

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
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Series: Philippians  
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Working Out to Finish Strong  
Philippians 2:12-18

**"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, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 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 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. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me."**

Father, we love you, and we are incredibly thankful for the work you're doing here, just the privilege it is to be a part of it. Lord, I pray that you would prepare our hearts and minds for the reading of your Word, the teaching of your Scriptures this morning, and that these ancient truths would come alive and we would be able to apply them to our lives. I pray that you would keep the Enemy far from this place, keep distractions far from this place, and help us to focus on what your Spirit is doing. In Jesus' name, amen.

When I started preaching, the elders of the church we were at called a meeting, a lunch, and said, "Hey, we would like to be about church planting, and we would love to send you somewhere to plant a church. We will do that formally. We're going to focus the next year on training you to this end, and we would love to send you to plant a church. We would love for you to talk to your community about it, your Life Group, and see if any of them want to go with you," and all of that.

It was a big left turn. I didn't see that coming. There are a lot of left turns in life. So, Monica and I met with our group that night. We took that call very seriously. We sat down with our Life Group, and we just told them what the elders had said. They were largely encouraging. They prayed over us, prayed for wisdom. Then the next day, one of the couples followed up with us and said, "Hey, we would love to meet with you."

So they came over. It was kind of a formal meeting again. We sat down at our home, and they said, "We appreciate your ask to go with you. We appreciate what the elders have invited you to do, but we want you to know we won't be going with you. Right now, at least, we have some concerns." Wow. Okay. Didn't see that coming. I said, "Is it Bible knowledge? Is it Scripture? Is it doctrine, theology? Is it sin in my life that I can't see? What is it?"

He said, "No. You're out of shape." I was like, "Is that a metaphor? Like, spiritually I need to get in the Word?" He goes, "No, no, no. When you preach, you breathe really heavily." He goes on further to say, "This is hard. Leadership takes a toll on your body. It takes a toll on your mind psychologically, mentally. You need to prepare for it, and I just don't see you preparing your body and your life in that way. So that is our concern, and for that reason we won't be going."

This was 10 years ago, but it's interesting. I was reminded, because even recently... This was this week. He said, "Sometimes when you talk about working out, I'm afraid you discourage people from doing so, how lightly you take it, and you don't see this clear call in the Scripture that we need to be in shape. We need to care well for our bodies." And he's right. I want you to know he's right, because physical discipline, physical training, is of some value, and the Scripture speaks to it, but this is what it also says.

First Timothy 4:8: "**For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.**" I'm going to be in Philippians 2:12-18 this morning. I'm going to talk about working out and finishing strong, but I'm leaving the physical metaphor of taking care of our bodies, and I'm talking about spiritually now. I'm leaving you caring well for your physical fitness, and I want to use that as a metaphor to bridge us to this idea that we are to grow spiritually strong, that we're to grow godly.

The reason I don't like working out is it requires maintenance. You have to keep doing it. There's no cruise control in working out. It's not like at some point you can get your bench max to some point, you can look in the mirror and say, "Hey, I like where everything is right now," and just say, "Great. I'm going to stay there. I'm going to choose to stay there." You have to work to stay there, and if you want to get bigger or stronger, it takes work for you to get bigger or stronger.

Now, speaking spiritually, we do not drift toward spiritual maturity. It will not happen on its own. There is no sitting stagnant in the faith. If you are sitting stagnant, you're actually digressing. You are drifting backward. This is how D.A. Carson puts it: "People do not drift toward Holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord.

We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated."

I love that phrase: *grace-driven effort*. It is by grace we have been saved through faith, and now we have some work to do. We walk through the good works which God has prepared in advance for us to walk in. I hate working out because you have to stay on top of it. When I got COVID-19, I didn't see the gym for six weeks. When I went back in there, I was weak. I was out of breath. I was out of shape. I was sore the next day. I could hardly move my arms. You have to stay on it to finish this race.

Another nationally known pastor fell this week. I never get used to it. It is always sobering. He fell morally. He had an adulterous affair. There are people you assume to be Christians right now who will not finish the race. There are people you sat beside in this room prior to COVID-19, and they'll never be in this room again. We will not see them here, and for some of them, we will not see them in heaven. That is sobering. There's this climb, this journey, this perseverance, this growth. It's something to work out.

So, as we move through this text in Philippians 2, I want to talk about how we are to work out our salvation, how we are to work on what we're serving, and how we are to serve with joy to the finish. By recap, where we've been, if you're just joining us... We started the book of Philippians. Week one, we talked about how Paul has planted this church and how his affections for this church that he knows intimately have grown.

