

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

Philippians 2:14-30

Dr. Bruce Bickel

August 10, 2018

Bruce: Well, good morning, men!

Men: Good morning!

Bruce: Good to be with you again today, men. I'm sure you were glad to have Jeff with us last week. We are very fortunate to have him as part of our teaching cadre.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We're so very, very fortunate to have him with us. Don, do you want to set the tone for us, brother? (*Music*)

Dear sovereign and gracious Lord, what a privilege it is for us to sit at Your feet once again. We trust that Your Holy Spirit will be our Teacher, that You would remove the frustrations and consternations of this week and replace them with the vision of who You are in all of Your glory.

And Father, while we're always looking for answers in our human life, today we don't look for answers. We just look to see You. We want to see You in all of Your glory, Your majesty, Your dignity, Your honor, Your characteristics, Your nature. Father, just give us a vision of who You are. And the sooner we have a vision of who You are, the easier it will be for us to take care of our hurts and our pains. May it be so for Jesus' sake that You open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly for Christ's sake. And all the Brave Men said,

Men: Amen!

Bruce: Amen! I'm going to read our passage today, which is in Philippians 2. I'm going to start with verse 12, where we left off last week. I'm going to be reading from a new Bible I just received. The translation is by Holman Publishers. It's called the Christian Standard Version. And Bishop Rodgers and I were talking about it. It's somewhere in the middle, between the more word for word English Standard Version and the thought for thought NIV. It's somewhere in between. I'm not saying that I'm going to use this all the time. But I just got it this week. The thing I like about it is that all the teaching notes are from Charles Spurgeon. (*Laughter*) So I've got my Charles Spurgeon quotes right here today, and you're going to get some. (*Laughter*) I have all of his sermons. It's much easier just to go in and look at the verses, rather than pour into 65 sermon books I have with my lack of preparation. So I'm not sure that I'm going to use this all the time. But we'll give it a try and see how it goes. Let's listen to the word of the Lord.

Philippians chapter 2, beginning at verse 12. *“Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence, but even more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to His good purpose. Do everything without grumbling and arguing so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world, by*

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

holding firm to the word of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ, that I did not run or labor for nothing.

“But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial service of our faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. In the same way you should also be glad and rejoice with me.

“Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon,. So that I too may be encouraged by news about you. For I have no one else of like mind, who will generally care about our interests. All seek their own interests, but not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that he has proven his character, because he has served with me in the gospel ministry, like a son with a father. Therefore I hope to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. I am confident in the Lord that I myself will also come soon.

“But I considered it necessary to send you Epaphroditus my brother, coworker and fellow soldier, as well as your messenger and minister to my need, since he has been longing for all of you, and was distressed because you heard that he was sick. Indeed he was so sick that he nearly died. However God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. For this reason I am very eager to send him to you, that you may rejoice again when you see him, and that I may be less anxious. Therefore welcome him in the Lord with great joy. And hold people like him in honor, because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for what was lacking in your ministry to me.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Now last week we ended in verse 12, *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”* Now Paul is not at all suggesting that you work out your own salvation based upon your own terms, that you come up with your own methodology. He’s not saying that at all. What he is saying is this. You have received this salvation by grace. Now work at it. Work at it daily. Work it out in your own life. Express it any way you can.

What he is teaching us, friends, is that life in the Christian world is a life of activity, not inactivity. We need to work at our salvation. We need to work at expressing it. Do we live it out? Is it a testimony of grace? We need to work it out. It’s something you receive, not something you achieve. But we do have the responsibility to work at it after we receive God’s saving grace.

I think that working out my salvation with fear and trembling could be described as *giving myself to what God is doing in my life.* If you don’t know what God is doing in your life, you can’t pursue it. You can’t work at it. You need to know that.

One of the best things you can do every day, men, is to ask yourself this question. Lord, what are you doing in my life? And let me join that. I want to work at that. I want to work out my salvation with fear and trembling, with awe and honor for You, because I see what You’re doing in my life.

All the years that I drove down to PNC, going through the Fort Pitt Tunnels, as soon as I came out of the tunnel, the first thing I ever said was this. “Lord, show Me what You’re doing in my life, what You’re doing around me, so I can join it.” You see, that’s how you work out your salvation. It’s something where you’re very active. You don’t sit on your

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

butt and do nothing. You're working at it because of God's grace. Remember, He is the One who will work with you, because it's His will and work that causes us to do it in the first place.

The thing I like about Paul so much in his writing is that he'll give you a statement of doctrine. And then right after that, he gives you some application. Doctrine precedes practice.

