

## Joyful Obedience

Philippians 2:12-18

Please keep your Bibles open, or your Bible apps open. We are using the YouVersion Bible app and set up an Event for each Sunday so you can follow along – this time with BLANKS to fill in!

Look at v. 12 – ***“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed.”*** This is a passage about obedience. Paul connects an exhortation about obedience to the preceding section about Jesus’ obedience to the point of death, even death on a cross.

**Therefore** – because of all Jesus has done for us; because He humbled himself to serve us; because of His finished work on the cross; because He is the exalted Lord of heaven and earth before whom every knee will bow; Therefore, Paul says: **OBEY**..

Whether I am with you or not, continue to obey. ***Here he sounds like a parent***, doesn’t he? Ok kids, mom and I are not home tonight but that doesn’t give you a free pass to go crazy. We still expect you to follow the rules of the house. In our house full of boys those rules include things like: no wrestling, no words that tear down, think of others, don’t be a total digital zombie, etc.

We have not instituted rules like that for our boys as conditions for joining our family or for remaining a part of our family. It’s not obey OR ELSE. It’s obey BECAUSE. ***Because you are an Anderson, live like an Anderson.***

That’s how it is with God and His children too. He does not give rules and say, obey these rules in order to become my children. No, He says – I have chosen you, I have adopted you, I have paid the price to make you my own. Now, ***because you ARE my children, live like my children.*** Live a life worthy of the gospel.

We saw this a couple of weeks ago. **God does not command us to work IN ORDER TO BE SAVED but to work BECAUSE WE ARE SAVED.** If we think our efforts are earning our salvation that is self-reliant religion. No, the Gospel says that salvation is a gift of God’s grace from beginning to end. But because we are saved we must work to make progress, we must make an effort to grow toward maturity in Christ. This mind-shift makes all the difference between the exhaustion and futility of ***self-reliant religion*** and the ***joyful, living relationship*** believers should have with our gracious and loving heavenly Father!

Listen to these Gospel exhortations. You can find them in the YouVersion App.

Because you are loved	–	live a life of love
Because you were chosen	–	live at peace
Because you are justified	–	live gratefully
Because you are blessed	–	live joyfully
Because you are a child of God	–	live in obedience
Because you are a citizen of heaven	–	live with hope
Because you are holy	–	live with purity
Because you have the Holy Spirit	–	live in His power
Because you are forgiven	–	be quick to forgive
Because you were reconciled	–	live in unity

Because you were served	-	live a life of service
Because you have a mission	-	live boldly for Christ
Because you received grace	-	be active in sharing the gospel of grace
Because you are saved	-	live worthy of that salvation

This is what Paul is doing here with that single word, ***“Therefore.”*** In light of all that we have in Christ, in light of who we ARE in Christ – beloved children of God – let’s live as obedient children of our loving and gracious heavenly Father.

This is why our obedience should be JOYFUL: because it is ***fueled by our gratitude and joy in Christ***; it is a gospel-motivated obedience. There are two parts to the message today: why we obey and how we obey. First, what motivates us to obey and second what our obedience should look like.

Here is the big idea: ***because of who Jesus is and all He has done for us, we should joyfully and faithfully obey Him.***

**The two reasons** that motivate our obedience are very simple. We obey Jesus because He is Lord and because He has saved us. We obey Him because of who He is and all He has done. As soon as Paul finishes a glorious presentation of Jesus’ self-humbling obedience followed by his exaltation to his rightful place as Lord over all things, his very next breath is THEREFORE, OBEY HIM!

We have already seen the first reason to obey – **because of what Jesus has done for us**: because we are saved; because Jesus is our all-sufficient, all-gracious Savior; because we ARE now children of God, the only appropriate response is to obey our Lord Jesus. We obey Jesus because of all he has done for us and secondly, because of who He is.

