of the Lord. That joy is a present reality as implied in verses 17-18 of our passage... and it comes through sacrifice and service, *“¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”* It is remarkable that in two verses that discuss sacrifice, Paul used the words “joy” and “rejoice”... and repeats them. Most people would associate sorrow with suffering, but Paul saw suffering and sacrifice as doorways to a deeper joy in Christ. In Philippians 2:17 Paul was comparing his experience of sacrifice to that of the priest pouring out the drink offering (see Numbers 15:1-10). It was possible that Paul’s trial would go against him and he would be killed/executed. But this did not “rob” Paul of his joy. His death would be a willing sacrifice, a priestly ministry, on behalf of Christ and His church, and this would give him joy. Sacrifice and service are marks of the mind of Christ as seen in Philippians 2:7-8, and the submissive mind experiences joy even in the midst of suffering.

THE MIND OF CHRIST... LIVING IT OUT

It takes “faith” to exercise the mind of Christ... a life/mind that was willing to be broken and poured out for us, to humbles Himself, and give His life for us, to submit his heart and mind to God and God’s plan. It takes “faith” to have the mind of Christ.

4 Important and Helpful Truths of the Joyful Ins and Outs of Christian Living:

- 1. We must by faith believe that God’s promises are true and that they are going to work in our lives just as they worked in Paul’s life.**
- 2. God works in us through His Word, prayer, and suffering; and we work out in daily living and service.**
- 3. God fulfills His purpose in us as we receive and believe His word. Life is not a series of disappointing ups and downs. Rather, it is a sequence of delightful ins and outs.**
- 4. God works in... we work out. The example comes from Christ, the energy comes from the Holy Spirit, and the result is... JOY!**