Now notice chapter 2 verse 12. Here's your doctrine. "*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is working in you, both to will and to work according to His good purpose.*" Now that's the doctrine.

Now the application comes in the next verses, which is very interesting. He gives us a whole series of things that you and I can work on, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, with honor and grace for God.

And he uses the example of Christ. This section can be entitled, "Practical Outworking of Salvation." This is how we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Notice that he uses the example of Christ in verse 8. "*He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even to death on a cross.*"

What Paul is teaching us here in this passage is that we need to become more Christlike. And how do we do that? I think the one word that helps us to do that is the word *obedient*. That's why Paul uses the life of Christ as an example of us working out our salvation with fear and trembling. The key word is the word *obedience*. That's what Jesus is in verse 8. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient. Being obedient and working out your salvation with fear and trembling are the same thing. That's how we do it. That's how we give evidence of our salvation. So let's take a look at this in our passage today.

When you're looking at the book of Philippians, men, it's got four chapters, and we'll conclude this over the next several months. But in chapter 1 you have *the single mind*. In chapter 2 you have *the submissive mind*. In chapter 3 you have *the spiritual mind*. In chapter 4 you have *the secure mind*. Those are the four themes in the four chapters in the book of Philippians.

And Paul deals with your mind in four areas. You need to have a single mind, a single purpose. You'll see that in 1:21. "*To me to live is Christ.*" That's a single-mindedness.

Then you come to the submissive mind. You see that in chapter 2 verse 8.

Transcriber's Note: Philippians 2:8, NKJV. "*And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*"

Bruce: Christ was obedient. In future studies we'll look at the spiritual mind in chapter 3 and the secure mind in chapter 4. But where we are right now, Paul is speaking about being singly minded. He's also talking about a *single manner* in verse 27.

Transcriber's Note: Philippians 1:27, NKJV. "*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*"

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

Bruce: In 1:21, a single mind. In 1:27, you have a single manner. And then the single motive is in chapter 2, verses 12 and 13. So where we are so far is a single mind, a single manner and a single motive. A single mind is 1:21, a single manner is 1:27, and a single motive is chapter 2, verses 12 and 13.

So with that little review, let's continue on. Paul is now going to say this. Here is how you work out your salvation with fear and trembling. You do these things.

Notice verse 14. "*Do everything without grumbling and arguing.*" What he's saying is that you need to do this—work out your salvation with fear and trembling—with the right spirit and very high standards. You'll see that in verses 14-18.

What Paul is teaching us now in these verses, men, is this. It's not just what is done that matters, but the spirit in which we do it. We are free of murmuring and free of complaining.

No complaining, no griping and no blaming. That's what my dad told me a man was when I was twelve years old—no complaining, no blaming and no griping.

That's exactly what Paul is saying. Men, this is the evidence of how we work out our salvation, by not grumbling when things come down the road of life, by not complaining. We don't do that. We don't blame people. This is part of working out our salvation. Yes, please?

Participant: Was your dad a Christian?

Bruce: Absolutely. Yes, he was. All I ever wanted to do in my life was to be a dad like my dad was a dad. I was very, very fortunate and very, very, blessed.

Now we must set very high standards if the world is going to see how we operate in a morally wicked society. Now the society that Paul was referring to can be described for us in Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 5. "*They have dealt corruptly with Him. They are no longer His children because they are blemished. They are a crooked and twisted generation.*"

How you and I work out our salvation is important, because the generation in which we live is wicked and blemished; it's a twisted generation. So Paul says, "Here are some things you can do."

There are five things that he gives us to do to "*work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*" The first one is this: *without grumbling and murmuring.* In other words, without complaining. Work out your salvation in your daily life and your daily activity without complaining.

Now in the original text, verse 14, which we read as "*do everything without grumbling and arguing*", in the original the first phrase is "*all things.*" And a more literal translation would be this. "*All things practice doing without griping.*" All things practice doing without murmuring and griping and argumentation. In other words, everything in your life you work at. And we need to do it by not griping and complaining, without murmuring.

Paul is telling us that all the commands of God, all the dictates of God, must be obeyed cheerfully, in such a manner that the will of man does not rebel against the means by being discontented or griping.

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

Let me give you some cross references, verses to help us understand this point. We do things without griping. We do things without complaining. How about Exodus chapter 4, verses 1-13, Exodus chapter 16, verses 7-9. I trust that you'll look up these verses on your own time of devotion and your quiet time, to let the Lord teach you these things in greater depth.

