

Lifeblood: The One Thing You Can't Live Without

The Gospel: How We Live

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The Gospel: How We Live Philippians 2:12-13

I invite you to open with me to Philippians 2. We are going to jump right in today. We have got a lot of ground to cover, and it is a lot of thick ground just to kind of give you a heads up. There is going to be just a lot of challenging ideas, concepts that we face all throughout this text.

Three Foundational Components of Salvation...

What I want to start by doing is I want to just give you an overview of three foundational components, or facets, of salvation that I hope will help us understand this text but also understand this whole series. We are just going to go kind of these one by one, and I have got Scriptures that are listed there so you can go back and look at these things later. However, I think we need to have this total picture of salvation as Scripture describes it, including all three of these components in order to understand what we are going to study today.

Salvation involves a change.

So, first component of salvation: Salvation involves a change. It involves a change. This is fundamentally what happens at the core of who you are when salvation begins. It is what we talked about last week. You are born again. In fact, you will see there listed John 3:1-16. This takes place at a point in time. The Scripture talks about it as a past event...a past event. This is something that happened to you at a specific time, at a specific place, this happens. The Scripture doesn't give evidence of anybody just oozing into the kingdom. There comes a point in time when we are born again, where we have life, and God declares us righteous before Him. He gives us a new heart. He opens our eyes. He enables our faith to turn from sin and trust in Christ. All the things that we talked about last week.

I asked the question last week, "Have you been born again?" That is an important question to ask. There is not anymore important question to ask. I know that some of you last week, and even since then, have been wrestling with that question. I want to encourage you that it is good to wrestle with that question. It is good to know that this is something that has happened in your life. We are all prone to spiritual deception. That is where we started in this series. We are all prone to spiritual deception, and we can't take this point of salvation and approach it with unbiblical methods and unbiblical language and just assume that it is there without a biblical foundation.

So, have you been born again? Then...something, the past event, you see there, we have been saved when you look at Ephesians 2:5 and 2:8. *"It is by grace you have been saved."* This is something that has happened to you, and the Bible often refers to this as justification. Justification. Romans 3:24 and Romans 5:1. It is all over Romans as well as the rest of Scripture. Romans 5:1, *"...we have been justified by faith, and we have peace*

with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand." It is something that happened to us that affects us now. We are justified before God. The language that the Scripture uses is, at that point when we are born again, God declares us righteous before Him.

Now, I want us to realize this whole idea of being born again, just to go back a little bit to what we were talking about last week. This looks circumstantially different, really, across all of our lives. I want you to follow with me here. There are some things that are the same for every single one of us when it comes to being born again. The gospel is the same. That is why we are focusing on the gospel. We are not talking about a man-made, man-centered gospel. We are talking about the God-centered gospel of the Bible. That is going to be evident in any person being born again. The proclamation of the gospel is going to be a part of that.

At the same time, the things that we talked about last week are going to happen in every single one of our lives when we are born again. God is going to open our eyes to our need for Him. God is going to enable our faith to turn from sin and trust in Christ. He is going to change our heart. It is going to happen in all of our lives. It is going to be a process for transformation of all our lives. However, when it comes to what the circumstances are around that, who the people are involved in that, maybe how old we are in that, we all know that this is going to be different for many if not all of us.

Take, for example, a twelve-year-old boy who grows up in a home where his parents are devout followers of Christ and love Christ and know the gospel and feed the gospel, in a sense, to him, ever since he was born. He gets to twelve years old, and he sees for the first time his need for Christ, and he trusts in Christ, and this whole "born again" thing happens in his life. Now, you compare those circumstances with, say, a forty year old who has little or no exposure to the gospel whatsoever in his life, who, maybe, is living amidst drug and alcohol addiction, and all of a sudden, comes to the point where he sees his need for Christ. He turns from sin, and he trusts in Christ, and God gives him a new heart and the born again picture there. It is going to look different. It is probably going to be more dramatic over here than here.

So, we don't need to get in the midst of comparing experiences like this. We need to focus on, "Have I trusted the gospel? Have I heard the gospel and has this born again thing happened in my life?" That is going to look different, even when you look in the New Testament. It happens differently in different people's lives. Obviously, Paul was a very dramatic conversion. At the same time, you don't see that all over, every time somebody comes to faith in Christ in Scripture. So, I just want to encourage you that it is a past event. It is what happens, the point of salvation when we are born again. The Scripture refers to that as justification.

Salvation involves a journey.

Second...salvation involves a change, and second, salvation involves a journey. If we stop at this change, then we will miss biblical salvation. We will understand salvation incompletely. We won't understand salvation as the Bible teaches it. Salvation involves a change, and that leads to a journey. At that change or that point of salvation, we are declared righteous before God. That begins a journey, by which, we are made righteous, by which, God is now conforming us into His image. He is transforming us.

This is where we almost kind of blurred the lines a little bit last week because, at the end, we talked about, when we are born again, how God transforms our lives. That is absolutely true. At the same time, it is not that this transformation process is immediate; that this just

happens, and all of a sudden, everything is right, and everything is transformed. We know that this begins a process by which we are transformed. So, instead of salvation being...we talked about salvation is a journey. Instead of it being a past event, something happened to us.

