



SUPER JOY - A STUDY IN PHILIPPIANS (Week 5) - Joyful Service (or Labor)

- **Renovating homes (video illustration)**
- **Hard work is joyful when you love what you're doing or if you love who you're doing it for or who you're doing it with.**
- **If you complain the entire time you're doing something it's either because you don't love what you're doing or it's because you don't love who you're doing it for.**
- **Paul gives us the foundation of what**

joyful service looks like in the Christian life.

Philippians 2:12-18

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed,

Last week we covered the “therefore.” Because Jesus Christ is the Great Lord God Almighty who loved us before we knew Him, who humbled Himself by giving His life for us before we knew Him...

Because He has shown us the innumerable in which He loves us and how much we can trust Him... *therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed...*

And here is the dominant characteristic of a Christian, someone who obeys Christ out of love and trust.

John 14:15

15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Obedience to Jesus is not a burden. As a matter of fact, Jesus says that obeying Him isn't burdensome.

Matthew 11:29-30

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

So, a characteristic mark of an authentic Christian is someone who grows progressively in their obedience to Christ, *because they love and trust Him.*

“We may depend on it as a positive certainty, that where there is no holy living, there is no Holy Ghost.” (J.C. Ryle)

You can't say you love Jesus if you don't actively obey Him. Now, I didn't say perfectly obey Him. All I'm talking about here is consistency.

But what does holiness look like? Because there are so many cultural trappings in evangelical Christianity, what we often

perceive as holy living is simply self-righteousness.

Let's dig into this so that we all might have better understanding, because the thing that produces love for Christ in anyone is a more thorough understanding of the gospel. And we could all do with a more thorough understanding of the gospel.

12 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, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

There are two things to notice here. One, Paul tells us work out our own salvation with a deep sense of reverence toward God. Two, it is God who works in us.

I think we can safely say this. If God's not working in us we won't be working anything out. And if God is working in us then we'll be working things out. Always remember this, you can't work out what you don't possess. If you didn't already have salvation, you couldn't work it out.

I John 3:24

24 The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

"The Spirit is compared to the wind, and, like the wind, He cannot be seen by our bodily eyes. But just as we know there is a wind by the effect it produces on waves, and trees, and smoke, so we may know the Spirit is in a man by the effects He produces in the man's conduct. It is nonsense to suppose that we have the Spirit, if we do not also "walk in the Spirit." (Gal. v. 25.) (Ryle, J. C.. *Holiness* (p. 23). GLH Publishing. Kindle Edition.)

Now, if we know salvation to be a gift, this working out of ours can't be *for* our salvation. This working things out is simply what true Christianity looks like in daily life.

So, what exactly are we working out? This working out is another way of saying we're being sanctified. Sanctification is a word that can be summed up this way — God is shaping you back into the image that was

lost at the fall, which is to say He's reshaping you into the image of His Son.

Here's the difference between salvation and sanctification. Salvation is the free gift God has given us in Christ. Sanctification is the working out of that gift in our lives.

"In justification the word to be addressed to man is believe— only believe; in sanctification the word must be 'watch, pray, and fight.'" (Ryle, J. C.. *Holiness* (p. 9). GLH Publishing. Kindle Edition.)

That's the distinction we're going to make today.

Galatians 2:19-21

19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. **20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

How does Christ live in us? Through the Person of the Holy Spirit.

And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Notice the foundation for living for Christ (for obedience, for holiness) is the gospel.

21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

In other words, if you could be saved by following the Ten Commandments, then Christ didn't need to die on the cross. Have you ever examined yourself in light of the Ten Commandments?

1 You shall have no other gods before Me.

The greatest misconception about sin is that sin is about what you do. Sin is relational. Humanity's relationship with God is broken. This broken-hearted humanity acts out in ways that break the world. That's sin. Because there is relational breakdown that's why we break all the other commands.

2 You shall not make idols.

- 3 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
- 4 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- 5 Honor your father and your mother.
- 6 You shall not murder.
- 7 You shall not commit adultery.
- 8 You shall not steal.
- 9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- 10 You shall not covet.

On the cross Christ took away the penalty of the law — the guilt and condemnation you incurred for not obeying God. Disobedience is just another way of saying to God, “You don’t know what’s best. You can’t be trusted. You’re not good.” It’s a sign of relational breakdown.

- Paul says you have been crucified with Christ. The former *you* happens to be dead — crucified with Christ.

Yet (as Jack Miller has pointed out) the former *you* is also a deadly threat. The new you — the essential you is in Christ. There is also a now and not yet aspect to the

Christian life. God has made you a new creation in Christ and He is reshaping you into the image of His Son. That is happening now. But we will not experience the completion of this reshaping until we are with Him in glory. There is a now and a not yet.

- When your life is centered in you (or ego-centric) this is what the Bible calls the flesh. When it’s centered in Christ that is walking in the Spirit. This is the tension of the Christian life — the now and not yet. The kingdom of God has burst into this world in the Person of Christ, but the kingdom of God is not yet fully realized. That will happen at the Second Coming of Christ. It’s now (the First Coming of Christ) and not yet (the Second Coming of Christ). It’s the same thing with our Christian lives.