Transcriber's Note: Exodus 4:1-13, ESV. *Then Moses answered, 'But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'"*

"The LORD said to him, 'What is that in your hand?'

"He said, 'A staff.'

"And He said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw it on the ground. And it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. But the LORD said to Moses, 'Put out your hand and catch it by the tail.' So he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand — 'that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.'

"Again the LORD said to him, 'Put your hand inside your cloak.' And he put his hand inside his cloak. And when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow.

"Then God said, 'Put your hand back inside your cloak.' So he put his hand back inside his cloak. And when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. 'If they will not believe you,' God said, 'or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. If they will not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. And the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.'

"But Moses said to the LORD, 'Oh my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and of tongue.'

"Then the LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go. And I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.'

"But he said, 'Oh my Lord, please send someone else.'"

Exodus 16:9, ESV. *"So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, 'At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt. And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because He has heard your grumbling against the LORD.'"*

Bruce: How about Numbers 17:5, John 6:41-43 and 1 Corinthians 10:10?

Transcriber's Note: Numbers 17:5, ESV. *"And the staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout. Thus I will make to cease from me the grumbings of the people of Israel which they grumble against you."*

John 6:41-43, NKJV. *"The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, 'I am the bread which came down from heaven.'*

"And they said, 'Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven?'"

"Jesus therefore answered and said to them, 'Do not murmur among yourselves.'"

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

1 Corinthians 10:10, NKJV. “*Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.*”

Bruce: Those are all verses that ratify and affirm the point of working out our salvation with fear and trembling, but not griping and complaining.

Now whenever there is a submissive mind, there is going to be sacrifice and service. And this was true of Christ. Look at verses 7 and 8. You see, in chapter 2 we’re talking about a submissive mind. And where does that submissive mind come from? It comes from obedience.

The single mind leads to the submissive mind. Chapter 1 leads to chapter 2. The single mind—“*to me to live is Christ*”—leads to the submissive mind of obedience in chapter 2.

Now Paul’s point is this. Christians must allow God to work in them. You can’t just work up humility. You can’t flip a switch and say, “Oh, today I think I’ll be humble; it’s Wednesday.” (*Laughter*) You see, humility has to come through the power of the Holy Spirit within us. God works in us because He works through us. God works in us before He works through us. And He uses His word, the Spirit and prayer as a means of working in us before He works through us.

So let’s take a look at some of these expressions of Christian living, how we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. There are five of them. These are examples of the single mind and the submissive mind combined. The single mind leads to the submissive mind. You can’t have the submissive mind of chapter 2 unless you work on the single mind of chapter 1. Let’s take a look at these activities we can do to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

First of all, *blameless and innocent*. That means that we’re above criticism. *Blameless* is the judgment of others. Blameless is how people would look at you. They would say, “Oh, he is blameless.” That’s one of the 28 qualifications of an elder, that they are blameless. How does the world see them? It sees them as blameless. They find no fault in them.

Innocent is how you view yourself. *Blameless* is how others view you or see you. *Innocent* means that you know you are innocent. That’s how you see yourself.

You and I have to work at that. Now for me to recognize that I’m innocent may mean that I’ll have to recognize my sin. One of the greatest gifts God can give us is the exposure of our sin, because what has Christ come to do? He has come to take away the sin of the world. One of the most powerful things that can happen to us is for God through His Holy Spirit and in His grace to expose sin in our lives so we can confess it, because “*he is faithful and just ... to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”

So there are two things. We need to work at being blameless for other people to see us, and not have anything against us, and to know in your own conscience and your own heart that you are innocent, because you’ve confessed your sin.

The second thing he says to work on is this. He tells us that *we are children of God*. Now that indicates a relationship. It means that you have a family likeness. You work at having the family likeness of being like Christ and Christlike in your obedience. It’s not only a privilege, but it’s a responsibility.

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

Now one becomes a child of God by regeneration, for a child of God is one begotten by God, born again by God.

But it doesn't end there. Regeneration leads to sanctification. That's what we work at. Those who by virtue of regeneration are children of God must endeavor to become children of God without fault or blame. We work at that through the power of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration leads to sanctification.

Let me read a little quote from Charles Spurgeon regarding this. *"The Holy Spirit in regeneration descends into a man and creates in him a new nature. He does not destroy that old nature. That remains still to be battled with and to be overcome. But the nature which the Spirit imparts is perfect in its kind and in its degree, yet it is not perfect in its development. God having first worked it in us, it becomes the business of the Christian to work out his salvation with fear and trembling."* Regeneration leads to sanctification, and we need to work at that.

