

Motivated to Follow

Philippians 2: 12-18

One of the greatest means of motivation is a great illustration or example. Following the great discourse on the obedience of Christ, having provided the great example for believers to follow, Paul offers a discourse on our obligations to follow the example Christ left for us.

I will admit that following this example is humbling and overwhelming at times. However, this is not a mere suggestion, but an exhortation for obedience. If we are to mature spiritually, and live pleasing to the Father, we must strive to follow the great example Christ left for us. Let's examine the [considerations](#) of Paul in the text as we discuss: [Motivated to Follow](#).

I. A Spiritual Work (12-13) – As we consider the aspects of Christian life, Paul addressed our obligation to be engaged in a spiritual work for the Lord. Consider:

A. The Exhortation (12a) – [Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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.](#) Paul refers to their obedience in the faith. The believers in Philippi had been consistent in the faith, while Paul was active among them, and even in his absence. As he mentioned their obedience to Christ, he revealed an exhortation to continue in the faith. He was pleased with their obedience thus far and encouraged them to press on as they had in the past.

- It is interesting that Paul begins this exhortation with the word “wherefore.” He is actually calling them back to his previous statements. He referred to the incarnation of Christ, humbling Himself in obedience to the Father’s will by offering Himself the atoning sacrifice for sin. He admonished the believer to possess the mind of Christ in regard to obedience. Here in verse 12, Paul takes them back to the great example of obedience found in Christ.

B. The Expectation (12b) – [Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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.](#) As they were obedient in the faith, they were expected to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Paul does not imply that one must work to obtain their salvation as some teach. This would be a direct contradiction of his teaching in [Ephesians 2:8-10](#). Neither does he imply that one must work in order to keep their salvation, although works present evidence of our salvation. When one considers the exact meaning of the phrase, it is easy to understand and accept. Paul speaks of *“carrying out until completion; putting forth the necessary effort and energy to finish a task.”* The

phrase was used in reference to properly solving a math problem, mining ore and minerals from a mine, or reaping the complete harvest once a field had been planted.

- Simply the change that has taken place on the inside through salvation will be manifested outwardly through our faithful obedience and service to Christ. [James 2:17-18 – Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.](#) ^[18] [Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.](#)

C. The Efficiency (13) – [For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.](#)

Paul knew the Philippians would question how such a thing were possible. Through mere human effort and ability, it is impossible. Thankfully we are not expected to serve Christ alone. As we work out our own salvation, revealing the great transformation in our lives, we do so as God works in us according to His divine will and good pleasure. We have the ability to efficiently serve the Lord because He provides the ability to do so.

- Honestly, that is a very humbling thought. In reality, all that we accomplish for the Lord is the result of His working in our lives according to His will and good pleasure. We have absolutely nothing to boast in of ourselves. If you are living in obedience to Christ, making a difference in the lives of others, praise the Lord for the ability He has provided for you to be effective!

II. A Social Walk (14-15a) – After speaking of our obligation to work, Paul dealt with the aspects of our walk. Notice:

A. The Restraint (14) – [Do all things without murmurings and disputings.](#) Having served the Lord for years, in a variety of environments, Paul knew the difficulties associated with serving the Lord publicly. Everyone would not receive their witness or embrace the faith. Some within the church would even question their true motives. It would be difficult to maintain a proper perspective, requiring restraint at times. Paul urged them to labor for the Lord and walk among men without murmuring or engaging in disputes. While all are tempted to engage in these activities at times, Paul knew such activity would mar their witness and hinder their work for Christ.

- I am sure you are aware that this requires much effort and dependence on the Spirit. It is within our nature to grumble and complain. We often want to lash out when someone wrongly accuses us or questions our motives. We must refrain from such in order to walk in a way that influences others and pleases the Lord.

B. The Reputation (15a) – *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation...* Paul knew there was more at stake than a moment of relief from frustration or brief satisfaction in rebuking one in confrontation. The believers in Philippi were reminded that they were to present themselves in a manner pleasing to the Lord, without rebuke, as they presented Him in the midst of a crooked and perverse people.

- The believers I love and admire are, more often than not, very soft spoken. They know the value of walking away, rather than being caught up in a fruitless argument. They value their testimony much more than the momentary satisfaction of being declared the victor in a fight. They live in such a way that generates respect, even from unbelievers. We need those will set the example for others to follow; those who live above reproach, bringing honor to the Lord and credibility to the church!