***“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”*** as you consider who it is that holds your eternal destiny in his hands. Only a fool would take this lightly. Everyone has an eternal soul, so everyone spends eternity somewhere. “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” Jesus described a man who was doing so well in business that he decided to tear down his barns and build bigger barns, telling himself:

***“And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’” Luke 12:19-20***

**As you contemplate ETERNITY**, as you consider the moment you will stand before the omniscient and perfectly just God of heaven, **only a fool would be brazen enough not to tremble**. It is right, even for the blood-bought, eternally secure children of God to tremble before His greatness and glory, approaching Him with the reverence due only to Him.

It’s like when the children came into Narnia and were first hearing about Aslan from Mr. Beaver:

***“Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion.” “Ooh” said Susan. “I’d thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion”... “Safe?” said Mr Beaver ... “Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”***

Aslan is a beautiful picture of the fierce, unstoppable power of Jesus Christ, the King – who is also the gentle, merciful, sacrificial Savior even of those who betray him.

There is a dangerous trend in what passes for Christianity these days to see Jesus more as your buddy or chum than as the holy God of heaven. Don Carson, commenting on John 15 when Jesus says, “No longer do I call you servants but now I call you friends,” writes:

***“In the Bible, God and the Lord Jesus call certain ones their friends, but no human ever refers to God or Jesus as their friend. It’s not a mutual, reciprocal friendship. Jesus here calls the disciples His friends. But He is still their Lord and Teacher ([John 13:13, 14](#)). Although at the last supper, the apostle John laid his head on Jesus’ breast, years later when John saw Jesus in His glory, he fell at His feet as a dead man ([Rev. 1:17](#)). So as we consider whether or not we are friends of Jesus, we need to maintain John’s reverence.”***

No one in the Bible ever dares to claim that “Jesus is my friend,” as possibly the most obnoxious song on Youtube tritely repeats over and over. Jesus does, on one occasion, call his disciples HIS friends. Praise be to God we are no longer God’s enemies, but let’s remember that we are God’s SERVANTS, we are His children, we are His creations, His workmanship; and it is right for us to come before Him with reverence, awe, fear and trembling.

The command here is to WORK OUT your salvation with fear and trembling. Notice that Paul does not say WORK FOR your salvation. That would run counter to everything he says about being saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. No, it is impossible to work FOR your salvation – there is no one righteous, not even one. Romans 3:20 ***“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”***

**The Law’s job was to reveal and restrain sin, but it could never REMOVE sin.** The Law of God is like a mirror to help us see how very far we fall short of God’s perfection and glory. But that Law does NOTHING to help us make up the difference. The Law beats us down into a humble, fearful reality of our desperate and sinful condition before a holy God but it cannot lift us up. Only Jesus can do that. But that is precisely where Jesus meets us – for once the Law has revealed our sin we are ready to come to Jesus to ask HIM to REMOVE our sin.

In just a couple of weeks believers all over the world will celebrate the ***500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.*** October 31, 2017 should be circled and highlighted on all of our calendars not because our kids can go get free candy from our neighbors but because God in His grace moved in the hearts of the Reformers to come back to the central truths of the Christian faith, summarized as the FIVE SOLAS.

- ***Scripture alone is our authority – not popes or councils or human experience***
- ***Grace alone is the basis of our salvation – we add nothing to the finished work of Christ***
- ***Faith alone is the means of our salvation – not our human effort or our membership in the church***
- ***Christ alone is the agent of our salvation – there is no other Savior***
- ***God’s glory alone is the purpose of our lives – there is no higher goal***

The command here in v. 12 to “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling” has two purposes. First, it exhorts all people to **work out WHETHER you are saved.** Don’t presume on God’s mercy.

Don't assume you're all good. Take a good long look at your heart and your life. Are you trusting in God's grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone to save you? Or is some part of your trust resting on your own efforts, your church membership, a time 20 years ago when you walked an aisle, signed a card or were baptized. We are not saved by grace alone through an altar call alone or by grace alone through baptism alone. It is All grace, accessed by means of faith and that faith resting securely on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So first, work out **WHETHER YOU ARE SAVED**. Second, and related, look to **see that your salvation is working itself out in your life** – that there is evidence of saving faith, that your life is bearing the fruit of the new heart Jesus gave you; that you are living differently since you became a child of God; that you are living worthy of the gospel that saved you. If you are no different from how you used to be; if you are no different from the non-believers around you – this verse should make you very uncomfortable.