Men, as you know, Christianity is not a life of inactivity. It's a life of activity and dedication. Take a look at John 1:12. *"But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave them the right to become the children of God."*

Do we take on family resemblance? The way you do that, men, is by working out your salvation with fear and trembling and working on these things, being blameless and innocent.

Next he says that the second thing to work on is to be *without blemish*. Now the words *without blemish* mean *thoroughly wholesome in character*.

Now this was a requirement of the sacrifices of the Old Testament at the altar. They had to be without blemish, a spotless lamb without blemish. It is also used of Christ Himself in a moral and spiritual sense. And that is our standard. We need to be without blemish. And we need to work at that. However the Lord is pleased to reveal those things that are marks on our souls and our character, we need to get rid of those things. We work at those things as an expression of our salvation.

I call your attention to Hebrews chapter 9 verse 14. *"How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."*

Christ is our model, men. He offered Himself without blemish to God. We need to purify our consciences from dead works so that we can serve the living God effectively.

Peter says the first thing in 1 Peter 1:19. *"But with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."*

If we're going to become Christlike, we need to be free of blemish. Yes, Brian?

Brian: Would you say that it's a good summation to say that the transformed life is the transformed want or desire to fight for obedience, not necessarily that it will be easy to have obedience? Rather than that, your mind says now that I will fight for obedience and submission in living out the Christlike life?

Bruce: Yes, chapter 1, the single mind. *"To me to live is Christ."* That's the summation. That leads you to the act of obedience, which is chapter 2, which is the submissive life. So absolutely. It's a fight, and that is what Paul is telling us. That's why

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

he uses the words “*work out*.” It’s an active word and we have to work at that. So that would be a good summation.

How about 1 Peter? “*But with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*” It looks like we’re getting rain on the ground. It’s raining in our souls, as we study.

Next Paul tells us that we need to work at *shining as lights*. We need to work at being a shining light. Literally, this means *light bearers*, indicating that Christ is the light that we’re to reflect, and that to other people. We reflect the life of Christ. We become Christlike through obedience. And we become light bearers, as Christ Himself is the light.

John the Baptist spoke about “*the Light that was coming into the world. He was not the Light, but came to bear witness to the Light. The true Light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world.*” That’s a reference to Christ.

We are light bearers. We need to work at that. In our Christlikeness, when we go to work, we need to be bearers of light, to bear the light of Christ.

How about John 8:12, when Jesus describes Himself this way. “*And Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’*” We are light bearers of the light of Christ. We become Christlike and we become the light bearer, to demonstrate His light in a crooked generation.

Then lastly this: *holding fast to the word of life*. Now the word *hold* here can be used in two ways—*hold onto*, or *hold out*, meaning that we’re to hold fast to the Word, the Scripture, but above all to offer it as the word of life for a perishing world. We hold onto it and we hold it out. We take it to the people of the world.

Look at John 6:68. Simon Peter said this. “*Lord, to whom shall we go?*”

Participant: Yeah, right.

Bruce: “*You have the words of eternal life.*” We hold onto that in our own lives, and we take it to the world.

Acts chapter 5 verse 20. “*Go and stand in the temple, and speak to the people of all the words of the Life.*” Life is capitalized; it’s about the words of Christ. It’s about the Person and work of Christ.

I had a friend call me the other day. And he said that he had this woman who lived next door to him in his complex listen to a sermon. It happened to be a sermon by Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Now that’s not the easiest thing to listen to for a nonbeliever, right? Or anybody, really. (*Laughter*) But she listened to it and said, “I’m very confused about Christianity.”

And I said, “My friend, don’t have her listen to sermons yet. Go to the book of John and find out who God is.”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Christianity is not about sermons. It’s not about people’s lives. It’s about the person and work of Christ. You need to show who Christ is. People don’t define Christianity; Jesus does. So let them read the book of John so you can see who Christ is. Let them see that Christ is God. She needs to understand that before she can listen to sermons.

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That's what it means to be a light bearer.

How about 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, a very good illustration of us being light bearers? *"For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing—to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance of life to life. Who is sufficient for such things?"*

Now men, we need to understand this: that Christianity has life and death consequences. Your being a light bearer has life and death consequences. To some people you're a turn-off. And some people you're going to turn on. You don't control that. We just need to make sure that we don't do something stupid or idiotic to turn people off. But some people are not going to respond to your being a light bearer. That's who they are. They cannot do that until God saves them, until God grants them regeneration, changes their hearts, opens their eyes, opens their hearts. They may just be turned off. That's a life and death consequence. Some people are going to be turned off by your light-bearing. But other people will be drawn to the cross of Christ.

