

Our Obligations in Christ

Philippians 2: 12-16

Today we celebrate Father's Day and seek to honor those men who have made an impact in our lives, particularly our dads. I can honestly say that being a father is one of the greatest joys in life. I am thankful for the children God has blessed our family with. My father passed away at a young age, and yet I have memories of his time here. As I consider Father's Day, I am also thankful for many men who invested in my life and helped guide me in the Lord. I am certain we all have someone we are thankful for today, whether it be our biological father or another who made an impact in our lives.

The text before us is fitting for the occasion, but it is not limited to fathers. In fact, this passage is relevant for all who seek to follow Christ and serve Him. Paul speaks of the obligations believers have as they walk with the Lord and strive to serve Him. I want to examine the [aspects](#) of Christian life Paul reveals as we consider: [Our Obligations in Christ](#).

I. A Spiritual Work (12-13) – As we examine the aspects of Christian life, Paul addresses 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. Here Paul recorded one of the greatest passages found in all of Scripture. 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.
- Every great father, and every great Christian for that matter, must be obedient to the faith, committed to the cause of Christ. One of the greatest things we can leave our children and future generations is an example of obedient faith 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. This statement has caused much debate and confusion over the years, but such confusion is unnecessary. 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. Dr. Rod Mattoon described it this way, “The life of the Christian is not a series of up's and down's, but in's and out's. God works *in us* and we work *out* what He has done within us.”ⁱ [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, much like you and I, 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. Our human nature likes to be praised and recognized for anything we accomplish or achieve. 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 deals 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. They would face false accusations and public confrontation. 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 men that 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 men who 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) – Finally 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. Remember, light shines the brightest when it is darkest. The darker the world gets,

the more noticeable our light will become. We need to shine for Jesus! There are many friends, neighbors, and family who need to see the Light and respond by faith in salvation. 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.

- This is an elementary truth, but it must be preached and taught today as well. 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. Most of you will not understand, but there is a great responsibility in ministry. 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. I want to be faithful to please the Lord and add some fruit to my pastor's account. I pray you do also.

Conclusion: This message was prepared with fathers in mind, but it has application for all. Are you working out your salvation before the Lord? Are you walking in a way that honors the Lord and bears witness of His saving grace? Are you a faithful witness of the Gospel? You must be saved in order to accomplish these things. If you are unsaved, respond to the call of Christ and be saved today. If you have received salvation and are lacking in your spiritual life, seek the Lord for guidance and help. Our salvation is the only thing we will be able to take with us at death, but we can leave some things behind. Let's endeavor to leave a legacy of faithfulness unto the Lord!

Mattoon's Treasures - Mattoon's Treasures – Treasures from Philippians.