Instead, second, it is a present process; something that is going on in our lives. 2 Corinthians 3:18 talks about how we are being transformed with ever increasing glory into the image of Christ. We are being saved. Not, "We have been saved," but we are in the process of being saved, and we are working out our salvation as we are going to talk about today. This is really where we are going to camp out today. However, this is the means by which we are being made holy and being made righteous in the sight of God.

Now, that doesn't happen automatically, and I don't believe Scripture teaches it happens, even fully, in this life. That we won't get to the point where, finally, we are not sinning any more, and temptation is not a big deal for us. We are completely righteous in our character, and everything is just as it was created to be in the image of Christ. This is something that happens in the future. So, what you have got is salvation is a past event, a present process, a change, a journey.

Salvation involves a destination.

Then, third, salvation, Scripture talks about, as a destination. As opposed to being a past event or present process, salvation is referred to as a future prize. You look at 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. You look at Philippians 3:14, you see Paul talking about the goal of his salvation and running after the goal of his salvation, when we will culminate our salvation in the presence of God. We will be reconciled to Him. Just as we talked about at the beginning, the whole purpose of the gospel is that we might be reconciled to God. There is coming a day when we will be with God in the presence of God, and there will be no more sin, no more sorrow, no more sickness, no more pain, old gone and the new will have come. This is the picture that Scripture often refers to as glorification. We will be saved. We will be glorified with Him. This is something that is going to happen. It is the completion of our salvation.

When you look at Romans 13:11, Paul says that our salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. What does that mean? It is nearer to us now than when we first believed? It doesn't mean that we are still working on our salvation, trying to earn it. That is not what it means. Instead, what it means is the future glorification, culmination of our salvation, is still to come, and we are closer now than when we first believed.

So, what we have got to understand is that all three of those facets together. I just want to ask you the question, "Where do you find yourself on that spectrum, so to speak? Where are you on that spectrum?" Maybe you are here, and you have not come to the point where you have truly been born again. Or this has happened in your life, where there has been a change, a transformation that has begun in your life by the gospel of Jesus Christ, where you have turned from sin and trusted in Christ by the faith which God alone can give. Maybe you wouldn't describe yourself as a very religious person. That has just not happened. Or maybe you would describe yourself as a very religious person, and that still hasn't happened. Or would you find yourself, maybe, after that on this process, this journey where you know you have been born again, in this process, by which, you are being transformed.

I am guessing, by the nature of the fact that you are breathing this moment, that you haven't experienced that final facet of salvation, but I want to remind you of it, because it is a reality. For all who have been born again, I remind you that there is coming a day when we will see His face, and we will be reconciled to God in His fullness forever. If you have not been born again, I want to remind you of the urgency of this thing called salvation. Eternity

is too long and too important to be flippant, blatantly unbiblical with salvation. Have you been born again?

Now, it is important to understand all of that because we are going to come to Philippians 2. Philippians 2 is not talking about the point of salvation; instead, it is talking about this process. That is what I want you to kind of keep in your mind. When we come to Philippians 2, we are just going to read two simple verses: Verses 12 and 13. The context is Paul is addressing believers, followers of Christ, who were struggling in their relationships with one another. They had become very selfish in their relationships with one another in the church. So, verses 5 through 11 give one of the most beautiful, awe inspiring pictures of Jesus Christ in all of Scripture, of His humility, His exaltation, who He is, was, and I want you to see what happens right after that verse 12.

"Therefore..." Paul says, therefore, in light of this picture of Christ, *"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 according to his good purpose."* Did you hear that? The last part of verse 12, *"...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."* What is really interesting is that Paul is really, in a sense, kind of closing up a thought or an argument he began all the way back in Philippians 1:27.

Look at this verse with me. You might underline it because it is such an incredible verse, especially, in light of this series. Listen to what it says. Philippians 1:27, Paul has said earlier, "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." He is speaking to people who know the gospel, and he is saying, "Your life needs to be a reflection of this gospel. Your life is how this gospel is worked out day after day after day after day."

Three Foundational Truths in Salvation...

That is why he comes to this point in Philippians 2:12-13, and he says, "Work out your salvation. Work out the ramifications of the gospel in your heart, in your life. Work those out every day, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." Now, based on that, what I want you to do...we have seen these three components of salvation, I want us to look at three foundational truths in salvation that are all over these two simple, yet, astounding verses. Especially, I want you to think about these truths in light of that second facet of salvation, this process of being saved.

The grace of God undergirds every facet of salvation.

We talked about how the gospel affects how we live. Truth number one: The grace of God undergirds every facet of salvation; the grace of God undergirds every facet of salvation. This is so huge. Last week, we saw...we looked at what God does when we are born again. God opens our eyes. God changes our heart. God enables our faith. God transforms our life. He does all of that. It is His work. It is the grace of God at work. What we have got to realize is that it is the grace of God at work at the point that we are saved, but it is also the grace of God at work as we are being saved, as we are working out our salvation right here.