III. A Scriptural Witness (15b-16) – Here Paul speaks of the witness we are to present among the world, particularly among the unsaved. He reveals:

A. We are to Shine (15b) – *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.* The church was in the world, but not of the world. They lived among a crooked and perverse people, who walked in the darkness of sin. Those in darkness needed to see the light of Christ. The church was responsible to shine for Christ, being a light in the darkness of sin.

- We live in a dark world that grows darker with each passing day. Those who possess the Light of Christ are fewer than in years past. It is imperative that we too shine for Christ in the midst of darkness. The darker the world gets, the more noticeable our light will become. We need to shine for Jesus! If our light isn't shining for them, how will they see?

B. We are to Share (16a) – *Holding forth the word of life.* Shining for Christ in darkness was imperative, but that alone wasn't enough. They were also obligated to hold forth the word of life to those who had yet to be saved. They were expected to share the Gospel of Christ with unbelievers. Christ had given Himself the atonement for sin. He had risen triumphant from the grave, providing forgiveness from sin, reconciliation to God, and eternal life. These had heard and believed. Now they were obligated to share the Good News with others.

- We cannot, and must not assume that someone else will share the Gospel with those we know are unsaved. We too are obligated to share the truth of Christ with all we can. Paul doesn't

imply we are responsible for their reaction or reception to the Gospel, but we are obligated to share!

C. We are to Serve (16b) – [that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain](#). Paul reveals their faithful service to Christ will bring rejoicing when he stood before the Lord in judgment. He knew he would be accountable to God for the churches he served, and he didn't want his labor in Philippi to have been in vain. Their continued service would result in blessing for Paul and for them as well.

- This presents another humbling thought. I am aware of my accountability to God for this congregation. Your faithfulness to the Lord encourages me, knowing I will give account of the time I served as your pastor. If the church is unfruitful and lacking in zeal, I will answer for that as well. Our service to the Lord is individual, but it is never isolated. Our labor for the Lord impacts others much more than we know.

IV. A Substantial Willingness (17-18) – In our closing verses Paul discussed the believers' willingness to serve the Lord and shine for Him. Consider:

A. The Example (17) – [Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all](#). These were not mere talking points for Paul or an attempt to gain publicity or favor. He was genuinely committed to serving the Lord and sharing the Gospel, even if it endangered his life. He had come to the place in his spiritual walk with the Lord that he was willing to give his life for Christ. Paul had developed the mind of Christ.

- Even in our western culture, such a thought is difficult to embrace. One might say they are willing to die for the cause of Christ, but one doesn't know how they would respond until faced with such a situation. Paul knew that, and sought to prepare the church before they faced such a dire situation. We too must walk daily with the Lord, striving to grow in His grace, while leaning upon Him for strength and guidance. One thing is certain – if we are unwilling to walk with Him while there is little opposition, I doubt we would be willing to die for Him in persecution. Paul counted this joy. I want to possess the faith and commitment Paul had for the Lord.

B. The Enthusiasm (18) – [For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me](#). Paul knew the Philippian church was strong in the faith. They shared the commitment of Paul and were willing to stand boldly for Christ. There were mature believers in Philippi who counted it all joy in regard to serving the Lord. If need be, they too were willing to give their lives for the Gospel.

- The modern church needs to share this enthusiasm and faith. I fear we have come to the place that service to the Lord is more routine than desire. There is a tendency to separate, in a sense, from the body of Christ when many leave the church building. This facility is not the church; we are the church! Church is not a place we attend; it is who we are, a life we live! We too must be willing to count it all joy regarding our service to Christ. Regardless of what we face, if we are afforded an opportunity to share the Gospel, and witness for Christ, we are blessed.

Conclusion: The previous passage is one that generates great rejoicing in the hearts of many. I am convinced it is one of the greatest passage in Scripture, but many overlook the opening phrase – [Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus!](#) Our text today reveals what that actually looks like, and it is quite sobering. Do we possess the mind of Christ? Do our lives resemble the aspects of Christian life described in the text? If not they should. I will admit, I have room for much improvement. How about you? Do you sense a need to draw closer to the Lord while striving to obtain the mind of Christ? Do you know Him in a personal way as your Lord and Savior? Come to Christ for the needs in your life.