

Place: Lurgan Baptist 11:1:2015

Reading: Philippians 2:12-18

## THE JOURNEY TO JOY

### 8. FLESHING OUT YOUR FAITH

Did you know that many people reading their Bibles today are doing so with the aid of bifocals ? Inventor ? Benjamin Franklin, age 79. Did you know that the presses that printed these pages were powered by electricity ? One of the first harnessers ? Benjamin Franklin, age 40. Did you know that some are reading this wonderful Bible on the campus of one of the Ivy League Universities in America. Founder ? Benjamin Franklin, age 45. Did you know that others are reading it in a library. Who founded the first library in America ? Benjamin Franklin, age 31. Who started the first fire department in U.S.A. and designed a heating stove still in use today ? Benjamin Franklin. He was an economist, philosopher, diplomat, publisher, linguist, he spoke and wrote five languages. All this until the age of 84. **And he had exactly two years of formal schooling.**

Isn't that great ? Incredible ? Inspiring ? Yes. But it can be a bit disconcerting, too, as Mark Twain once quipped, "*Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.*" But don't good examples help us work harder and reach higher ? Yes ? But they do have this one problem. Good examples have no power to enable us to achieve the same

personal accomplishments. *Benjamin Franklin's successes may inspire us, but they cannot empower us.* There's nothing in them to make us the inventor he was. Now if this is true, why then, did Paul exhort us to follow Christ's example ? ( 2:5 ) Why did Paul say "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*" If such a goal is impossible, doesn't that set us up for failure ? Well, the problem is not really that difficult. Paul is not asking us to "*reach for the stars,*" rather he is setting us before us the *divine pattern for humility,* and the *divine power to accomplish* what God has commanded. "*For it is God which worketh in you.*" ( 2:13 ) My .... the Christian life is not a series of ups and downs. It is rather a process of "**ins and outs.**" God works in and we work out. Indeed as Paul moves here from doctrine to practice, he lays before us three precepts. Paul says,

#### (1) WORK OUT: THAT'S OUR GROWTH

Immediately, we think about "*working out,*" we think of training, athletics, and sport. Of course the key to being fit is discipline. This is the burden that is on Paul's heart as he continues his letter to these believers at Philippi. He is going to hold them responsible to discipline their own moral character until it falls in line with the mind of Christ which he has so fervently described in these verses. Linking this passage to what has gone before Paul says, "*Wherefore .... of his good pleasure.*" ( 2:13 )

Now Paul is not advocating a gospel of works here. The text does not say, "*Work for your salvation,*" or

" *Work toward your salvation,*" or " *work at your salvation.*" It says, " *Work out your salvation,*" and no-one can work it out unless God has already worked it in. Paul is writing to people here who are already saints ( 1:1 ) and he is referring to that aspect of salvation which we call sanctification, learning to live a life that is pleasing to God. The words " *work out,*" is a Greek word ( *katergazomai*) that speaks of our responsibility. This word would be used, for instance, in speaking of a student working out a problem in arithmetic. He carries the problem through the various stages of its solution to its proper conclusion. So this word " *work out,*" carries the meaning of " *work to full completion,*" and in Paul's day it was used for

*working a mine.*" My .... we could liken salvation to the gift of a gold mine.

If someone were to give you a gold mine of incalculable worth, you would have a great treasure, but the gold would not do you any practically good, unless you worked it out of the mine. My .... we have entered into a salvation that is a mine that is full of gold and it ours to enjoy and experience. On 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1947 police received a phone tip that a man had died inside a boarded up house. Unable to get in through the front door, they entered the house through a second story window. Inside they found the corpse of Homer Collyer on a bed clutching the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1920 issue of the Jewish Morning Journal, even though he had been blind for years.

Homer and Langley Collyer were sons of a respected New York Doctor. Both had earned college degrees.

When Dr. Collyer had died, his two sons inherited the family home and estate. The two sons, both bachelors were left financially secure, but they lived in total seclusion. They boarded up the windows of their house, and padlocked the doors. When police broke in that day they found the house full of broken machinery, appliances, folding chairs, instruments, rags, assorted odds and ends and bundles of old newspapers. An enormous mountain of debris blocked the front door. And Langley Collyer's body was found buried beneath a pile of rubbish some 6 feet away from where Homer had died.