Week two, we talked about courage from and for the gospel, that the gospel gives us courage to share the gospel and to live out the gospel. Week three, we talked about unity in opposition, a very important message in this season. Week four, maybe the most important message yet, we talked about the humility of Jesus and that we're to carry forth that humility.

We ended that chapter talking about how from his humility he reigns as King at the right hand of the Father, that at his name every knee will bow and every tongue will confess...at the name of King Jesus. He's King. He says in verse 12, "**Therefore...**" Because Jesus is King, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord.

**"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, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."**

He says, "My dear friends..." It's a tender language. It's "Those I love, work out your salvation." This is a controversial text. "Work out your salvation." To understand this text, we have to define *salvation* appropriately. I asked a room full of Christians recently, "How would you define salvation?" and honestly, they struggled to define it. So, I'm just going to go to Webster's with you so that we know.

*Salvation* is the preservation or deliverance from harm, ruin, or loss. In Christian theology, it's deliverance from sin and its consequences. Jesus has saved us from sin and its eternal consequences. Paul says, "Work out your salvation." I don't know why we struggle with this, because, honestly, we use this language today. Think about it. If I were to say, "Work out your [fill in the blank]..." What could I say there?

Let's just say maybe we're in a gym. I say, "Hey, today I want you to work out your arms. Work out your chest. Work out your back." Am I saying you don't have biceps? No, I'm saying you have them; exercise them and watch them grow. This is what he's saying: "Work out your salvation. Exercise it. Use it and allow your faith from salvation to grow." But he says, "With fear and trembling." That makes it, again, very controversial.

What does that mean, *fear and trembling*? What is he saying there? There are two primary camps. One translates fear and trembling as *awe and reverence*. So, work out your salvation with awe and reverence to God. I do not agree with that interpretation, because the Greek there is *phobos* and *tromos* where we get two words we use today. Do you know what they are? *Phobia* and *trauma*. "Work out your salvation with phobia and trauma." It's a leap to get to *awe* and *reverence* from *phobia* and *trauma*.

The other interpretation is "Work out your salvation, knowing that God is powerful and he can send you to hell at will, that he is mighty." "Work out your salvation in fear of him." I also disagree with that interpretation, which puts me in a minority camp. I just want to bring your attention to that, so that as you leave here you can test what I'm about to say, because I strongly believe this is what it's saying. Again, it is a minority view.

Here's why it's okay, though. We should approach God with awe and reverence, and you do need to know God can send you to hell. He is all-powerful. Both of those perspectives do not change the application that we're to work out our salvation, but what I think it is saying is "Work out your salvation, and I know that as you..." This preposition *with* means in the midst of. In the midst of fear and trembling.

"I know that Nero is emperor, that he's crucifying Christians, that he's lighting them on fire to light the path to use them as lamps, so work out your salvation, and I know it's hard. I know there are people who come against you, but keep going. Stay in the fight. Exercise your salvation and let it grow in the midst of persecution."

That's a great word, and that is what I think he's saying here because of verse 13. "**...for it is God who works in you...**" That's why I don't think the "fear and trembling" relates to God, because he comes back and says, "Because it's God that works in you." I think he's saying, "Work out your salvation past the point of being scared. Remember, it is God in you who is actually at work when you do." That's how I would summarize that.

This is what missionary and theologian Ed Elliott said: "[Working out your salvation happens by faith.] This process can be frightening in the beginning as a new believer discovers how to live and walk by faith. Some strong trepidation may be present at first when a person decides to trust God as his or her source of peace. I remember how scary it was for me to stop trusting in my natural abilities and trust in God's Word.

This is what Paul is referring to when he mentions 'fear and trembling.' He isn't talking about being afraid of God. Rather, he is helping the new believer to know that in the beginning, it will seem scary to walk by faith. However, it is the only way to see our inner salvation manifest on the outside through our character." There's something God placed inside that we're called to show outside. And that is hard. It's challenging. You might be afraid to do that.

1. *Work out your salvation trusting that God is at work in you.* It's like if I say, "I want you to work out your biceps with..." I could say "The curl bar." Like he's saying, "Fear and trembling." Work out your biceps by doing curls. But I don't think that's what he's saying. I think he's saying,

"Work out your biceps with resistance and straining." Work out your salvation past the point of your comfort.

