

New Hope Missionary Baptist Church – Southfield, Michigan
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#hope in the field

Bible Study Series: Philippians
Unified Hope: Loving Christ as we Love One Another

“Shining as Stars” Philippians 2:12-18 (continued)

Reflection Questions:

A. What can prevent us from being obedient to God and his Word?

B. What are the characteristics of believers who shine like stars for Christ in the World?

C. **In the midst of situations of persecution, trials, internal difficulties, and threats to sound teaching; Christ set aside his prerogatives [privileges, rights, and entitlements]; and the Apostle Paul imitated Christ by doing the same. How can twenty-first century believers develop the boldness required to imitate them today?**

- ☐ Arguments
- ☐ Attitude
- ☐ Believers
- ☐ Complaining
- ☐ Drink Offering
- ☐ Example
- ☐ Faithful
- ☐ God
- ☐ Holy Spirit
- ☐ Hymn
- ☐ Obedience

- ☐ Innocent
- ☐ Jesus Christ
- ☐ Joy
- ☐ Light
- ☐ Lives
- ☐ Obedience
- ☐ People
- ☐ Rejoice
- ☐ Work
- ☐ Boast

- ☐ Reverence
- ☐ Sacrifice
- ☐ Salvation
- ☐ Serving
- ☐ Shining
- ☐ Sin
- ☐ Stars
- ☐ Unity
- ☐ Partnership

Introduction

Believers ought to follow Christ's example not only to bring unity and peace to the church, but also so that no one in the outside world would be able to find any fault with them. Philippi was a pagan city; Paul wanted these believers to be unified, morally pure, and filled with good works so that they could bring the light of Christ into their dark world. Is your light shining for Christ?

Important Emphasis

Submission

Paul writes to the Church at Philippi concerning their obedience, but he does it in the Spirit of Love. The reason why Paul speaks to them about obedience at this time was because he has just revealed in the Christological hymn the greatest display of obedience which is in Christ. The verse starts off with "So then" or "Consequently" (hoste in the Greek) Paul implies because Christ has obeyed, we should dwell in obedience as well. **2 Cor. 2:9; 7:15; 10:5**

Paul does this in love he doesn't just use the word **brethren** (adolphoi) but he uses the word **beloved** (agapetoi) he is speaking to the brethren in which he loves. Because he loves them, he knows what is best for them and that is to be in alignment with the righteousness of God in obedience. This Word obey means to "Listen for" Latin obedire "to hear toward" **This was a parallel to answering a door**. Obedience is to answer the call or the door because you're listening. One opens to the knock they hear.

Col. 3:22 This is not for eye service or to work because someone is watching.

Salvation

Paul speaks of them Working out their own salvation. Paul is speaking of their total well-being, including their spiritual prosperity both now and in the future. **Phil. 1:19** (deliverance) and **Job 13:16** (salvation). Paul nor his contemporaries thought of salvation in the individualistic mindset.

Workout your salvation implies continuing to work toward the conclusion of something already begun. But they have to do it with fear and trembling! Karl Barth calls it "**startling humility**". **Gen 9:2, Exodus 15:16, Isa 19:16** rather it is in **Awe** Psalm 2:11

Substitution

God exalted Christ because of His Obedience. This obedience caused him to empty himself just as Paul spoke of pouring himself out. Paul does not desire for his running to be in vain; literally in emptiness or perhaps in modern automotive terms running on empty or fumes. Metaphor of emptiness were a favorite way to talk about the uselessness, madness, and importance.

The pouring out that Paul speaks of relates to the sacrifice that he gives rise to in **Rom 12:1**. Paul is too busy pouring himself out instead of pouting. Which the alternative was Murmuring. Murmuring is used in Hebrew Scripture to describe expressions of dissatisfaction with God's actions and commands.

Murmuring and questioning are the outward expression of an inward rebellion against God, arguing with what God has ordered, and thus implicitly with God's right to rule and God's wisdom and judgment.

Lesson Outline

- I. Reverent Obedience to God
- II. Righteous Children of God
- III. Rejoicing in Service to God

Exploring the Text

I. Reverent Obedience to God (2:12-13)

¹² *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (NKJV)*

The Philippian church was dear to Paul's heart. He didn't want his absence from them to be a detriment to their **spiritual growth**. So, he requested that they always be careful to follow his instructions [or always obey (KJV/NKJV/NASB)], even while he was away. They must put into action God's saving work by **obeying** God with deep **reverence** and **fear**. Paul was calling the entire church to work together to rid themselves of **divisions** and **discord**.

Obedience defined:

Following commands or instructions. In a spiritual sense, it refers to adhering to the will and **commandments** of God.

[Volpe, Isaac. THE JESUS CHRIST DICTIONARY. A Study of His Most Frequent Words and Ideas: A journey into the heart of the teachings of the world's most revered spiritual leader. (p. 43). UNITEXTO Digital Publishing. Kindle Edition.]

Perfect Obedience defined

In the New Testament Christ embodies [the] quality of **perfect obedience** to God (**John 6:37–38**). His obedience, the antithesis [opposite, contrast] of Adam's disobedience, provided for mankind's atonement (**Rom. 5:18–21**). It began at the incarnation (**Heb. 10:5–10**) and continued throughout his life on earth, including ultimately his death on the cross (Phil. 2:6–11). His obedience thus became an example for those who would become his disciples (**Matt. 16:24**).