You say, "Well, what do you mean? I thought it sounds like this passage is talking about what we do. Work out your salvation." Don't miss it. Look at the way verses 12 and 13 flow together. They are linked by one important word. He says at the end of verse 12,

"...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for..." Literally, because this is how this can happen. This is why this can happen. *"...for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."* In other words, what he is saying is the only way you can work out your salvation is if God is working in you.

So, who is the actor in this part of salvation? It is God. Just as God is the one who worked and brought us to be born again, it is God who is making us holy. It is God who is carrying out this whole picture of salvation. The grace of God undergirds the whole thing.

Think about it in three different levels. First of all, think about the fact that grace is our message from cover to cover. From beginning to end in salvation, grace is our message. You think about it with me. We need the gospel to know Christ; we need the gospel to know Christ. Now, that sounds very basic. Of course we know that. We know that in order to be saved, you have to hear the gospel and to respond to the gospel. The gospel is necessary in order to know Christ.

The problem is we have a dangerous tendency today to say, "Yes, I know I need the gospel to know Christ." We have a dangerous tendency to leave the gospel at the point which we know Christ, and now, we have got to go on with our Christian lives and figure out how this thing looks. We say, "Okay, I have been saved by the gospel. Now, I need to move on to bigger and better things and learn how to pray and learn how to study the Word and learn how to do this and learn how to do that. Now, I have got to begin to obey God and do all these things," and we leave the gospel behind. That is a tragic mistake.

We need the gospel to know Christ, yes, but second, we need the gospel to grow in Christ. The gospel is the means by which we were saved, but it is also the means by which we are being saved. The gospel is still foundational. One writer put it this way: "The gospel isn't one class among many that you will attend during your lifetime as a Christian. The gospel is the whole building that all the classes take place in." We have this mentality that we need the gospel at that certain point, and we move on apart from the gospel. However, the reality is our souls are sanctified by Christ, forgiven by Christ, given new life by Christ; our souls need to feed on the gospel day after day after day after day. It is the foundation by which we live today as followers of Christ. It is all based on the gospel.

That is why...some of you have seen this over the last few weeks as we have been focusing on the gospel. Just what is the gospel? So many of you have said, "I feel like my heart is craving this, and I am feeding, and I am drinking from it like a deep well." That is the way it is supposed to be. Our hearts, our souls were created, saved to crave the gospel and to feed on the gospel, and we will never get tired of the gospel if we are followers of Jesus Christ. If we do ever get over the gospel, what it means to feed on the gospel, then we need to recheck our hearts and whether or not we ever really knew the gospel. This is something you can't get over. The gospel that we talked about a couple of weeks ago is the foundation, not just for that point of salvation, but also for this process of salvation.

Think about how does the gospel affects our families. How does the gospel affect us as husbands or wives or parents or kids? How does the gospel affect suffering? How does the gospel affect the way we walk through hard times? How does the gospel affect evangelism? This is the gospel, and, if we have created this man-made, man-centered gospel, how do we share our faith? Think about how the gospel affects social issues, and how we respond to social issues in our culture. The gospel is the foundation for every dimension of our lives. We need the gospel to know Christ, and we need the gospel to grow in Christ. So, that is the message of grace.

Second, grace is our master. Take the term here “master” from Romans 6 when Paul said, “*Sin shall not be your master because you are not under law, but under grace.*” I want you to think about how grace has conquered sin, who was our master...has conquered it in two ways. Number one: By His grace, we are free from the penalty of sin; by His grace, we are free from the penalty of sin. Again, this is a basic thing that I hope we know. Those of us who are followers of Christ, we know that Christ has taken the penalty of sin, the ultimate penalty, death. He has removed it. We don’t have to fear death because He has conquered the penalty of sin, and we are free from the penalty of sin, but this is exactly where we left off somewhat last week.

When we talk about salvation as a prayer you pray, and then your life goes on and looks the same as it did before, then we blaspheme God by making Him out to be a God who is able to handle the ultimate effect of sin and not able to handle the sin that we struggle with on a day by day basis. It is not true. It is not the gospel. The God who handled the ultimate effect of sin is also the God who is able to handle sin in our lives on a day by day by day basis.

By His grace, we are free from the penalty of sin, but, second, by His grace, we are free from the power of sin. Romans 6 says,

We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know [Listen to this.] that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

You are followers of Christ if you have been born again. I want to remind you. This may be one of the most important truths you hear today, if not the one thing that sticks out for you in your life where you are right now. You are dead to sin! You are dead to sin! Dead to the penalty of sin and dead to the power of sin in your life. Count yourselves dead to sin. You are alive to God.

So many of us, even those of us even those of us who are truly followers of Christ, who have been born again, live in guilt over sin. I remind you, “*There is...*” Two chapters later, “*There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*” God does not count your sin against you anymore. God does not count your sin against you anymore. This is grace. It is grace as our master.

You say, “Well, I still struggle with it.” Well, yeah. Romans 7:15,

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to

do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

It is the most schizophrenic passage in all of Scripture. Paul says, *"...in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members...Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* He gives us power over sin. Grace is not something that saves us then. It is something that saves us now. Something that empowers us now. You see why we can't leave the gospel back there. The gospel is huge for our lives today, for our struggles today, for temptations you will face this week. You need the gospel. You need His grace.