What happens if I go to the gym every day and I grab the five-pound dumbbells and lift them 10 times and then go home? Every day I do it. Every day I work out at the gym, five-pound dumbbells, 10 times. What happens? Nothing. Nothing happens. There is no growth because there is no strain. There's no resistance.

The same is true for your faith. You work out your salvation. You work *from* your salvation. You push it past the point of your comfort so that it grows and you learn to trust God, that he is with you and he's for you. He's saying, "Hey, put the heavy weights on." Why don't we put the heavy weights on? Because I don't want to get stuck.

Has anybody ever done that? Has anybody ever gone and loaded up the bench press...? I've done it. My eyes were bigger than my muscles. I was there by myself, no spotter. I got under that bar. "Help." Yeah, it happened. So, you're there. You're kind of like, "Oh man. Do I yell for help or do I just see how long I can last?"

You have to do the wobble. Hopefully you didn't put clips on. Don't put clips on when you're by yourself. You have to go slowly *this* way and let those forty-fives fall off. They hit the ground, and then you swing *this* way, and then *they* fall off. It's a loud commotion, and everybody looks at you, and you say, "Yeah, that was me. I didn't have a spotter."

Then you walk up to the bench press with fear and trembling, like, "I don't really want to do this anymore." Unless you have a spotter. If you have a spotter, you walk up with confidence. You're like, "Keep your hands on the bar, man." With that confidence, you can go up and down, and you can press against the resistance, and you know that if you get stuck, they'll help.

God is there. He's with you. When you get past the point of you can't, God is at work in you. He placed the salvation in you. You were saved by grace, and you are being sanctified by grace. You have a role to play. You have commands and rules to follow, but when you get to the point of you can't, as you're walking in obedience, God is at work in you according to his purpose in you. He's accomplishing what he wants to do. He's spotting you.

I love the way Paul says it to the church in Colossae. Colossians 1:29: "**To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.**" "To this end I strain, but I strain with all the energy of Jesus so powerfully working in me." Jesus did the heavy lifting of your salvation, and he will do the heavy lifting of your sanctification, so put the weight on and push past your comfort.

What does this mean? It means if you're here and, let's just say, you're really comfortable sharing your faith... "No problem. You want me to share the gospel? No sweat. I'll share the gospel everywhere I go." You maybe need to go to a closed country. We may need to take that courage and that gifting and put it in a place where you're *not* comfortable.

You say, "Oh yeah, man. I give." I've sat with billionaires or hundreds of millionaires, or however you say that, and they give large sums of money to missions and ministry and churches, but it's rounding errors for them. They don't feel it. What does it look like for us to move past what we're comfortable doing so that we actually have to live by faith, so that our faith gets stronger and grows bigger? That's consistent with the Scriptures, and it is a better life.

We do it without complaining. There's the hard part for some of us. Verse 14: "**Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure...**" Where it says *blameless and pure*, it doesn't mean perfect. It translates *above reproach*, so that no one can bring anything against you.

**"...so that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.'"** That's a weird line. It's in quotation marks in your Bible. It comes directly from Deuteronomy 32:5. He's talking about how Israel has been set apart. God set Israel apart by the clothes they wore, the way they did their hair, the things they ate, the ceremonies they had. He set Israel apart.

He's saying, "Christians, you will be set apart by the way you work out your salvation with joy and without complaining." **"Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky [set apart] as you hold firmly to the word of life."** As you work out, knowing that it is God who works in, don't complain. Some of you have a "Do I have to?" faith. This is a family meeting real quick.

"Hey, we would love for you to go to the membership class."

"Do I have to?"

"We would love for you to get in a Life Group."

"Do I have to?"

"We'd love for you to meet weekly."

"Do I have to?"

"We'd like for you to serve."

"Do I have to?"

Just opportunities for you to tell us all the time how we should do church. "Do I have to?" Every week. But some of you, many of you, most of you, have a "Do I get to?" faith. "Do I get to join that movement of God, invest in that movement, gather with a small group of people, celebrating the gospel moving forward, in my living room, sharing the Scriptures, talking about stories of God moving in our lives? Do I get to have help in this way as I continue to run this race? Do I get to?" Yes!

"Do I get to?" It's a better way, a way that is the Spirit of God at work in your life. Do not grumble or complain. "What can I grumble and complain about?" "Do everything without grumbling and complaining." I've learned from experience (so much of ministry is pattern recognition) there are three groups of people who are grumblers and complainers. Let's just talk about them really quickly.