The Christian life is learning how to live in this now and not yet reality. That’s working out your salvation. It’s learning how to live in the new essential creation that God has birthed in you and how to put your old ego-centric self to death. That is why every authentic Christian will notice this internal battle. It’s a battle between the now and not yet. We engage in this battle by “working out our salvation”.

Now, this brings us to the exhortation watch, pray and fight.

- Watch (think about Scripture), pray (communicate our dependence on God) and fight (we take action steps in the great mission he has given us).

Frankly, I don't think you can watch, pray and fight without becoming self-righteous unless you have a deep understanding of your own sinfulness and a far-reaching grasp of the gospel.

I would venture to say that we strive to obey Jesus only in proportion to our understanding of how much we've been forgiven. "Much forgiven, we shall love much." So, a shallow understanding of sinfulness leads to a shallow obedience. And therein lies the weakness of the evangelical church in America.

"As we realize how much Christ has done for us, shall we labour to do much for Christ." (Ryle, J. C.. *Holiness* (p. 20). GLH Publishing. Kindle Edition.)

This is hardworking labor that we want to do. We do it joyfully. It's not a burden.

Paul basically says to them, "God is with you. The Holy Spirit is in you. You have nothing to complain about."

14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing,

What are grumbling and complaining signs of? That someone or something in life has dared to refuse our wishes. They are signs that someone is not obeying the commands of our ego.

Can you do all things without grumbling and complaining? No, you cannot. But you can do all things through Christ. Not you, but Christ in you. My trust to live the Christian life is not in myself, but my trust is in the Holy Spirit who lives in me. That's the fine distinction that if we miss can often lead to self-righteous.

15 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,

What is it that makes you shine as a Christian? Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Again, we must always remember the Christian life works on two levels.

First, you are innocent and blameless because of what Christ has done for you. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross. So, even though we are to blame, He took our blame and that makes us blameless. Even though we are guilty, He paid for the guilt of our sin and made us innocent before God. This is the objective aspect of the Christian life.

The subjective level is learning how to live out of that reality. And when we live out of that reality, not trusting in our own resources, talents, giftings, etc. but trusting in Christ in us, then we become people who progressively grumble and complain less.

People who do things without grumbling are pleasant people to be around. We might even say, we like being around such people because they are joyful. You can't be joyful and grumble and complain simultaneously.

Paul was in prison and what do we find him doing — singing.

What is grumbling and complaining a sign of?

Exodus 16:7

7 and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against the Lord. For what are we, that you grumble against us?" **8** And Moses said, "When the Lord gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the Lord has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord."

Grumbling and complaining are simply signs of unbelief.

You don't believe God is in control of the situation. You don't believe God can change the situation. You don't believe He has good in mind, which is another way of saying you doubt His goodness.

That's not trust. That's unbelief. And that's the wickedness of unbelief for the believer, which is who Moses is addressing in Exodus.

Let's see if the wickedness of the unbeliever is similar.

John 6:41

41 So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

People don't grumble or complain when you say, "My belief in Christ is very comforting. Or my faith in Jesus has really helped me cope with life." People don't complain about such statements.

But when you say, "There is no hope for anyone without Christ because..."

John 14:6

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

People will grumble and complain against such an immense proclamation because it takes salvation out of human hands. The sentiment that your goodness is not good enough to save you is ego crushing.

This is why we look to Christ for our salvation — the objective declaration that our guilt has been removed. And we look to Christ for our sanctification — the outworking that Christ now lives in us in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

This is the word of life that we hold fast to — the gospel.

16 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.

This is one of the most frightening things about living the Christian life — that you can labor in vain. You can waste your life. Who is building your life? You or the Lord? Any step of obedience to Christ is building your life on solid ground. Any step in our own wisdom is building on sand.

Psalm 127:1

Unless the Lord builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.

The Lord can do whatever He wants on His own. But for some strange reason He has chosen to do His work through means. We are

those means. This is the wonder of the Christian life. We can have the most gifted musicians to lead worship — that a means. We can have the nicest facility to worship in — that a means. We can have a well-educated preacher who has been given a gift in communicating — that is a means. But without the power and presence of the Holy Spirit it all add us to nothing. And that's an apt illustration for how the Christian life works. We work out our salvation always with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in mind.

17 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.

Paul gladly spent his life on the spiritual well-being of others. Could Paul rejoice like this in himself? Of course not. He rejoices because Christ poured Himself out as an offering for Paul. Now, Christ in Paul is pouring Himself out for the sake of the faith of the Philippians.

Both his rejoicing and his service are based in the gospel — that Christ died for sinners, of which Paul claimed to be the greatest. He understood that he had been forgiven much, so he labored much. That's a better New

Testament way of putting it. We could say he loved much, but love is an action word that expresses itself through action — watch, pray, fight.

18 Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.