[Myers, Allen C. 1987. In *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 775. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

Although believers are saved once for all when they accept Jesus Christ as Lord, it is in the grind of everyday life that **salvation** is put into action. Paul wanted the Philippians to put their salvation into practice for the health of the church. As they did so, they would not do it on their own. Through his Holy Spirit, God would be working in them for the tasks he wanted them to do (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). He would give the Philippians the desire to obey him and the **power** to do what pleases him to bring **true unity** to the church. God works in believers; believers do God's work. **Believers** are partners with God.

Understanding the Text (2:12-13)

1. What did Paul urge the Philippian Christians to do in his absence, and how? (2:12)

2. What were the Philippian believers to work out? (2:12)

3. How would God help the Philippians obey Him? (2:12-13)

II. Righteous Children of God (2:14-16)

¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

Paul had advice for how they could go about acting out their faith—they should stay away from **complaining** and **arguing**. Paul returned to the basic problem described in 2:1-4, the **arrogance** that leads to **dissension**. Complaining translates from a word that describes a bad attitude which expresses itself in constant grumbling. The word for arguing has a legal connotation and may refer to the Philippian Christians going to civil courts to settle their differences, an action Paul condemned elsewhere (1 Corinthians 6:1-11).

Complaining and arguing are completely opposite to Christ's **attitude** (2:5-8), which believers are to **emulate** [imitate, follow]. They also give people a bad impression of the church, and no one should be able to speak a word of blame against the believers. If all that people know about a church is that its members constantly argue, complain, and gossip, they get a bad impression of Christ and the gospel. Unbelievers then feel justified in criticizing the Christians. Probably more churches have split from causes related to arguing and complaining than from heresy.

Instead, believers' lives ought to be clean, meaning beyond **reproach**, incurring no justifiable criticism. This does not mean sinless perfection; instead, the church was to be beyond the criticism of the unbelieving world. Their lives also ought to be innocent. There ought to be nothing within the church that would weaken its strength or contaminate the **truth**. The church's members then could be **children of God** in a dark world full of crooked and perverse people (John 1:12-13; Galatians 3:26; 1 John 3).

While believers are rescued out of the present evil age (**Galatians 1:4**) and are no longer of the world, they are not taken out of the world. They are “in” the world and have been given a commission to go “into” the world with the Good News (**John 17:15-18**). The church of Philippi needed to fulfill its mission in the world, and it could best do so by being clean and innocent children of God right in the middle of the depraved culture. The contrast with their culture would be so stark that the believers would **shine brightly**. They bring the **light of truth** into the darkness of depravity, as **stars** light up the darkness of the night.

The Philippian church should hold tightly to the **word of life** by spreading the truth of the gospel beyond the doors of the church. To do this, they must be grounded in the truth, refusing to compromise. When Paul saw the church remaining clean and innocent and holding tightly to the truth as they reached out to a **depraved** world, he would be proud that his work among them was not useless [or in vain].

“You Shine” in verse 15 it is in the present tense so that passage is being linked to the idea of Matthew 5:14-16 the shining they do in the world. They are luminaries. In English it means those that have made prominent achievements because they have a word that brings life.

Understanding the Text (2:14-16)

4. What instructions did Paul give in relation to everyday Christian living? (2:14-16)

5. Why were the Philippians not shining "like stars" in their world? (2:14-16)

6. Why did the Philippian assembly need to show a united front to unbelievers? (2:14-16)

7. What would enable Paul to boast about the Philippians? (2:14-16)

8. Whose honor was Paul concerned about? (2:16)

III. Rejoicing in Service to God (2:17-18)

¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul's reference to being poured out like a _____ was an allegory [story or symbol] for martyrdom. The drink offering was an important part of the Jewish sacrificial system. It involved wine being poured out on an altar as a sacrifice to God (see **Genesis 35:14; Exodus 29:40-41; Numbers 28:24**).

Paul regarded his life as a suitable offering to complete the Philippians' _____ of _____, and he willingly offered it for the sake of Christ's gospel and for the many who had believed in Christ because of his preaching (**Ephesians 6:7; 1 Peter 4:10**).

Yet even through these somber words a ray of light was shining. If Paul were indeed to die, he would _____ and desire that they would _____ his _____. Paul was content, knowing that he had helped the Philippians live for Christ. Paul was able to have joy, even though he faced possible execution. When you are totally committed to serving Christ, sacrificing to build the faith of others brings a joyous reward. Paul considered it a privilege to die for the faith, and he wanted the Philippians to take the same attitude in the case of his death.

Understanding the Text (2:17-18)

9. How did Paul view his own life? (2:17)

10. How did Paul view the faith of the Philippian believers? (2:17)

11. What did Paul want his friends at Philippi to experience? (2:18)

Life Application

- In what way can you help repair a breach of peace with someone in your life?

- In what way can you shine like a star in your home, on your job, in the community, or at your church?

[Resources: Adult LessonMaker Questions and Life Application New Testament Commentary]