One is a wiring. It's a critical wiring. It's just the way you are, however God made you. You came out of the womb. You're the person who goes somewhere and you just see the gaps. You're a great movie critic. "They shouldn't have put that song there, and the plot was long. It dragged on." You're just a great critic in general, because you're critical. It's just kind of who you are. It's a superpower, and God can use it, and the kingdom can benefit from it, but you need to be careful.

You're hard to be married to. You can really squash your children if you're not careful. There are some real pitfalls to this wiring. Right about now, you need to be thinking, "He's talking about me." There are some real things you have to be cautious about. You're the one who will get to the car, and everybody in the car is like, "Oh, I loved that song, and, man, when he said... It was so good to see the..." And you're like, "It was a little long."

I said this at the first service. Then I got a text from the parking team at the first service. They said, "Hey, can you communicate to people to be patient with us, that we're doing the best we can? People are frustrated as they're leaving, and they don't want to go the way we're telling them to go."

I want you to know what that does to me as a pastor. I want to meet with every one of those people face-to-face and just pray for them. It's so confusing. They're out there serving. They got here at 6:30 this morning, circled up, preparing, been praying for you. I know you're hungry. I know you have stuff you need to do.

Okay. The second group is associated with age. There's something about age, that you get to a point and things start to fail you. You start to hurt. I don't know why. I slept wrong last night, and I feel like I need to go to the hospital. It just happens. When you feel that, you internalize that, and you look back on a generation... "I don't understand why they... And their phones, and this..." You just start complaining, and you start feeding that complaining loop.

I want to talk to my younger friends. You will not naturally drift toward holiness. You're going to naturally drift toward being a complainer. If you do not put a stake in the sand and march against the current, you will naturally grow grumpy. That's the way it goes. You will be the grumpy grandpa. You will be the grumpy grandma. That's the way that goes. You probably had one, and you will *be* one.

Then the third group, the one I'm most compassionate toward, is sometimes you go through a circumstance in life, and it just turns your heart downtrodden. It can be loss of a kind, a disease. It can be divorce, a layoff, just a circumstance in life. You get stuck in that pit, and you start to feed the feedback loop, and you just become a grumbler and a complainer. You have to be careful. You have to get some encouragement around you and get out of that pit.

We'll be patient with you. I'm telling you, we will be patient with that group, as patient as we need to be. We're so glad you're here. We're not going to kick you out or anything like that. We're going to come alongside you and do whatever we need to do to help you move forward, but I just want you to know you don't have to embrace that for the rest of your life.

The Spirit of God in you is bigger than your reputation. I don't care how old you are. If your reputation is you're a grumbler and a complainer, the Spirit of God is bigger than that. A lot of times, these guys are really smart. They really know theology. They love the Lord their God with all their heads, and only their heads.

2. *Work on serving the word of life, not words of death.* The reason I summarized it that way is because where he says, "Holding firmly to the word of life," in the Greek, a better translation, in my opinion (and commentaries agree with me), is "Work on holding forth the word of life." *Holding forth* is the same phrase you would use to serve wine at a wedding, that you would hold out wine to someone and serve it to them.

What is the *word of life*? Some say the Bible. That's not wrong, because the Bible has the gospel, but I do think it's the gospel when he says, "Holding out the word of life." He's saying, "Everyone serves one of two things. You either serve grumbling and complaining...that's what's coming out of your mouth...or you're serving the gospel."

Could you imagine? What if we said, "Hey, every time you complain, you have to walk up to a stranger and share the gospel." That's good. I wonder if we could mandate that real quick. I mean, you can in your homes if you want. That can be the rule in your home. If anyone complains, they have to walk up to someone and share the gospel. That will help with that.

In reality, the complainer is not healthy. There's almost always something else going on. I can't tell you how many times in pastoral ministry I've sat down with somebody, and we met about the chairs and the lights or the temperature or the parking, the crowds, whatever, and underneath it... It's like, "Hey, bud, what's really going on?" Usually, about the third or fourth time you ask that, something comes out, and there's something underneath the grumpiness.

I think the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul is so right here. They're not serving the word of life. The love and the joy of God are not flowing through them. They get from the church, they receive from the church, they keep it inside, they internalize it, they start to point out the gaps, and they just turn. There's a lid on their faith.

Have you ever left something like this in your truck? Like, you have a little bit of it, and it's too hot, and you leave it there and forget about it. It sits in your car for a week. It starts to leak. Anybody ever do that? You go back. Hypothetically speaking, you get in your truck a week later, and you're like, "What's that smell?"

