

**WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?  
Work It Out!  
Philippians 2:5-16**

The following is a portion of the opening and the closing of one of the most precious documents in human history. You should recognize it quite quickly.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

Rights are a big deal in the United States of America. Our country was founded on the belief that all men are “created with certain unalienable rights.” Life. Liberty. The pursuit of happiness. These are beautiful and powerful concepts that brought about the birth of the greatest nation that has ever existed on the face of the earth. But I want to remind you of an important truth that is EMBEDDED in our very Declaration of Independence. It is a truth that was LIVED OUT by the 56 men (and their families) who signed their names to this precious document. **The truth that they lived out was simply this: They had to LAY DOWN THEIR RIGHTS IN ORDER TO SECURE OURS.** Think about this. They were standing up for the rights of people by laying down their own rights. Have you ever thought about the FATE of the signers of our Declaration of Independence? Let me read you excerpts of a document that you can read in its entirety on our website. It is attached to the manuscript that you click on if you want to read this message. [\[Read attachment\]](#)

These men and their families displayed the kind of SELFLESSNESS that is required for a movement like the American Revolution. It was driven by the desire to give OTHERS the chance to prosper and enjoy freedom. It cost the signers their LIVES. Jesus did this for us. Jesus displayed ULTIMATE HUMILITY when he laid aside his divine rights and came down to live and die as a human being for our salvation. Listen to Paul’s “Hymn of Praise” about Christ one more time now, in the context of our Christian relationships. **Philippians 2:5-11 NIV**

**5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human**

likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death-- even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Those are amazing words. He did not consider equality with God as something to "be used for his OWN ADVANTAGE." Wow! If ever there were something that you could use for your own advantage, it would be divine power! But Jesus did not use his power in this way. Instead, Jesus did the unthinkable for us: He surrendered his own rights as the Son of God in order to endure unimaginable horror for our salvation. His mindset was one of TRUST and LOVE that was manifested by obedience to God. **OBEDIENCE is the key to the surrender of our rights. You see, Christ did not surrender his rights TO US, but TO GOD!** Because of this, God was the One who guarded and honored his Son's name while Jesus fulfilled his good will! Moreover, we can see how his ATTITUDE was manifested in these acts of obedience in another place in the New Testament. **Hebrews 12:2 NIV**

2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Did you catch that? Jesus endured the cross for the sake of the JOY that was set before him. Do you know what that joy was? It was your salvation! Instead of crushing us all in judgment in order to be rid of the effects of sin in this world, he SURRENDERED his rights so that he could become our perfect sacrificial Lamb and have the JOY of bringing us to glory with him forever. Last week, I told you that I wanted you to think about this concept on your own in light of your relationships with other believers at CHC: **The key to Christ's attitude was his faith-driven decision to surrender his rights!** Do you AGREE with this statement? Have YOU been willing to lay down your rights for the sake of your Christian brothers and sisters? Paul gave us this glorious description of Christ's humble attitude in order to inspire us to MODEL it in our own relationships. It is true! One of the most Christ-like things that we can do is to SURRENDER our rights for the benefit of others. This is a BIG CONCEPT, but it must be expressed in the LITTLE moments of life. Now, Paul could have used this HYMN about Christ to challenge them to do some great thing for God (Give \$1,000,000; Go overseas on mission!). But instead, he used this hymn to challenge them to simply express the reality of their salvation by developing the right attitude towards one another. **The truth is, I will not lay down my rights to God FOR you if I am not willing to adjust my attitude TOWARD you!** This is why Paul used the word THEREFORE in the next sentence after he finished this hymn about Christ! **Philippians 2:12 NIV**

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

There is so much great stuff in verses 12 and 13, but I want to go slow so that we do not miss one thing! Paul informs them that his instructions are for the purpose of helping them to WORK OUT their salvation. That is a remarkable concept. Of course, it does NOT mean that they will receive salvation because of their works, but that the salvation that they have already received needs to be WORKED OUT in the experiences of everyday life. Praise God, he also says that our Father is even now supplying you with what you need to fulfill his will in your ordinary, everyday life!

