

## Lights in the Dark

### Philippians 2:12-30

A few weeks ago, I preached out of Philippians, the end of chapter 1 and the start of chapter 2. It was a heavy message – because I saw in those verses a very raw “gut check” of what God desires us TO STRIVE FOR as Christians. It was a look at how to be SUCCESSFUL as Christians by remembering the truth of what the Gospel IS...like REALLY is. This is very helpful because we are told to “Imitate God, as dearly loved children, to love each other like Christ, who gave himself up for us as a sacrifice to God the Father” (Eph5:1-2). Isn’t it amazing that Jesus gave up every piece of His authority and power as God? He gave it up – He let it ALL go so that He could be THE PERFECT and FULL payment for our sin. So, we can be MORE successful as a Christian if we **grow** in the mindset of “considering others as more important” and to “loving others sacrificially” BY remembering the truth of the Gospel as FUEL.

Let us also remember that the submissive obedience of Jesus to give up all His authority and Power to allow humiliation and death as payment for our sins IS the ULTIMATE display of how much He loves YOU!!! – HE LOVES YOU – HE LOVES US! He wants us to be His and enjoy relationship with Him and enjoy the blessings that come with following Him! It’s so good.

Let’s enjoy that truth as we dig into the next words in Philippians 2:12-30.

Please turn to those verses, again, Phil 2:12-30

Lets Read Phil 2:12-18 to begin, 19-30 as we go ... ESV

## Lights in the Dark

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

*<sup>14</sup> Do all things without grumbling or disputing (or arguing), <sup>15</sup> that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*

**I see tall this as - How to keep improving (on being like Jesus).**

And I see 6 things to help us make gains, as a team, in our faith.

1. We should be viewing God with reverence and fear (Fear & Trembling) while we engage in the good work that HE wills us to do. (vs12-13).
2. That others see a trusting (not grumbling) and unified (not arguing) church (vs 14) –

3. SO THAT...we will be seen as LIGHT in a dark world. This trust and teamwork can display some blessings of God (light) within a dark and crooked and twisted generation (vs 15).
4. Look to the Bible “hold fast to the word of life” for instruction (Vs.16).
5. Christians can look at death as joyful (a time to rejoice) (vs17-18).
6. (After we address those 5 points, we will look at) #6 - Look at other people who are living out their faith WELL as examples to learn from (vs.19-30).

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Let’s dig into each of these points, starting with...

**1. We should be viewing God with reverence and fear (Fear & Trembling) while we engage in the good work that HE wills us to do. (vs12-13).**

If a pastor is around or not, it says - *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,*

In the Greek the word for FEAR means reverence, awe, or respect

The word for TREMBLING means – fear.

Kind of interesting that the translators used the words they did, as I looked at the Greek I saw how easily the translation could have been worded, “Work out your salvation with “reverent fear”. Right, the word for **fear** is really meaning **reverence or awe** and the word **trembling** really means **fear**. I don’t know why the translators did what they did, but this is truth. We are told by God that we do a better job of worshiping Him and following Him when we have a healthy reverence and fear of Him! I had doubt attack me with this verse as a younger Christian. I had confusion enter my mind with thoughts that played out something like “can I trust the Bible; it tells me God loves me and that Jesus is love but now it tells me to fear Him? Why would I fear a God who loves me? Those things seem to contradict each other – how can I trust a book that contradicts itself?”

C.S. Lewis, attempts to address this biblical truth with Aslan, in [The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe](#). It shows up in a conversation between Mr. Beaver and Susan early on....and I quote....

*“Aslan is a lion- THE Lion, **THE GREAT** Lion.” said Mr. Beaver. “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.”*

God is good. God is love (1Jn4:8).

The important truth, that God is communicating here is, God is indeed ALL powerful as well as loving, and that power is to be feared.

GOD will bless you if you approach Him with fear and trembling, fear is the beginning of wisdom after all, as God teaches us in Proverbs, 9:10. AND when we enjoy His LOVE and WISDOM, God awakens HIS desires within us to work for ‘HIS good PLEASURE’ (vs13). But God will NOT bless you if you are PROUD and ARROGANT in regard to Him.

The bible continually teaches us this truth in so many of its true stories.

Let's look at ONE of the places this shows up - Mark 5:22-42, *"A ruler of the synagogue named Jairus came and THREW HIMSELF AT THE FEET of Jesus, and BEGGED Jesus earnestly – "my daughter is dying, come lay your hands on her so that she will be well!"* Did you catch that, Jairus THREW HIMSELF at the feet of JESUS – this is fear and trembling! Jesus responds to this reverence and agrees to go with Jairus.