It had a lid on it. You make the mistake of opening the lid, and there are little islands of mold in there. That's what happens. You start to grumble and complain, and the word of life is not



flowing through you, and you turn rotten. That's the way you will naturally go. That's the way you will naturally drift.

**"And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you."** Where it says *sacrifice and service*, you could interpret that as sacrificial service. "I'm being poured out like a drink offering even through your serving, and I'm able to rejoice with all of you." **"So you too should be glad and rejoice with me."**

He's speaking of when the Lord returns, whether it's the rapture or when he's face-to-face with King Jesus, and we're able to see our downline. You're with Jesus, and at that moment you can see every soul God used your life to save and to get there. You see them. You see your eternal investment from your time on earth. He's saying, "At that moment, I will be able to rejoice, I will be able to celebrate, because my life has been poured out like a drink offering."

See, he doesn't have that problem. There's a lot of rejoicing here in this letter, because he doesn't have a lid on his faith. You know that person who's just overflowing with Jesus? You see them at Sunday school. "Hey, how are you doing? Jesus is King!" They go up to you. "Oh, got a little Jesus on you. Sorry about that." They come over here. "Hey, it's so good to see you, guys! Jesus. Yeah, my sins are forgiven." There's just joy flowing from their life.

As I say that, you know them. You're thinking of them. You're like, "Oh yeah. That's like so-and-so." Let's just agree. In the kingdom of God, that person is infinitely better off than the grumbler and complainer. I don't care how obnoxious they are. There's not one of you who is like, "Oh yeah. I bet you God would rather have them grumble and complain than be that way."

Paul says, "My life is being poured out like a drink offering. There's no time for it to get moldy, to sit stagnant. The Word of God is flowing through me, producing fruit, and I rejoice. It is all joy, because I lived the life according to the will of God." He's not talking about working out just to have pretty muscles. He's training for a marathon. It's just like my friend warned me. It's a spiritual marathon, and the finish line for him is close. He's going to die soon, and it's all joy because he did as he was supposed to do.

3. *Pour out your life in service with joy to the finish.* An important aspect of growth as a Christian is service, that you would serve through the local body, the church; that you would serve others; that you would be an extension of God's grace to others. This is my biggest concern. I've said it many, many times. I won't stop saying it. My biggest concern with COVID-19 is that we don't have enough for you to do, and that's where I think we're struggling.

I've met with the staff. I'm like, "Guys, you have to deploy the body. You have to deploy the members for service. They have to have opportunities to be the church." There are huge needs. There are enormous needs around here, so it's on us for not communicating them appropriately. We are building a team right now to serve our facilities and exterior landscaping.

I said, "What if we had a family own one month of the year, and they take care of what this place looks like outside?" Or maybe it's not a family. Maybe it's a Life Group, and they say, "Hey, we've got it. We will mow the grass. We will trim the bushes. We will plant flowers. We will take care. This will be our month." We're going to do that. That's coming. You can sign up for that.

We need committed members here to launch Life Groups. If you're here and you are a mature follower of Jesus, we need you to launch Life Groups. We need college students to help out with Life Group kids' discipleship, that as parents go to Life Group, you're meeting with their children and pouring into them and helping watch over them so they can do that.

We need administrative help here. So, if you have time and abilities to help with administration, we need it. We need volunteers in our kids' ministry, especially around the holidays. There's a long list. I'm going to stop there. These are all enormous needs of the body. If, as I was saying that, at some point you said, "Well, I could do that," please...[hello@harris creek.org](mailto:hello@harris creek.org). We need your help. Just email us this week. Say, "Hey, this is what I can do," and we will put you to work.

As service helps us work out our salvation, the picture Paul paints for us is the finish line, and I think it's the right picture. At a finish line, what is there? There's celebration, there's completion, and there's exhaustion. You celebrate, there's something that's finished, and you're spent. He says this. It's the same words in 2 Timothy 4:6:

**"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."**

We're going to be with Jesus. There are people who you know who call themselves Christians who won't finish. They will drift. So, what guarantee do you have that *you* will finish? How do you know *you're* not going to drift? **"...on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me."** Lots of gladness. Lots of rejoicing. This is very communal language.

We need encouragers. You can't go at this alone. You have to have encouragers. When I got here, I didn't know about the video. They showed that, and at first I was like, "Oh no. No, no, no. Don't make this about me." Then I thought, "You know, the Lord knew." I woke up this morning, and I am usually just giddy as all get out to get up here and preach the Word to you, but I woke up this morning and the Enemy was kicking my tail. I was discouraged.