**Philippians 2:13 NLT**

13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

Isn't that awesome! God is the one who gives you both the DESIRE and the ABILITY to do what pleases him. **We are simply called to WORK OUT what God has been WORKING IN us!** **Are you finding an increasing desire to do what God wants you to do in your life? This is one of the signs of his indwelling presence!** When you "delight yourself in the Lord," then he will give you the "desires of your heart." This does not just mean that he will give you what you desire. He will even give you the desires that you desire! I love it.

Now, back in verse 12, Paul encourages them to obey his instructions even (and especially) when he is not with them. You see, he knows that there is a good chance that he will never see their faces again. They cannot have the mindset that they are going to be on their best behavior only when Paul is around. Their obedience is not for Paul's sake, but for Christ's. We need to be reminded of this as well. Our attitude is not just to be good when we are at the church house or when "the preacher is around!" We need to have a Christ-like attitude when no one else is watching but God. In another place, Paul said we should obey "not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart!" This has to spring from who we are in Christ. So, what does it mean to "work out our salvation?" Let's look again at verse 12, but this time let's look at it in the Amplified version of the Bible. It will bring detailed clarity! **Philippians 2:12 AMP**

12 Therefore, my dear ones, as you have always obeyed [my suggestions], so now, not only [with the enthusiasm you would show] in my presence but much more because I am absent, work out (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with reverence *and* awe and trembling (self-distrust, [a]with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ).

To “work out” your salvation means to “carry it on to completion.” Let it have its full expression in your words, attitudes, and actions. It is awesome to know that you are a redeemed child of God that is going to heaven, but it becomes evident to others when they can SEE IT and HEAR IT in your attitudes and actions. **God’s work of salvation is a work of TRANSFORMATION that has as its goal the FORMATION of Christ’s character in us. Nothing less!** Now, this transformation will only happen as we cooperate with the Spirit of God within us with a spirit of “**reverence and awe.**” I love how the Amplified translation magnifies the meaning of these words. First, we must learn to trust the Spirit of God about our own motives and actions rather than trusting ourselves. **Do you have a healthy SELF-DISTRUST of your own motives and attitudes?** Do you always ASSUME that you are “in the right” in the things that you do and say? It is time to change that! A healthy believer knows that he needs practical accountability in his life in order to protect him from his own blindness, selfishness, and propensity to sin. **I am a pastor, but I am under no illusions about my own weaknesses. This week, I am going on a trip overseas. I am going to be with my great friend and mentor Ron Upton. We will hold each other accountable while we are with one another. I have also asked my friends here at CHC to pray for me and hold me accountable for what I watch on television and what I do while I am away. I do not want to be a “50 Mile Baptist!” (You know; that is someone who only acts like a Christian when he is within 50 miles of his own church!)** Are you realistic about your own weaknesses? Maybe you need to trust yourself less so that you will learn to display “**serious CAUTION**” and genuine “**watchfulness against temptation!**” You must strive to keep your conscience TENDER by creating wide margins between you and the sin that could easily tempt you. **Our entire staff and leadership team have all agreed to the “STAFF 10 COMMANDMENTS” that ensure that we will take firm steps to use wisdom in our relationships with people of the opposite sex. I am going to be with some new friends over in Africa this week as I tour the various ministries that are going on over there. I trust these people, but I have still requested that I never be left alone with a member of the opposite sex while I am traveling with them. I believe that that is a wise and proper protection for me.** Are you this deliberate in your interactions with the opposite sex? Your spouse, your kids, and your Christian brothers and sisters would greatly appreciate it if you were!