On the way to this girl – Mark 5:25-32 A great crowd presses in around Jesus as He tries to walk, many people were now aware of the teaching ability and miracle work of Jesus and they wanted to see and touch Him. So as Jesus walks it says, *"a woman with a medical problem of continual bleeding which had afflicted her for years heard how Jesus could heal people. She was confident that all she would need to do was touch His garment. So, she came up behind Jesus as He walked through a crowd and touched His cloak – immediately power came out of Jesus and into her and she was healed. Jesus felt it and turned to everyone behind Him asking "who touched me?" It's funny to see how the disciples of Jesus answered His question right away with "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say 'Who touched me?'"(vs32)...Ummm pretty much everyone here has touched you.... But look at verse 33. "But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in FEAR and TREMBLING and FELL DOWN BEFORE Him" and Jesus says to her "Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace and be healed of your disease."*

While all this is happening people from Jairus's house run up to him and tell him his daughter is dead. Jesus overhears the report and steps in, he tells Jairus not to fear this death but to trust Him and they continue to go to the girl. Vs 39 of Mark 5 – Jesus arrives at the house and says, "the child is not dead" – vs 40 = those at the house "laughed at Jesus". Now, the response to this UNTRUSTING laughter was for Jesus to throw those people out of the house (and I believe this is a foreshadowing of THOSE WITH NO TRUST in Jesus (laughing at him – not really fear and trembling, not believing Him) will get THEM thrown out of His presence! [hell])

Lets continue in Mk 5, vs 41-42 where the Bible says... Jesus took the girl "by the hand he said to her, little girl arise." "and immediately the girl got up and began walking..."

Faith with reverence, respect, and with a healthy fear (Jairus, the sick woman). Faith with those qualities brings blessing!!!!

Faith without reverence and fear....well, its not good. The Bible teaches us:

Prov 16:5 Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished.

James 4:6 says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

There is major danger here. God clearly looks upon those that have an appropriate and healthy fear of Him WITH LOVE!

Those that want to follow their own way – the way that makes sense to them even if it goes against God - that's pride and when that pride is directed against Gods desires, He hates it. God considers this kind of rebellion as an abomination against Him and punishment is NOT withheld.

Let yourself be in awe of God, be in awe of His eternal power and divine glory (Rom1:20) and let that reverence make you tremble in fear at His immense power for that fear brings wisdom (Prov9:10) to follow Him and do HIS good work.

**Let's look at Points 2 & 3 in vs14-15.**

*"Do all things without grumbling or disputing/arguing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.....shine as lights in the world,"* (vs14-15).

**2. Those outside the church should see a trusting (not grumbling) and unified (not arguing) church (vs 14) –**

**3. SO THAT...we will be seen as LIGHT in a dark world. This trust and teamwork can display some blessings of God (light) within a dark and crooked and twisted generation (vs 15).**

**God wants His church to be seen IN UNIFIED TRUST – which will be like a LIGHT in a Dark World.**

We cannot shine if we are GRUMBLING. if we are grumbling against how God is working in our lives we are being like the Israelites as they grumbled all the way from Egypt to their promised land....this grumbling is really a way we don't trust God.

Work at not complaining to God, work at trusting Him. With trust in God you will find direction from God. Prov 40:4 says "Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, **who does NOT** turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!"

Now, let's be honest, every Christian has doubts! Don't ignore your doubts, don't stifle your questions about God – **Just DON'T grumble against God – GO TO God for your answers!!!! Seek** out what the Bible says! Prov3:5 says, "trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will lead your path straight."

Next, we are to work together without disputes or arguing. That's pretty common sense, there is NO WAY we can display a team of JOY (LIGHT) to others if we are bickering and arguing with each other.

We will bicker....we do bicker...sadly. I'm guilty at times....its ugly at times for all of us within a lost world. Buts Gods wants us to be sanctified – that means SET APART or SEPARATE, if the world is dark – God wants us to be the opposite – LIGHT.

And it's easy to see how dark, crooked and twisted the world is. As I prepped for this message I did a quick scan of the news headlines and found 6 out of the top 10 were abductions, 1 a drug overdose, 1 about a kid being beaten up by a gang of bullies, 1 about covid numbers spiking in brazil and 1 about a police officer being murdered. Unfortunately, these are common headlines....

The world is dark, the world is full of twisted and wicked people and God wants us to be a shining light within all that darkness — whenever we trust God more and praise God instead of complaining – that's shining! Whatever gains we make in addressing disagreements with gentleness, respect and forgiveness – that's shining! This is especially true when we are trusting and responding with grace WHILE WE ARE BEING SINNED AGAINST! That's being LIGHT in a dark world! Its tough to do! But boy is it beautiful

when we do it. THE place to find the ENERGY to light us up....point 4.

**4. Look to the Bible “hold fast to the word of life” for instruction (Vs.16).**

This is simple but so beneficial to take hold of. Look to Gods word for guidance. Remember that Gods word is “breathed out” by Him and profitable for teaching us His truth, FOR convicting us OF what to do, FOR correcting us in the ways we are wrong and training us TO DO what is right (2Tim3:16)! God knows we need His word. God tells us that through knowledge of Him, He has “*given us everything we need for a godly life*” (2Pt1:3). And God does not JUST provide guidance with His word. God also gives us real people, people who have applied God’s word to their lives, as examples. Point 5 sheds light on one of the ways Paul is an example for us.