I was sitting back there. I was like, "Lord, why am I discouraged?" I think probably turning 40 has something to do with that. My buddy wrote a note back there and put it in my office, and I read it, and it lifted my spirit. I was ready to run through a wall. I couldn't wait to bring the gospel to you guys, couldn't wait to bring his Word to you. Then I sat right there on the side, and they showed that video, and it lifted my spirit.

The lie the Enemy says is, "Hey, you're all alone, man. People aren't with you." Then I thought, "No." God was so kind to me, saying, "No, they're with you. Let's go." You have to have it. Who's that encourager in your life? Who's that person who's spurring you on? Because today, you need to text them and thank them. "Thank you for the ways you've spurred me on." And you need to be that for somebody else.

Text three other people and say, "Hey, stay in the fight. Keep going. Do not grow weary in doing good. Keep going, guys. Let's rejoice. Come over on Wednesday, and let's have a meal together and just celebrate all that God is doing." You tell his stories. You spur each other on toward love and good deeds. You have to have those people, and you should *be* those people.

You replace your complaining with celebrating. Make sure you celebrate way more than you complain. You tell God's story, because we win. We're going to be forever and ever and ever with King Jesus. He has died for our sins. God raised him from the dead, and we're going to be raised from the dead to be with God forever and ever and ever.

For me to get in the gym, I need to know that someone is meeting me there. I hate working out. There have been times where I've gone by myself and I've walked around for 30 minutes. I'm like, "Oh, that's a neat machine. I wonder what *that* does. Oh look, another one. Well, I guess I'll just go to my car."

I have to have somebody who is meeting me there, spurring me on. Christianity is a team sport. You have to have someone who's meeting you there and spurring you on. So, in summary, work out your salvation, trusting that God is at work in you; work on serving the word of life, not words of death; and pour out your life in service with joy to the finish.

When I was a fairly new Christian... As a reminder, I became a Christian at the age of 21. I grew up in church all the time, but I surrendered my life to Jesus at the age of 21. Before that, I meddled in paganism. I was really good at it. So, I was hanging out with my old friends, which I would do with appropriate accountability and caution. We went to the lake on this day, and they were partying, and I was there with them.

There was this girl I didn't know. She wasn't usually with us. She was there on this particular day, and she was wild. I mean, by all accounts...what she said, how she acted, how much she drank...she was wild. She had fully embraced the world and loved the world and the things of the world. We met, but I just continued to go on my way, trying to be a light, to stand out like a star. This is the language he uses.

Afterward, she had asked my friend... She said, "Hey, there's something different about that guy." My friend said, "Yeah, he'll tell you about it. He'd love to tell you about it. You should email him." So she did. She emailed me. She was just saying, "Hey, there's something different about you." It wasn't even really encouraging. It was more like curious, like, "Hey, why were you so different? What were you doing out there?"

What was interesting about her email was her signature. You know how we have a signature that says what we do and sometimes our Instagram handle or Twitter handle or whatever? Her signature was a quote, and I'll read it to you. It said, "Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly screaming, 'Wow! What a ride!'"

This encompassed her. She lived this out. It is a mantra for pagans. It's a much better mantra for Christians. There's so much to be discouraged about here, but you need not be discouraged. 2020 has been a difficult year. There are challenges around you. There's division, oppression of sorts. There is disease and death and just the fallen world we live in.

We're going to heaven, and we can represent that today. We lock arms, and we encourage each other. We spur each other on toward love and good deeds. No one should have more fun than a Christian, because we have it in context that we're going to be with God forever. We understand the true source of joy. We know him. We have a relationship with him.

So, we're not trying to arrive at the casket safely. We're trying to be poured out like a drink offering. *Spendomai* is the Greek. Spent, poured out, squandered, but not wasted, that others will come to know the one true God, that we would live a life that matters forever. Let me pray that you would.

Father, I thank you for your Word, these examples, for this place, for the wonders of your work, your goodness and your mercy, your kindness and your compassion. Father, strengthen us. Help us to be a light, to stand out in a dark world in contrast to the darkness, that others would see something in us and want more of you for themselves. We love you, Lord. We're so thankful for you. Help us to celebrate more than we complain. Would you fix in our hearts what is broken? No matter how long it has been there, Lord, would you fix that? Fix that in my heart, please. In the name of Jesus, amen.