But if you do see fruit, if you can see progress – even if it's a little here and a little there – then this verse should encourage you to see **WHO JESUS IS** and **WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR YOU**.

- Jesus is the **almighty Lord of heaven** to whom we owe wholehearted, reverent worship.
- But Jesus is also the **faithful, promise-keeping God** who deserves our wholehearted trust. Look at v. 13 ***“For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”***

Here is the beautiful paradox of our sanctification: we are commanded to work but God is the one who does the work. Good works will be the fruit of a life transformed by the gospel, but even those good works are produced by God. Just as the faith that saves is a gift of God's grace, so the works that demonstrate our salvation are also gifts of God's grace. “It is GOD who works in you.”

God works in us ***to give us both the desire and the power to please Him***. He works in us to give us the “will” and the power to “work for his good pleasure.” The work that God started in us HE promises to finish at the day of Christ Jesus. Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith. He is the faithful, promise-keeping God – our creator, our Savior, our sustainer, our sanctifier and one day our glorifier. God is filling us with the fruit of righteousness that can only come **THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**. And because it is God at work in us, because these fruits come through Jesus, it is **GOD ALONE** who gets the glory for them.

So these are our twin motivations to obey – because of who Jesus is and because of what Jesus has done. We obey because Jesus is the holy, righteous, almighty Lord we worship and He is the faithful, covenant-making, promise-keeping God we trust.

We obey not in order to be saved but because we are saved; not to become beloved children of our Father in heaven but because we are beloved children of the King.

That is why we obey. Now, **what does obedience look like?** Four expressions of these wonderful gospel truths; four fruits of “the obedience of faith”: contentment, discipline, boldness and joy.

The first fruit of an obedient faith is **contentment**. V. 14 ***“Do all things without grumbling or disputing.”*** ALL THINGS. Easy things and hard things. Assignments you like and assignments you don't like. “Do all things without grumbling or disputing.”

How many moms here would love it if this single command in the Bible were consistently obeyed in your house? Friends of ours expect their kids to obey “all the way, right away.” How pleasant would a household be if kids obeyed this verse all the way, right away and NEVER grumbled or disputed with mom or dad?

- **Grumbling** is the muttering complaint of one who is dissatisfied with his situation.
- **Disputing** is the argument of one who questions the wisdom of his leader.

You’ll remember that the nation of Israel consistently grumbled and disputed against Moses. It’s clear Paul has a specific moment in Jewish history in mind because he refers to a “crooked and twisted generation,” which is a direct quote from Deut. 32:4-5

“A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; **they are a crooked and twisted generation.**” Deut. 32:4-5

Moses is referring here to the 1 million plus people the Lord delivered dramatically from Egypt – with the 10 plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh’s entire army. Just three days out from the Red Sea the people started complaining. Can you imagine? God has just performed at least a dozen massively visible and crazy memorable miracles to prove His supremacy over the gods of Egypt. And three full days haven’t gone by before the people start grumbling about a lack of water and disputing about the wisdom of Moses, their leader.

We had a phrase in our house when our boys were younger: **“Fussers get nothing.”** I recommend that for any of you with small children. “Fussers get nothing.” Kristin and I determined early on that we did not enjoy whining and therefore would not reward it. A corresponding principle is “we don’t negotiate with terrorists.”

So if our little guys whined or complained we simply told them, “If what you want is NOTHING, then by all means keep up your fussing – but do it in your room where I don’t have to hear you. If you want SOMETHING, then use your words and maybe we can work something out.”

God took the same line when it came to the promised land. The Israelites sent in 12 spies. 10 of them came back complaining about how big and strong the Canaanites were and those 10 overruled Caleb and Joshua who said, “With God’s help we can drive them out!” The fussers won the day, grumbling about their situation and disputing about the wisdom of their leaders – and God said, “Ok. **You’ve chosen to be fussers. Now you get nothing.** No promised land. No milk and honey. You get to wander in the desert for 40 years until everyone over 18 is dead.”