Paul’s next statement brings us down to where the rubber meets the road in our Christian relationships. It is also where many of us fail miserably in this area of attitude! **Philippians 2:14 NLT**

#### **14 Do everything without complaining and arguing,**

Are you a grumbler? Do you mutter your frustrations under your breath while you go about fulfilling your responsibilities in life? That is sad. Are you a complainer? I have known some people who will complain about anything. If the weather is good today, then they complain about how horrible it was yesterday! This is no small matter; it is an ATTITUDE EPIDEMIC! Stop complaining. Measure your words to see how often you complain about people and circumstances. When you complain

about circumstances, you make them “bigger than God.” And when you complain about people, you magnify their weaknesses and make it impossible to enjoy them. Complaining then will lead to ARGUING. I love having discussions about the meaning and applications of Scripture. I DESPISE arguments about the Word of God. **Let’s sharpen one another; not stab one another with the Word.** Furthermore, when we develop an argumentative spirit, relationships experience death. As Gary Chapman said in one of his great books, “In family arguments, when someone wins; everyone loses!” **You can actually disagree without arguing. Try that sometime.** I think that we have too often accepted the notion that arguing is ok. It is not. Arguments do not bring us together; they divide us. Arguing in your home and in the church leads to hurt feelings and broken relationships. When you win an argument, you seldom “win over” the one that you defeated in the verbal battle. Think about that.

Paul made it clear that the decision to relate to our Christian brothers and sisters without complaining and arguing has HUGE implications. **Philippians 2:15-16 NIV**

**15 so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.**

A complaining, argumentative spirit is a contradiction of the Spirit of Christ. Let no one be able to successfully accuse us of such a spirit. Instead, we are called to STAND OUT in this world as people of peace in a crooked and perverted world. And when you stand out like stars in the night sky, you will faithfully fulfill your calling to be the LIGHT of the world like Jesus said. To “**hold firmly to the word of life**” is not simply a reference to our reliance upon God’s Word, but also to our commission to spread that Word. That, Paul says, will allow him to rejoice before God in what his ministry has helped the people of Philippi to accomplish.

So, what does that mean for us today? Here is the bottom line. We must strive to make our attitude a reflection of the Spirit of Christ. **In light of the specific commands that Paul gave to us, I want to give you two challenges this week.** **First, for ONE WEEK, DO NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT A SINGLE THING.** Not one thing. For some of you, this will be quite easy. For others, it will seem as if I have asked you not to breathe for an entire week. I challenge you to make this commitment and then ask God to help you fulfill it perfectly. Here is a tip that may help you. Every time you are tempted to complain about something, make yourself THINK about something that you are GRATEFUL for, and then express that gratitude OUT LOUD. Are you willing? **Second, I want to challenge you to go ONE FULL WEEK without getting into one single argument.** I do not care how RIGHT you think you are or how IMPORTANT you think it is for you to win “just this one.” Don’t do it. **Surrender your right to FIGHT with your words!** Bite your tongue. Some of you cannot even conceive of going a week without arguing with someone (especially if you have a

teenager in your house!) Ask God to show you another way to work through a disagreement with a loved one without arguing. You will really have to pay attention to where your words are headed. You will have to begin to recognize how often YOU are actually the one who “sets up the scene” for arguments. You have developed this skill perfectly. I am asking you to DISMANTLE it for this week.

If you choose to accept these two challenges, then I believe that you will find that your heart and mind will be in a better place, and that your relationship with God and man will be sweeter and more precious to you than it was before. You will find that it will make you more reliant upon God, more aware of wrongs in YOUR OWN spirit and attitude, and less impatient with people. You might even GROW some. But not if you do not EMBRACE this challenge for what it is: A command from God. Who knows? You might even discover that this is a great way to LIVE from now on. God thinks so.

Are you up to the challenge?

Let's pray.