**5. Even dying can be seen as JOY (a time to rejoice). (17-18)**

Remember, Paul is writing this letter from a prison cell in Rome where he may be hauled out and killed for his faith at any moment. Within that real threat Paul reminds his fellow Christians that “even if I am Poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of YOUR faith, I am GLAD and REJOICE with you...”(vs17)

Here is Paul displaying his DEEP understanding of the Gospel. Paul knew JESUS was the REAL sacrifice...NOT himself. Jesus WAS and IS the pure, perfect sacrificial lamb who was slaughtered on the cross. Paul knew he was more like the “drink offering”. The “drink offering” was part of a blood sacrifice on the Holy Alter. During a blood sacrifice, wine was poured in front of or on top of the burning animal so that the steam created by the wine would rise up as a fragrance TO...&...FOR God – a secondary additional element of sacrifice to PLEASE God. Paul knew he was not THE sacrifice to God – Jesus is – Paul knew he was just a secondary add on, a man saved by God – pouring himself out for God by helping others know Jesus. Therefore. Paul reminds the Philippians and us, that if he dies in service to God, it should be rejoiced in like a fragrance of worship. When we die, if we die in faith – it’s a WIN to rejoice in. When Christians die in faith – ITS GAIN! Its one more faithful teammate to REMEMBER and LEARN FROM and REJOICE in, both for the example they provided here – and for the joy being given to them in heaven. (In my father house there are many rooms, I go to prepare a place for you, says Jesus (Jn14:2), we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Ps23:6).

My last point, Point 6 adds onto point 5. God has given us His word to learn from AND other great lives of faith, not just the apostle Paul’s, to learn from.

**6. Look at other people who are living out their faith WELL as examples to learn from (vs.19-30).**

Lets read 19-30.

*<sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. <sup>20</sup> For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. <sup>21</sup> For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> But you know Timothy's<sup>[a]</sup> proven worth, how as a son<sup>[b]</sup> with a father he has served with me in the gospel. <sup>23</sup> I hope therefore to send him*

*just as soon as I see how it will go with me, <sup>24</sup> and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.*

*<sup>25</sup> I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, <sup>26</sup> for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. <sup>27</sup> Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup> I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. <sup>29</sup> So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, <sup>30</sup> for he nearly died<sup>[c]</sup> for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.*

In other words – lets all look to and work at growing in our faith by learning from those who emulate and share the Gospel well.

Paul provides the Philippians and us with examples of;

- a. Timothy. Timothy was like a son to Paul and helped Paul preach the Gospel message faithfully – “proving his worth” (vs22). “I have no one like him”, Timothy is someone who has “genuine concern for others” (vs20). Timothy is someone who did not seek his own interests, but the interests of Jesus (vs21). Paul saw the normal attitude of others to be that of doing things for their own interest...Timothy was NOT like that!
- b. Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus is a Philippian! He was sent to Paul with money and other supportive gifts to aid Paul’s prison situation. But Epaphroditus almost died in this journey. He got deathly sick. God spared Epaphroditus from death and was able to return to Philippi. Paul is pointing out that service like this, service that is sacrificial in order to advance the Gospel message should be honored (vs29-30). When we take time to reflect on and honor anyone who has served God well – we Honor and Glorify God who gave them the desire to “*work for Gods good pleasure*” (vs13), and our HONORING OF THEM can “*spur (us) on to love and good deeds*” (Heb10:24).

God loves you – He always loves you – and He wants you to display His love to the rest of the world.

I brought up 6 points, let me summarize them in 4...

1. Embrace a healthy REVERANCE and FEAR of God so that you are motivated to do what is pleasing to God with your life – (share the Gospel / Disciple each other). (vs12-13)
2. You can’t SHINE for God **as well as you should** when you are grumbling and disagreeing with others and with Him. (vs14-15)
3. Look to the Bible “hold fast to the word of life” for instruction (Vs.16).
4. To look at heroes of faith in the bible, throughout history, and in our own lives, who have served sacrificially to spread the Gospel, as examples to motive and imitate(vs.19-30).

Let’s be like the Philippians who were partnering with Paul in Gospel work. They were doing it well enough to gain Paul’s praise as well as his continued teaching. Let’s partner with our Lord and continue to look to HIM for our teaching. And let us embrace Joyful, sacrificial, love for one another. LET THAT

happen SO WELL that it spills over the borders of our church into the lives of others around us so that THEY are hearing AND seeing the Gospel message THROUGH us.

If you have heard all this and have come to realize you have never accepted Jesus. You realize that you don't have this joyful, trusting faith.

Accept Him now, just say yes to Jesus becoming your salvation!

He overcame death for all of those who believe in Him. By accepting Him as your Lord you become a Child of HIS – You become a CHILD OF GOD who gains all the blessings of God, forever. You can gain joy and peace in this life – but you will gain ETERNAL JOY and ETERNAL PEACE with God by saying Yes to Him now! That is the deepest heart cry of man – to “dwell in the house of the Lord forever!” (Ps23:6). So, as I was saying. If you recognize that you have not believed in the Love of God, that you have resisted how God sent His Son Jesus to save the world BUT want to accept Him now – enjoy our prayer together, and when we are done praying – immediate contact a Christian friend and tell them you just become a follower of CHRIST! God's word says “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever would believe in Him would not perish but have eternal life (Jn3:16), and God's word also says “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Rom10:9).