It's very serious, men. We need to understand that this is not flippancy. This is very, very serious. There are life and death consequences to you and me being light bearers in a perverse and degenerate world, because some people are not going to respond and will reject it. It's a sign of their death. Other people will accept it and respond to it, and it will be a sign of their life.

Those are the five things that Paul tells us, men, that we can work on to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, daily activities that we need to work on. There are certainly other things and other Scriptures that are going to give us more. But in this context those are the five things. Paul says to do these things without grumbling and without complaining.

And the next thing he teaches us here is *to rejoice in spite of the unknown*. Now Paul is thinking of his life as a race. And he's working hard at it to the point of being weary. But with his spiritual vision fixed on the Lord, he looks forward to seeing Jesus face to face and having Jesus' appeal and approval. He rejoices in spite of the unknown.

That's difficult for us to do, to rejoice in spite of the unknown, and to do that without grumbling. Those are the things that Paul gives us very practically, how you can work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Then he talks in verses 19-30 about *his future plans*. In verses 17 and 18 the thought of death becomes possible in his mind because of his imprisonment. He thinks about his impending death. But he says that his death would be an offering to God.

Every day we get one step closer in God's grace to Him taking us home. Can you look forward to standing in front of Jesus, seeing Him as He really is? When He comes we will see Him as he really is, and who we really are. Paul is looking to the future and saying, "If my imprisonment takes my life, that's okay, because it will be an offering for the Lord, and I will see Jesus face to face." That's what gives us such confidence as we look to the unknown future.

And then lastly I want to conclude with a little section on *fellowship*, and what it means to be brothers in Christ.

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

Now Paul speaks about two of his fellow coworkers, Timothy and Epaphroditus. He talks about his plans for them and his hope for them being able to come again to Philippi. Paul speaks of these two men in deeply affectionate terms, and he gives glowing testimony about their character and their devoted self-service.

Now these are two good examples of what we just talked about, working out your salvation with fear and trembling, two good examples of good lifestyles that are very, very attractive. And we need to examine these for a moment.

Let's take a look at Timothy—verses 19-24. Paul called Timothy his own son in the faith because Paul had the privilege of leading him to Christ. You can read about that in Acts chapter 16, verses 1-5.

Transcriber's Note: Acts 16:1-5, ESV. *“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.*

“As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”

Bruce: Now like Paul, Timothy lived for other people, not for self. Now take a look at Philippians 2:21, and also look at Philippians 1:21. 2:21 says this. *“All seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.”* 1:21 says what? *“For me, to live is Christ.”*

Too many people in the world who call themselves Christians live according to 2:21 as opposed to 1:21. But what he says about Timothy is that he knew how to serve, and was willing to sacrifice for him.

It's interesting. If you study Timothy's life, you'll notice that Paul did not call him into ministry right away. He let him stay at home and improve and grow for five or six years. There's a good point there. Timothy had a good testimony of service at home before Paul added him to his own team.

Men, we need to make sure that we have a good testimony in our own homes before we get involved in the Lord's service outside of the home in ministry to the lost. That's part of our validation. Paul did not grab him right away because he was converted, as we often do ourselves. I think it's important that we realize that Paul is teaching us the principle that it's dangerous to give new Christians important tasks right away. They need to mature, they need to grow, and they need to experience a little bit of grace.

I want to give you an illustration. It's going to be rather crass. Several years ago I worked with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. I was the vice-president of ministry, and we had these summer conferences all over the place.

We were in California once, and we had this all-pro football player. Somebody said that he was a Christian. He was coming to the conference, and we needed to let him give his testimony.

I was very skeptical, because I said that I didn't know anything about him. Just because he's an all-pro defensive end doesn't mean that he's got a testimony. Just because he genuflects after he intercepts a pass doesn't mean he's a Christian.

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

They said, “Oh, he’s a good man. He’ll give a good testimony.”

So we brought him up to the stage and introduced him with all of his athletic prowess, accolades and awards. And the first thing was that when he got up they began to clap a little bit. And the first thing he said when he got up to the microphone was “Jesus Christ!” And the group stood up and cheered.