# Destiny of **The Signers** of **The Declaration of Independence**

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When the 56 Signers of The Declaration of Independence attached their signatures to that document, each knew they were committing treason against the British Crowne. If caught and captured, they risked death. But death would not be swift. It would be by hanging to the point of unconsciousness, then being revived, disemboweled, their body parts boiled in oil and their ashes scattered into the wind. Our Founding Fathers valued freedom, for themselves and their posterity, to the extent that they found this fate worth the risk. The story below tells what happened to the men who signed the Declaration of Independence.

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## **What Happened to the Signers?**

This story comes from <http://www.self-gov.org/liberator/>

**Five signers** were captured by the British and brutally tortured as traitors. **Nine** fought in the War for Independence and **died from wounds or from hardships they suffered. Two lost their sons** in the Continental Army. Another **two had sons captured. At least a dozen** of the fifty-six **had their homes pillaged and burned.** What kind of men were they? **Twenty-five were lawyers or jurists. Eleven were merchants. Nine were farmers** or large plantation owners. **One was a teacher, one a musician, and one a printer.** These were **men of means and education**, yet they signed the Declaration of Independence, knowing full well that the

penalty could be death if they were captured.

In the face of the advancing British Army, the Continental Congress fled from Philadelphia to Baltimore on December 12, 1776. It was an especially anxious time for **John Hancock**, the President, as his wife had just given birth to a baby girl. Due to the complications stemming from the trip to Baltimore, the child lived only a few months.

**William Ellery's** signing at the risk of his fortune proved only too realistic. In December 1776, during three days of British occupation of Newport, Rhode Island, Ellery's house was burned, and all his property destroyed.

**Richard Stockton**, a New Jersey State Supreme Court Justice, had rushed back to his estate near Princeton after signing the Declaration of Independence to find that his wife and children were living like refugees with friends. They had been betrayed by a Tory sympathizer who also revealed Stockton's own whereabouts. British troops pulled him from his bed one night, beat him and threw him in jail where he almost starved to death. When he was finally released, he went home to find his estate had been looted, his possessions burned, and his horses stolen. Judge Stockton had been so badly treated in prison that his health was ruined and he died before the war's end. His surviving family had to live the remainder of their lives off charity.

**Carter Braxton** was a wealthy planter and trader. One by one his ships were captured by the British navy. He loaned a large sum of money to the American cause; it was never paid back. He was forced to sell his plantations and mortgage his other properties to pay his debts.

**Thomas McKean** was so hounded by the British that he had to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Continental Congress without pay, and kept his family in hiding.

Vandals or soldiers or both looted the properties of **Clymer, Hall, Harrison, Hopkinson and Livingston**. Seventeen lost everything they owned.

**Thomas Heyward, Jr., Edward Rutledge and Arthur**



**Middleton**, all of South Carolina, were captured by the British during the Charleston Campaign in 1780. They were kept in dungeons at the St. Augustine Prison until exchanged a year later. At the Battle of Yorktown, **Thomas Nelson, Jr.** noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the family home for his headquarters. Nelson urged General George Washington to open fire on his own home. This was done, and the home was destroyed. Nelson later died bankrupt.

**Francis Lewis** also had his home and properties destroyed. The British jailed his wife for two months, and that and other hardships from the war so affected her health that she died only two years later.

**"Honest John" Hart**, a New Jersey farmer, was driven from his wife's bedside when she was near death. Their thirteen children fled for their lives. Hart's fields and his grist mill were laid waste. For over a year he eluded capture by hiding in nearby forests. He never knew where his bed would be the next night and often slept in caves. When he finally returned home, he found that his wife had died, his children disappeared, and his farm and stock were completely destroyed. Hart himself died in 1779 without ever seeing any of his family again.

Such were the stories and sacrifices typical of those who risked everything to sign the Declaration of Independence. These men were not wild-eyed, rabble-rousing ruffians. They were soft-spoken men of means and education. They had security, but they valued liberty more. Standing tall, straight, and unwavering, they pledged:

**"For the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of the Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."**