Which leads to the third way I want you to think about grace. Grace is our message, grace is our master, but third, grace is our motivation. This is huge, especially, when we come to this picture in Philippians 2:13, *"It is God who works in you."* *"It is God who works in you."*, is what verse 13 says.

Now, in just a second, we are going to talk about works and salvation. We are going to get there, but we need to see this first. I need you to follow with me here, because this is open just to...you slightly twist this, and you have got a misunderstanding. Follow with me here. Grace is our motivation. The motivation for our obedience is never gratitude toward God. I need you to follow with me here. The motivation for our obedience is never gratitude toward God.

Now, let me tell you what I am not saying in this. I don't believe that Scripture, in any way, teaches that gratitude is a bad thing. Gratitude is a very good thing. We are supposed to, intended to, have grateful, thankful hearts. This is part of worship. Thank you for the cross. Thank you for the cross. Thankful, gratitude, but I want you to think with me about how gratitude...a good thing...can become the motivation for our obedience and become a bad thing.

I want you to think about gratitude with me. If someone does something very nice for you, very generous for you, then you feel gratitude toward them. The way that is most often expressed is through thinking, "Well, I need to do something for them. I need to do something for them." So, if someone does something kind for us, and we feel...what do we call it? We call it a "debt of gratitude." We feel a debt of gratitude. If you treat me to a really, really nice meal, then I would think, "Well, I need to at least take you to McDonald's or something." I may not be able to do all that you did, but I want to do something for you, and so, we owe a debt of gratitude when it is shown to us.

Now, I want you to think about how that kind of thinking pervades contemporary Christianity. You listen, you hear how we talk, you hear all the time, "Look at all that God did for you, now how much are you going to do for Him? Look at what Jesus gave for you. Now, how much are you going to give for Him?" We have this idea, and we begin to think, "Look at all that God did for me in bringing me salvation. He sent His Son to die on the cross for my sins. What can I do for Him now?" We say, "Well, if Jesus did all that, I am going to give my life, and I am going to give Him my money and my house and my family and my car and everything that I have. Everything that I have, I am going to give to Him because of what He did for me."

Now, you think, "Well, what is wrong with that?" Well, I want you to think about it with me. At this point, we are beginning to think about all that we do in our relationship with Christ. All we do in Christianity is now owing a debt of gratitude to Him. However, the reality is, as soon as you pay one thing toward a debt of gratitude to God, you undercut the very foundation of grace in the first place. It is grace because you can't pay it back. So, stop trying contemporary Christianity. Stop trying true follower of Christ. You can't pay God back. This turns into some sick, religious lifestyle where we actually begin to think that our church attendance and our Bible reading and our prayers and all these things that we do are somehow paying God back for all that He has done for us.

The reality is we are not in debt to God. Now, follow with me here. Again, this is going to be twisted. Please follow with me here. We are not in debt to God. In fact, I would go so far as to say you don't owe God anything; you don't owe God anything. Now, it is not that He hasn't given all these things. He has undoubtedly given all these things. He has given His life. He has given Himself. He has given all of these gifts, no question. However, the beauty of Christianity is not that he did all of these things for us then, and so now, what can we do for Him now. The reality is God has not stopped giving to you.

Now, this is the crux. This is the key. When we think like this, we think, "Look at what God did for me at the cross, so now, how can I live for Him now?" The reality is you cannot live for Him now unless He keeps giving to you. Therefore, you will never, ever be able to pay one thing back to God, because His grace doesn't just save you then. His grace is what saves you now. We think we have...who are we to be so arrogant as to think that now that we have something to offer to God? The reality is, if you had been a follower of Jesus Christ for 75 years, you are just as desperately in need of grace today as you were 75 years ago. God is not in the business of making...He is not a businessman wanting to make a business deal with you. You know why? Because you don't have anything to offer. Anything you offer Him that is good comes from Him. This is the beauty of Christianity. We are not in debt to God.

Gratitude is not the motivation...not that that gratitude is bad, but gratitude is not the motivation that drives us to obey God. Instead, the motivation for our obedience is the grace of God, always the grace of God. His grace is what motivates us. His grace is what compels us, 2 Corinthians says, to obey Him. We are not in debt to God, ladies and gentlemen, we are indwelt by God. We are indwelt by God. It is His grace that lives in us. This is the beauty of Christianity. We can never...we can never relegate salvation to attempts to earn the favor of God or attempts to pay back, even, God for all his favor. That undercuts the very foundation of the gospel.

Andrew Murray said this best this way in a book called *Abide in Christ*, a great book. He said, "The idea that many Christians have of grace is this, that their conversion and pardon are God's work, but now in gratitude to God, it is their work to live as Christians and follow Jesus. No," he says, "just as it was Jesus who drew you when He said, 'Come,' so it is Jesus who keeps you when He says, 'Abide.' The past grace to come and the future grace to abide are alike from Him and Him alone." We are indwelt by God, and His grace undergirds every facet of our salvation.