I thought that was just offensive! It’s offensive. He mentioned the word Jesus and people clapped. The kids clapped. They thought, *Oh, he’s a Christian because he said, “Jesus Christ.”* After that, I put down some really strong restrictions about who would be on our podium to give testimonies for Christ. We had to know their lifestyle—what they did at home! Let’s examine their home life. Are they good at work? Are they good with their team? What kind of a testimony do they have in the locker room? Those are the people who we want to have to talk to our kids, not somebody who just boldly stands up and says “Jesus Christ,” and expects applause.

Paul teaches a great principle here. You can’t give young Christians new responsibilities without some growth. That’s the responsibility we have—to train them and teach them, to help them grow in grace.

Now Paul tells us this. Paul’s first desire for Timothy was that he might be cheered by the news of the Philippian Christians, that what he would hear from Timothy would cheer Paul up.

Paul also had a view of ministry for Timothy and what he might do down the road for the church at Philippi.

Notice how Paul says this in verse 18. He says, *“I hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.”* And how frequently he uses this phrase! It’s very similar to *“in Christ.”* You’ve heard me tell you this, that Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” 127 times in the New Testament to describe a person who has a saving relationship to God the Father through God the Son. He’s referring to our union with Christ when he says, *“I hope in the Lord Jesus Christ,”* talking about our union with Christ.

Paul summarizes this by saying, “I have no one quite like Timothy, who has such a genuine interest and spiritual concern for the Philippian Christians.” Men, when we take people on to the work of the Lord, we have to let them have some degree of maturity. Just because they give a testimony does not necessarily mean that they are yet qualified to be workers in the field.

How about the example of Epaphroditus? A couple things I observe about the life of Epaphroditus would be these. He was a *balanced* Christian—verse 25. He was a *burdened* Christian in verses 26-27. And he was a *blessed* Christian in verses 28-29.

Take a look at the life of Epaphroditus. He was a balanced Christian—verse 25. Paul says that he was a brother, which means that he knew the fellowship of the gospel. He had a union with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and therefore he had a fellowship in the gospel work. He was a companion in labor, which tied him to the furtherance of the gospel message. He also said that he was *“a fellow soldier”*, which means that he knew how to battle for the faith of the gospel. He was a balanced Christian. He knew the fellowship and he knew how to fight. He was a battler. He was a soldier. There was very good balance in his life.

Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 8

In the next couple of verses we see that he was a burdened Christian. He had a submissive mind that we've been talking about in chapter 2, and he thought of others, not self. And even though he was sick and almost died, his burden was for Paul and the church back in Philippi, not himself. He was a burdened Christian, meaning that he was carrying a lot because of his illness, because of his sickness. It's difficult to serve Christ when you don't feel well. But Epaphroditus was a battler, he was a fighter, he was a soldier. He was not only a balanced Christian man, but he was a burdened Christian man who fought for the cause of Christ in spite of his burdens.

Lastly, I think that he was a blessed Christian man—verses 28-30. When you read that, what a blessing Epaphroditus was to Paul! How he must have really encouraged Paul in those difficult days as they prayed and labored together for the cause of Christ!

He was also a blessing to his own church because he made it possible for the Philippians to share Paul's important ministry.

I think that Epaphroditus is a blessing to us today, because what are we doing here in the year 2018? We're talking about him. I think he is a blessed man, because he is an example of what it means to be a single-minded believer and a submissive-minded believer. We are studying his character and benefiting from his life and ministry. He was not only a balanced Christian, a burdened Christian man, but he was also a blessed Christian man.

I don't know about you, brothers, but sometimes it's very, very difficult to exercise the submissive mind that Paul is teaching us in chapter 2—the mind of Christ--because walking by sight as we do,--we walk by sight in our humanness,--we think that to humble ourselves means that we're going to lose. Yet the Scripture teaches us that the only way up is down.

Christ had a submissive mind—chapter 2—and God exalted Him greatly. Timothy and Epaphroditus also had submissive minds. And they were honored for their sacrifice and their service.

To summarize these verses, men, I would say this. The best way to get the victory over people and pride is through the submissive mind, the mind of Christ. And we receive this mind only as we allow the Spirit and the Word to work in our lives.

“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to His good purpose.” May God give us the grace to have the submissive mind of Christ and become more Christlike for His glory.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for these examples of a submissive mind, the primary example being the Lord Jesus Himself. Father, help us understand that if we're going to be seriously concerned about becoming Christlike, we're going to have to be more concerned about becoming obedient, because that is the quality that is exhibited in the submissive mind of Christ. It was His submission, His obedience. May it be so that we will become like that, that we'll become light bearers to a dark and perverse generation, for the glory of God. And all God's children said,

Men: Amen! (*Applause*)