

Ln 7 Becoming a Better Person

[*Philippians 2:12-18*](#)

One thing that causes a lot of stress in life is being unable to make positive changes in our lives to become better people. When this happens, we can be overcome by guilt and feelings of inferiority. In this passage the Bible tells us **four** things we need to know if we are to become better people.

First, there is potential to activate [2:12](#)

Paul talks about this when he writes: *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling* ([2:12c](#)). Paul is writing to people who are already Christians, so he is not suggesting we earn our salvation (see [Eph. 2:8-9](#)). Paul is not saying we work **FOR** our salvation, but rather we work **OUT** our salvation. The word translated *work out* refers to working a mine. It is the idea of getting from the mine as many valuable minerals as possible.

What does [Romans 12:6a](#) tells us about our potential?

Of every church it could be said, "Thar's gold in them thar pews." This is because every believer has a spiritual gift that is full of potential. The local church is a gold mine of talents and gifts, but most believers are not working out their salvation because they are not activating their potential.

As we grow to be all God wants us to be, we are to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*. This refers to a holy *fear* that trembles at the thought of boarding up the spiritual gold mine of *salvation*. The thought of missing out on being the people God wants us to be should cause *fear and trembling*.

Why, according to [Romans 14:12](#)?

Of what will we give an *account*? Our lives, our gifts, our talents—our potential! God will judge us by how we have worked out our salvation, how we have lived up to the potential and purpose He has given us as Christians.

To become a better person, we must realize there is **potential to activate** and...

Second, there is a power to stimulate [2:13](#)

Working out our salvation is not something we do under our own power. That's why Paul writes, *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure* ([2:13](#)).

The word translated ***worketh*** (***energeō***, **en-erg-eh'-oh**) is the word from which we get our English words "**energy**" and "**energize**." In other words, God through the Holy Spirit energizes (or stimulates) us to be better people.

How does [Ephesians 3:20](#) describe this power?

The stimulation to become a better person, as well as the power to do so, originates with God. **Becoming a better person** is synonymous with the phrase *do of his good pleasure*. What is God's *good pleasure* for our lives? God created us in His image, or to **be like Him** ([Gen. 1:26](#)). God doesn't want us to become gods, but He does want us to become godly. To help us do that, God gives us written instructions, a manual we call the Bible! The entire Bible is inspired by God *and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* ([2 Tim. 3:16](#)).

Why, according to the next verse ([3:17](#))?

If you want to become a better person, get into the Bible. As you read the Bible, the Holy Spirit will give you the desire and power to become a better person.

To become a better person, we must realize there is **potential to activate, a power to stimulate**, and...

Third, there is a practice to eliminate [2:14-16](#)

To become a better person, we must *do all things without murmurings and disputings* ([2:14](#)).

The word translated **murmurings** refers to a bad attitude that expresses itself in constant complaining. Complaining is a habit, and habits are only broken by replacing them with something else. To stop complaining, we must replace it with positive speaking.

We can do this if we remember what principle found in [Proverbs 16:24](#)?

Therefore, our speech should be a source of sweetness and blessing, as well as bringing healing, or renewal, and encouragement to others. If we practice this principle, we can replace complaining with compliments.

Here is your assignment: for the next seven days, every time you are tempted to complain about something, replace the complaint with a compliment or something positive. Imagine how much stress that will take out of your life and what a better person you will be.

The word translated **disputings** ([Philip. 2:14](#)) means expressing opinions that stir up division.

More churches have been harmed and more churches have split because of arguing than because of false doctrine or immorality.

The result of refraining from *murmurings and disputings* is *that ye may be blameless and harmless* ([2:15a](#)).

The word **blameless** means "**without outstanding faults.**" It means there is nothing in one's life that would ruin their Christian witness. The word translated **harmless** means "**unmixed**" and refers to pure

metal that has not been alloyed or mixed with other metals. It basically means **having integrity**. People who are not guilty of complaining or arguing are people of integrity.

If we become *blameless and harmless*, we can be *the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation* ([2:15](#)).

The word translated **crooked (skolios, skol-ee-os')** is the word from which we get our word "**scoliosis**," which is an abnormal curvature of the spine. It refers to that which is morally or spiritually twisted or corrupt. The word translated **nation** can also be translated "**generation**" or "**time**."

Knowing we live in a *crooked and perverse* generation, what does Jesus pray in [John 17:15](#)?

We should contrast so much with the culture in which we live that we will *shine as lights in the world* ([Philip. 2:15c](#)). If we are genuinely positive and complimentary, we will stand out from our culture like beautiful stars against the dark night sky.

That's one reason Jesus makes what declaration in [Matthew 5:14a](#)?

Complaining, negative people always bring darkness, but positive, complimentary people always bring light wherever they are. Wouldn't it be great if our churches had reputations that caused people to say, "That church is where all the positive people in town go!" Do you think that kind of church would be attractive to unbelievers? Certainly! What would your home be like if you stopped complaining and being critical? What would our schools be like if all the griping, complaining people left town? What would our city be like if all the griping, complaining people moved?

As we *shine as lights* by being positive and complimentary, Paul says we are *holding forth the word of life* ([Philip. 2:16](#)). What is *the word of life*?

How does Jesus answer that question in [John 6:63b](#)?

Also, Peter said to Jesus, *thou hast the words of eternal life* ([Jn 6:68b](#)). Eternal life comes from hearing the words of Christ contained in the Bible. However, unbelievers will not come to hear His words in a church filled with negative, argumentative, complaining people. That's why complaining and griping are such serious sins. They destroy the witness of the church and drive people away from Christ, who has the *words of eternal life*.

To become a better person, we must realize there is **potential to activate, a power to stimulate, a practice to eliminate**, and...

Fourth, there is a Person to emulate [2:17-18](#)

Paul looked at his imprisonment and possible execution as an opportunity to be an encouragement to other believers. Therefore, he writes: *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith* ([2:17a](#)).

This offering refers to the Jewish practice of pouring wine on an animal at the altar of sacrifice in the temple as an act of dedicating it to God ([Ex. 29:40](#); [Num. 15:5-7](#)).

If Paul's imprisonment and possible martyrdom would in any way encourage others, he says: *I joy, and rejoice with you all* ([2:17b](#)), and adds: *for the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me* ([2:18](#)). Paul is just reflecting the mind of Christ whom we are to emulate.

How does [Hebrews 12:2a-b](#) describe this fact?

If we emulate Christ, whose example Paul is following, and look at our adversities as opportunities to build the faith of others, our problems will turn into sources of joy, which will enormously reduce stress in our lives.

To become a **better person**, you must realize there is:

A POTENTIAL TO ACTIVATE,

A POWER TO STIMULATE,

A PRACTICE TO ELIMINATE,

A PERSON TO EMULATE.