Now, it is at this point that if we are really grasping this, we begin to think, "Well, then what do I do? If it is God who works in me, then what do I do?" It is at this point that many people will begin to think, "Well, there is nothing that I can do. I am just going to..." and the phrase that we use, "I am going to let go and let God." We begin to get this passive idea of Christianity and that is not the gospel either.

Faith is the God-ordained link between His work and our work in salvation.

Which leads us to the second truth. Grace undergirds every facet of our salvation. You have got your minds, hearts, arms around this. Then, second, faith is the God-ordained link between His work and our work in salvation. Now, here is where the work comes in. Faith is the link. By grace alone through faith alone. Grace undergirding everything. Faith is the link between His work and our work in salvation.

This is where we finally come to the point of tension that began and erupted a bit in Matthew 7 a few weeks ago. *"Not everyone..."* Jesus said, *"Not everyone...Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."* Jesus said this. Obviously...obviously, obedience to the Father's will is very important to Jesus, and it even has something to do with getting into heaven. Do works play a part in our salvation? Obviously, in some sense, they do. However, we have seen and we know there is no chance that we can do anything to earn our salvation. We know that faith is the only way by which we can be saved. We know that faith alone...we are justified through faith in His blood. We have talked about this.

So, how do you reconcile these two together? This is where Philippians 2:12-13 is so beautiful. Because what you have got is you have got these ideas just side by side. You see them. So, that...listen to what it says, *"Continue..."* Verse 12, *"...continue to work out your salvation."* Work out your salvation. That is active work. That is something to do. *"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for..."* Here is how this can happen. Why it can happen. *"...For it is God who works in you."* So, what we have got is God's work and man's work side by side.

Now, this word *"work out your salvation"* literally means "create your salvation," "produce your salvation," "bring it to completion, your salvation." We will get to it a little bit later. So, how do we do that, and at the same time, it be the work of God? The answer is faith. Faith is the link between these two. Even this here, verse 12 and 13, can be open to misunderstanding. Some of us will walk away thinking, "We have got to guard against this." Some of us, though, will walk away thinking, "Well, when it comes to salvation, God does His part, and then I do my part." That is not what Philippians 2 is teaching us. It is not teaching us, "Well, God does this, and I meet Him in the middle, and I do this." What he is saying is we work, but when we work, it is God who is working in us. The only work that we can work is if the work of God is evident in our lives. It is not, "Here is His part, and then here is my part; I bring my part to the table." Instead, any part that I bring to the table is because God is working in it.

Let me show you this in Scripture. Go with me, turn with me to the right one book to Colossians 3. Let me show you this in two different places. Colossians 3. Look with me at verse 1. This is a passage that we studied a while ago. I am back in the series on abiding in Christ, and this really goes back to a lot of that series. Colossians 3:1. Listen to what it says. It says, *"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ..."* Listen to what it is talking about here. What he is talking about is what happened when we came to faith in Christ and who we are in Christ. *"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."* Listen to verse 3. *"For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."*

Here is the picture of Colossians 3:1-4. Your life now is hidden with Christ in God. Who is your life? Christ is your life. Your life is not your own. Christ is your life. This is who you are. Now, based on who you are, who Christ is in you, then listen to this exhortation, these commands. *"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual*

immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these..." He goes on to list them. "...anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

Here is the picture. Do you see it? Being renewed. Who is renewing it? God is at work. He has taken your life. He has made Christ your life. It is what happens when we are born again. Now, what happens is we do all of these things. We don't lie. We avoid slander. We avoid anger. We avoid rage. We put to death all these things...impurity, lust. All these things, we do these because Christ is our life in us, enabling us to do these things. Our position in Christ is the way this process is carried out. It is God's work in us, but we are undoubtedly working here.

Now, go one more place. 2 Peter 1. Keep going to the right. You will go past Hebrews and James, and you will come to 1 Peter. Go to 2 Peter 1. It is the same picture here. We see this back to back, side by side, all throughout Scripture. Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ, therefore, I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live I live by..."* What? *"...I live by faith in the Son of God..."* "I live by faith." Do you see that? Not that I am saved by faith, that is true, yes, but I live by faith today. Faith is the means by which I identify with the crucified Christ who has given me victory over sin on a day by day basis.

Look at 2 Peter 1:3. Listen to this verse. It is the work of God. *"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature..."* The nature of Christ. *"...and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."* So, he said, "You have everything you need. I give you everything you need." You are participating in the divine nature.

Now, in light of this picture, look at what it says in verse 5. *"For this very reason, make every effort..."* Now, it is our work. Here is the picture. *"...effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love."* You see the picture. Now, it is not God's work now, our work starts, and we leave God behind. No, it is God's work, and God's work enabling our work. Do you see this picture?

Faith involves radical dependence on God's work in our lives.

So, how is faith the link between God's work and our work? This where I want you to follow with me here. Faith involves two things. In this working out of salvation, faith involves two things. Number one, faith involves radical dependence on God's work in our lives, radical dependence. Follow with me here. This goes exactly to what we were talking about last week. We were dependent on God to give us life then. We are dependent on God to give us life now. The same faith that saved us then is the faith that sanctifies us now.