Fussers get nothing – and often fussers get serious consequences – because **fussing reveals a lack of faith** and without faith it’s impossible to please God. Brothers and sisters, may we learn from Israel’s example and choose contentment instead of complaining; confidence in God’s plans instead of questioning of His wisdom. “Do all things without grumbling or disputing.”

The first fruit of obedient faith is contentment. The second is **discipline**. **“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish.”**

The final outcome of our faith is that we will be “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.” If we are constantly grumbling and disputing then we are heaping blame on ourselves, we are tarnishing our innocence and staining our purity. Contentment in suffering, joy in hardship, faith when things don’t make sense – should move us to a unified discipline, a culture of holiness and purity.

- **“Blameless and unblemished”** are words often used in reference to OT sacrifices – spotless animals without any defect.
- **“Innocent”** means unmixed and refers to pure gold or silver, not mixed with any lesser substance like lead to increase the weight through deception.

As we present ourselves to the Lord as living sacrifices of praise, may we present ourselves holy and pure – unblemished and unstained. This will take discipline, commitment, hard work and accountability.

Like anything worth doing, ***growing toward maturity in Christ takes both individual effort and support from a community***. You would never expect to become a concert level musician without lots of individual practice and some excellent teachers to help you along the way. You would never expect to become a doctor without studying hard and lots of support from professors, parents and fellow students. You would never expect to excel in a sport without investing a lot of time yourself and receiving a great deal of encouragement from your teammates and coaches. Every area of life is like this – we need to work hard and we need support from other people.

**Why would we ever think it would be different when it comes to spiritual growth?** Just as in every other area of life we need to work hard and be disciplined in order to grow in Christ and we need encouragement and support from our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Over these next two weeks we will be getting our regular ***Community Groups*** up and running. Some never stopped but others took a break while we have been doing the Courageous groups for men. If you are not yet in a Community Group, please contact me this week and I would love to help you find a group that would work for you!

Obedient faith expresses itself in contentment, discipline and third, **boldness**.

***“That you may be children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.”***

Our faith should shine like the sun piercing through dark storm clouds or like the dawn driving out the darkness of night. Jesus said to his followers, “YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.” We have the light of Jesus Christ inside of us, so how could we hide that light under a bushel basket (whatever that is). “Hide it under a bushel, NO! I’m gonna let it shine!”

**Boldness comes down to a question of what we are holding fast to.** Paul commands believers to hold fast to the word of life – meaning the Gospel. Cling to the truth you know from God’s Word and specifically hold on to the gospel tradition you have been taught. Hold fast to these precious truths and promises to the point that you can say, “For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

I’m sure we all grab onto the gospel when we are down or discouraged or have just fallen into sin, again. **But do we cling to the Word of Life all the time?** Or do we really hold on to other things?

Our reputation? Our career advancement? Our personal hobbies? What are you really holding on to right now?

***Nothing is more important than getting right with God yourself.*** Your eternal soul is at stake and only a fool would downplay the risks of ignoring the warnings and commands of Scripture. “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” Then **the next most important thing in life is sharing this good news with others.**

You have an eternal soul. Everyone spends forever somewhere. Are you prepared to stand before God on the day he will judge you for everything you have ever done, thought or said?

Now let me be clear. Our goal as bold evangelists is not to blind people WITH THE LIGHT of the Gospel. It is very possible to do that – to shine the light of truth directly in people’s eyes like a detective interrogating a suspect and tilting a light right in his face. “Where were you on the night of October the 14<sup>th</sup>? Were you cheering for the Chicago Cubs? Why in the world not?!”

No, **our goal is not to blind people with the light but to help them SEE with the light.** This is a basic principle of conflict resolution – don’t come at a person as if you are attacking them. If you come at me with a sword, I will defend myself with *my* sword. Instead, sit down beside the person and instead of attacking them, and ***attack the problem*** together. *“Let me show you what the Bible says about heaven. This is intense stuff but it’s important that we think about it. I don’t want to scare you but I do want you to understand what is at stake.”*

Then walk them through the Romans Road or the 4 spiritual laws and let the light of Scripture help them begin to see the truth, praying desperately that the Holy Spirit will open their mind to understand it and open their heart to receive it.