Just like...now, there are obviously differences, but just like when God opened our eyes at the point of salvation, we were born again; we need God to continually open our eyes, not in the same way that He first opened our eyes to our need for Him, but don't we need God? Isn't this the way the Christian life works? All throughout Scripture, we need God to open our eyes daily to our dependence on Him, daily to our dependence on His grace and the

gospel. We don't go on; we are not saved from self-sufficiency to live in self-sufficiency. We are saved in God-dependency to live in God-dependency where we see over and over and over again, "God, I need you. God nothing in my hands I bring. Just as I didn't bring anything in my hands then, I don't bring anything in my hands today. When I wake up in the morning, God I don't bring anything. You, you have to do your work in me." I am constantly, continually moment by moment, we are dependent on Him.

This is so key, and we have got to hold on to this because this is how working, doing things does not earn our salvation. Because the reality is anything that we are doing, the work that we are doing is coming by who? God. So, we are not earning our salvation before God because it is God that is working in us. Constantly looking to Him. You say constantly? Yes. This is the life of faith. It is a constant moment by moment, day by day dependence on God to supply me with all power for godliness, never at a point of self-sufficiency. It is when sin enters the ballgame. If we are going to be working out our salvation, then we are going to be dependent on God, and faith is looking to Him. Faith is the attitude of the heart that says, "I don't bring anything in my hands. I need you." It opens our eyes.

We talked about last week when we are born again, what happens is God changes our hearts. Now, obviously, our heart is changed, so we need Him to mold our hearts. This is exactly what Philippians 2:13 is talking about. It is God who works in you to do two things: To will and to act. First, to will. He molds our hearts. This is not just talking about our wishes. This is talking about the depth of our genuine desires, our wants. What we are saying in faith, this is the attitude of faith; it is us saying, as followers of Christ, on a day by day basis, "I want what you want. I want to will to will what you will. God I live, we all do, in a culture where we are surrounded by the pleasures of this world." Faith says on a daily basis, "God I am surrounded by all of these pleasures. I need new appetites from you. I need you by your grace to change my desires and to change my wants more and more and more and more. The process that you started then when you changed my heart, I need you to mold it more and more and more." In faith, this happens. God is faithful, and what happens is we need Him to mold our hearts.

Then, we talked about last week how He transforms our lives, that process of transformation begins. We don't need Him just to transform our lives though. Second, we need Him to empower our lives. This is what we saw in Ezekiel 36. He puts His Spirit in us to enable us to follow His commands. This is so key. To will and to act, and the only way that we can act, ladies and gentlemen, the only way that we can act, work in the Christian life, in the life following Christ is by faith. It is by faith. It is by trust in God. "God, I need you to enable me to work. I need you to enable me." Not just, "God, I desire holiness, you have given me a desire for holiness, but God I need you to enable me to be holy." This is faith. "God, not just I desire to serve people around me; God, I need you to enable me to serve the people around me." You see where faith is fundamental. It is completely fundamental and the walk, the day by day playing out, working out of our faith which gets back to verse 12. That is what God is doing. He is molding our hearts; He is empowering our lives, and faith is dependence on Him to do that.

Faith involves radical devotion to God's will for our lives.

The reality is when faith is dependence on Him to do that, then the second facet of faith comes in. Faith is radical, not dependence on His work in our lives, but radical devotion to His will for our lives. Radical devotion to His will for our lives. This is where our action comes in. Paul says, just catch this, Paul says to every true believer, every follower of Christ, he says, "Work out your salvation. Work," he says. "Work diligently. Work hard. Work with discipline." You see this all over his writings. Work, work, work out your salvation. People cry, "Well, that is legalism." No, it is not lazy Christian. It is the playing out of your Christian

life. It is the working out of the salvation that is all undergirded by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We work, and we work hard as followers of Christ. Not by our own strength, but by the one who supplies us strength.

Let me show you these two places that are so key. Look at 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15. You have got to see these two places. 1 Corinthians 15:10, and then we will go back to Colossians. We have to realize that this is an active thing; it is an active thing. We are working out our salvation. You are not sanctified, you don't work out your salvation by spending hours on the Internet and watching idle TV and participating in idle chatter and indulging in the pleasures of this world. That is not how we are sanctified. It doesn't happen like that. It happens through work. However, it is work that God enables us to do.

Look at this: 1 Corinthians 15:10. This is when Paul is talking about the gospel, one of the summaries of the gospel in the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15. Listen to what he says in verse 9, just to get the context. *"For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."* Now listen. Underline verse 10. Listen to this. *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect."*

So, he says it is all grace. However, listen to what he says. *"No, I worked harder than all of them."* So, he worked hard. He comes back, and he says. *"...yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."* Do you see the sandwich there? Grace of God at the beginning. Grace of God at the end. In the middle, you have got "working hard by the grace of God." "He looks back," he says, "It is by the grace of God." It is the picture.

You have got Paul getting up in the morning. How is he going to live out the Christian life? How do we live out the Christian life as a mom or dad or as a teenager? How does this look? We get up in the morning, and we look to God. We say, "God, I can't do this today. Your grace is all I have. I need your grace. I need your power at work in me. I need you to enable me to live out your Word." That dependency on grace, we talked about this is faith; dependency on grace now plays out moment by moment, day by day in Paul's life all day long. He is constantly looking to the grace of God, and he is working hard by the grace of God.

He gets to the end after a long day of preaching, you know, did a little miracle here or there, some cool thing that is going on, and he looks back, and he says, "Yet not I, but the grace of God with me." It is all grace. However, it is faith in the grace that God provides on a moment by moment by moment basis, and it is working very, very hard. He says, "I work harder than all the other guys."

Let me show you one more. Let's go back to Colossians right past Philippians to the right. Go to Colossians 1. This is terminology that makes some of us even a little uncomfortable here. Colossians 1. What you have got, we will start in verse 27, and we are going to focus on verses 28 and 29. Verse 27 is that masterful picture of the gospel of Christ in you. I want you to listen to what he says after this. He says, verse 27, *"To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery..."* Here is the mystery of the gospel, *"...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."* He says, "Christ is in you."

Now listen to this. *"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ."* Listen to what he is doing. He is working. He is proclaiming. He is admonishing. He is teaching everyone, so that he can present everyone perfect in Christ. *"To this end I labor, struggling..."* Do you hear the language that he is using? "I am working, laboring." It is struggling, striving in some

translations. Striving. Don't miss it. *"With all his..."* What? All his *"energy, which so powerfully works in me."* Do you see it? He is working. He is working hard. He is working out his salvation. He is proclaiming the gospel, admonishing people in the gospel. Helping people grow in the gospel. He is living out the Christian life. He says, "I am struggling and I do it with all of His energy working in me, which so powerful works in me." This is it. This is the secret, ladies and gentlemen, to this picture of working out our salvation with the power that God supplies.

Listen to what C. T. Studd says. You have heard me talk about C. T. Studd before, a guy who went to China, and then he went to India, and at age fifty, instead of retiring, said, "It is time for me to go to the Sudan." He goes to Sudan, and at that time, he is leading people to Christ all over Sudan, and he starts what became known as the World Wide Evangelism Crusade which made the gospel known all over Asia, all over Africa, South America. He died in the middle of Sudan at age 70. I want you to hear what he wrote shortly before he died.

Too long we have been waiting for one another to begin. The time for waiting is passed. Should such men as we fear before the whole world, I before the sleepy, lukewarm, faithless, namby, pamby Christian world, we will dare to trust our God. And we will do it with His joy unspeakable singing aloud in our hearts. We will trust Him. His joy will be in our hearts. [Listen to what he says.] We will a thousand times sooner die trusting only in God than live trusting in man. [You see how the man lived by faith.] And when we come to this position, the battle is already won and the end of this glorious campaign in sight, we will have the real holiness of God, not the sickly stuff of talk and dainty words and pretty thoughts. We will have a real holiness; one of daring faith and works for Jesus Christ.

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to stop...in every way, we need to avoid legalism. In every way, we need to avoid thinking that our works get us to God, earn us favor with God, in every way. At the same time, we have the power of God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, living in us. So, rise up with the power of God that so powerfully works within you. Go into every corner of Birmingham and every corner of the nations and proclaim His glory, and we will have a real holiness, not talk and dainty words every Sunday. We will have a life that demonstrates the working out of salvation. We can't be lazy Christians. Work out your salvation. Work. Work, be diligent. Be disciplined by the power of Him whose work is evident in you, constantly dependent.

This is faith. This is faith, and this is why you can hear Scripture all over the New Testament...it is why you can hear Scripture putting works and salvation together just like Jesus did in Matthew 7. When you understand this, it makes sense for him to say, *"Not everyone to says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of Heaven but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."* How do you do the will of the Father who is heaven? By day by day, constant dependence on Christ in you.

It is the whole point of the Sermon on the Mount. It is why He said later, in Matthew 24:13, *"The love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."* Only he would stands firm to the end will be saved. How can He say that? Does that mean, is Jesus saying that you have to earn your salvation for the rest of this whole deal, so that you can make sure you stand firm? No. No, but when God is working in you, you will stand firm to the end. It says in Romans 2:6, God *"will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who*

does evil." God will give to each person according to what he has done. How can he say that? He can say that because everything that he has done has been done by the power of God at work in him.

It says later in Romans 11:22, *"continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off."* That will preach. You have division in the church. Continue in kindness, otherwise some of you will be cut off. Listen to what he is saying there. He is saying the work of God in you...the work of God in you will enable you to do that. Colossians 1:22-23. I mean they are all over. *"You will stand holy in his sight if you continue in your faith."* 1 Timothy 4:16, *"Persevere in your life and doctrine because if you do, then you will save yourself."* How can the Bible say that? Because it is God at work in you, enabling you to persevere in life and doctrine.