Let’s be bold witnesses who shine like lights in this dark world, holding on to the Gospel ourselves and sharing that Good News every time we have the opportunity.

So four fruits of obedience we see here are contentment, discipline, boldness and finally: **JOY**. ***“Shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.”***

Paul comes back to the theme of chapter one “to live is Christ and to die is gain.” His concern is the day of Christ when his work will be assessed by his Lord. The apostle’s desire is to be proud of his labor – proud of the purity of the offering he presents the Lord that day. ***What he wants to present to the Lord is a group of believers who have remained faithful as he has*** – who are blameless and innocent, without the blemishes of disobedience, the faithlessness of complaining, the ugliness of disunity and unresolved conflict.

Those are the things that cripple a church and make it unworthy of our glorious Lord. But Paul says here, as long as you Philippians remain faithful to the Lord, my physical life here on this earth doesn’t matter. **I will have accomplished the task the Lord gave to me** – of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace and of exhorting God’s people to hold fast to that Word of Life. Then I can rejoice even if it costs me my life.

***Some thing are worth dying for.*** Some things are worth joyfully laying down your life to achieve.

**Jan Hus** is considered the father of the Reformation, following the teachings introduced by John Wycliffe the generation before him. What Wycliffe set in motion in England in the 1300s, Hus activated in Bohemia – today's Czech Republic - in the 1400s.

The wellspring of their convictions was the foundational and ultimate ***authority of Scripture alone***, especially over against the authority of the Catholic Church and the Pope. Like Wycliffe, and often simply translating the works of Wycliffe, Hus attacked the corruption in the church, the luxury of the priests, the abuse of power resulting from the fact that the bishops and the pope ran the affairs of the state as well as the church.

As it would be for Martin Luther 100 years later, a key issue for Hus was the selling of indulgences. This came to a head in 1411 when the Pope declared a crusade to consolidate his own power, seeking to finance the military mission by selling indulgences in all the Catholic Churches throughout Europe. All of the professors at his university supported the Pope, but Hus said, ***"Even if I should stand before the stake which has been prepared for me," Hus wrote at the time, "I would never accept the recommendation of the theological faculty."***

Despite repeated confrontations with bishops and the Pope, Hus stood his ground. Even when he was excommunicated along with all of his followers and when all of the writings of Wycliffe were burned in Prague, Hus remained faithful to his beliefs.

Finally, as he awaited the sham of a trial that would end his life, facing repeated and forceful demands to recant his teachings, Hus abandoned hope in any human courts and **appealed directly to Jesus Christ, the highest judge**. This moment in Bohemia has been compared to Luther's nailing up of the 95 Theses in Germany.

Repeatedly during his two year exile and his final eight month imprisonment in which he was hardly fed or cared for, Hus made a simple appeal: prove to me from Scripture where I am wrong. When faced with demand after demand to recant his teaching he kept coming back to this point saying, ***"I do not wish anything but to be convinced from Scripture."*** Forced to the ground for his final humiliation he spoke forgiveness for all of his enemies. And then he was chained to a stake piled high with wood and straw, and the fire was lit.

In a very real sense **the death of Hus lit the fire of reformation in Bohemia**, igniting the passion of his followers for the authority of Scripture, the truth of the gospel and the purity of the true church. Jan Hus, like the Apostle Paul, embodied the truth that "to live is Christ and to die is gain." Just as his life honored the Lord Jesus and built up the church so the death of Jan Hus honored the Lord Jesus and mobilized the true church in Bohemia to the point that 100 years later 90% of what we call the Czech Republic were Hussites and the stage was set for Reformation in nearby Germany.

Some things are worth dying for – worth being joyfully poured out like a drink offering for the faith of others. Paul knew this, as did Wycliffe and Hus.

Do we believe this, brothers and sisters?



Let's pour ourselves out in obedience to Christ - because of all He has done for us; because of who He is. Let's obey Him with contentment, with discipline, with boldness and with joy - no matter what the cost!