You see how we are constantly in the faith, saving faith, not just to the point of salvation, the process of salvation. Saving faith is a radical dependence on all of God's work in you, and at the same time, because of His work in you and His providing in you, a radical devotion to all of God's will for your lives. I am not saying...we have talked about this...I am not saying that this is instantaneous, that this is perfect. Every single one of us is guaranteed the rest of our lives to fulfill the will of God, but that leads us to this last part.

The grace of God undergirds every facet of our salvation. Faith is the link between God's work and our work. The third part: God purposes to complete our salvation for His glory. He purposes to complete it. I mentioned earlier, "working out your salvation", the word literally means "working out to completion." We can say that with confidence. We are going to talk about this some more next week when we talk about assurance of salvation. We can say that because it is God who is at work in you.

The picture here is that God...God finishes what He starts. This is the picture back in Philippians 1:6: *"He who began a good work in you will carry on to completion till the day of Christ Jesus."* He will carry it on to completion, but he says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." This is where we come back. We know that we still struggle with temptation here and there. We still struggle with sin here and there, so how do you work out your salvation? You do it with fear and trembling. What does that mean? I think it means three things when you look at the totality of Scripture based on this passage.

Number one, it means that we need to be afraid. We need to be afraid. By that, I mean be afraid, fear living in a way that dishonors God. The word is "*phobos*." The word "*phobos*" literally means "fright or terror." We are, ladies and gentleman, every follower of Christ in this room, every true follower of Christ, be terrified at the thought of not bringing honor to God in your lives. Let that terrify you. This is the life of the true follower of Christ.

It goes back to what we were just talking about, this faith, this moment by moment dependence, because you know you are, moment by moment, dependent on Him, because you know that at the very second that you take the reigns, at the very second that you take control and you live in self-sufficiency, that very second, you know that you are bound to fall. You know that the only way that you can stand against sin and temptation is if He provides the power at work within you. So, moment by moment, you are calling out to God, "God, I can't do this. I need you, God, I need you. God, I need you." He provides. He is faithful. He does it. That happens. Cultivate that kind of dependence when you work out your salvation with fear and trembling. When you fear and think, "God, I don't want to do anything in my life that would not bring you honor," that makes you dependent on God.

Second, I think it means be in awe, because God is at work within you. What is really cool...I wish we had time to go back and look, you might write this down. Back in the Old Testament there are places where these words are coupled together, fear and trembling. Exodus 15:16 couples them together when it is talking about how the people of God are going to go into the Promised Land and that the *"nations are going to fear and tremble when they see the work of God among his people."* The same thing in Isaiah 19:16. It says, *"The nations will shutter at the uplifted hand of God. They will fear and tremble at the uplifted hand of God."* Psalm 2 talks about...the glory of Christ is what it is really giving us a picture of, and it says...it says, *"The kings of the earth will fear and tremble, serve him with trembling."*

This is the picture in the Old Testament. When the people saw the work of God, then they had fear and trembling in their hearts. I love this picture when you kind of bring it to Philippians 2:12-13. *"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling because you see the work of God."* Think about the beauty of the Christian life here. When we are living in dependence on Him, devoting ourselves to His will and the power that He provides, then what we have the privilege to do, moment by moment, day by day, is seeing the power of God at work in our lives. Christianity now becomes a front row seat watching the power of God at work.

Now, I am not saying or assuming that it is always this dramatic thing. I am not even saying that it is always this joyous, easy thing...easy thing, but the reality is when we struggle with sin and temptation, and when we are moment by moment dependent on Him and His power over sin, then we see His power provide. We see His victory like Paul talked about in Romans 7. When we are, moment-by-moment, dependent upon Him, even when we walk through suffering, we see the God who sustains, the God who strengthens. We look at what is going on in our lives, and we know...many of us have been there, and some of us are there now...we know what we can do to walk through this, but we see the power of God first hand and at work in our lives. It is a beautiful thing.

Be in awe, God is at work in you. Work out with fear and trembling, because you are afraid and, you are in awe, and third, because you are assured; be assured. That is what I just mentioned. God will finish what He has started. I am going to bring it back around to Romans 13:11, which I mentioned earlier when we were looking at this text. Romans 13:11. We have salvation that is nearer now than when we first believed. The culmination of that salvation is coming.

A guy named Horatius Bonar, 19th century, was a pastor in Edinburgh, Scotland. He wrote one time to fellow pastors, "I am ashamed of my dull and careless heart and of my slow and unprofitable course of life." "I am ashamed," he said, "of my dull and careless heart and of my slow and unprofitable course of life." The only problem was his life was anything but dull and his course was anything but unprofitable. This is a pastor who, during his lifetime, wrote over 600 hymns and poems about the greatness of God, and he preached the gospel faithfully until he was 80 years old. The thing that gripped his heart, though, was when he looked at the church, and he saw the self-sufficiency in the church. He saw little desire, so little desire for God and so little dependence on God. So, he wrote one of his most famous hymns that describe the inability of man and the gracious ability of God; the inability of man to be righteous, the gracious ability of God to make him righteous. He brings them together to think much like Philippians 2:12-13 does. Contemplate how the gospel is the only way that you can live today.

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