The garbage eventually removed from the house totalled more than 140 tons. The Collyer's had an inheritance that was more than sufficient for their needs, but they lived their lives in self- imposed poverty. My .... are you like that ? Are you spiritually rich, yet living as a spiritual pauper ? We've been given a personal title deed to a heavenly mine, but many of us are not working it out. We're not enjoying or experiencing all the wealth that our salvation has given us. The growth, development, maturity, is not there. Paul says, " *You are in Christ, be like Christ.*" Flesh out your own faith. " *Work out your own salvation.*" Now notice we are to work it out,

**(a) PERSONALLY:**

Did you notice how Paul describes it ? " *Your own salvation.*" ( 2:12 ) My .... responsibility for your spiritual progress is entrusted to you. It's very sad that the spiritual progress of many believers is dependent

on the presence and proximity of a pastor or elder. ( 2:12 ) Paul says " *Whether I am there or not work out your own salvation,*" for God has an individual plan for your life. ( Eph 2:10 ) Cindy did not seem very happy when she arrived home from college to spend the holidays with her family. Her parents noticed her unusual behaviour but were wise enough to wait until she was ready to share the problem with them. It happened after dinner. " *Mother, Dad, I have something to tell you and I am afraid it's going to hurt you.*" " *Just tell us what's on your heart,*" said her father, " *and we'll understand We want to pray with you about it, whatever it is.*" " *Well, you know that all during high school I talked about becoming a nurse, mainly because Mum is a nurse and I guess you expected me to follow in her footsteps. But I can't go on. The Lord does not want me to be a nurse.*"

Her mother smiled and took Cindy's hand, " *Dear your father and I want God's will for your life. If you do anything else we'll all be happy.*" Cindy had done the courageous thing, she had faced God's will and decided that she wanted to " *work out her own salvation,*" her own Christian life and not what someone else wanted her to do. (a)

**(b) REVERENTLY:**

" *With fear and trembling,*" ( 2:12 ) Now it's not "*fear and trembling,*" lest we lose our salvation for that can never happen. ( Jn 10:28 ) Rather, this is a godly fear, a dread of offending God. The word "*fear;*" is **phobos**, which is our word for phobia. The word " *trembling,*"

is **tromos**, which is our word for tremor. The words speak of reverence and a passion to please. My .... there is very little fear of God before our eyes these days. Ever as believers we have lost sight of God. No longer does His Holiness overwhelm us, no longer does His Majesty awe us, no longer does His Greatness inspire us. My .... sacred things are treated with an unholy recklessness. How we need to hear the ancient call, "*Fear the Lord all ye His saints,*" (Ps 34:9) and to catch the strain of the heavenly song, "*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts.*" ( Is 6:3 ) Preston Taylor gave this definition, "**Don't treat the sacred as though it were a slapstick comedy.**" Is that not where we have come to ? So little reverence for God, before the meeting, after the meeting, and sometimes during the meeting.

A young Christian girl was out with one night with her unsaved friends. They were trying to entice her to the disco and the dance and she was rightly refusing. They said to her, "*Are you afraid that if you go your father would hurt you.*" " *No,*" she said, "*I'm afraid that if I went I would hurt my father*" My .... do you have a holy fear of God ? Do you abstain from everything that displeases Him ? Do you do everything that pleases Him ? (a) (b)

**(c) CONFIDENTLY:**

" *For it is God .....*" ( 2:13 ) Now if in ( 2:12 ) we have **Human Responsibility** in ( 2:13 ) we have **Divine Resources**. Do you see that word " *will,*" it means " *desire,*" Paul is telling us that God works in us to

give us a desire to do His will. There are two great needs in every Christian life. There is the desire to do God's will and the ability or power to do His will. Paul tells us that God not only creates the desire He provides the ability. *Both the desire and the deed belong to God. Both the prompting and the performing belong to God.* Paul expressed that thought to the Corinthian believers, "*I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*" (1 Cor 15:10) Kenneth Wuest translates this like this, "*For God is the One who is constantly putting forth His power in you.*" How does God do it? Through His Holy Spirit who indwells us, fills us, anoints us and leads us into all truth. ( Jn 14:16-17 Acts 1:8 ) My .... before we can ever work for God, God must work in us. Sure, the Lord wants to work with us, by us, for us and through us. But, before God can do that, He must first work in us.

My .... God must work in us before He can work through us. God took forty years to bring Moses to the place where He could use Him to lead the people of Israel. As Moses tended sheep during those forty years, God was working in Him so that one day He might work through Him. Do you realise that ***God is more interested in the workman than in the work ? Who am I is more important than what I do.*** If the workman is what he ought to be then the work will be what it ought to be. Has God been working in you to make it right with your fellow-believer ? Then "*work it out,*" Has God been working in you to speak to that unsaved friend ? Then "*work it out,*" Has God been working in you to have a sweeter temper, a bolder

testimony, a cleaner life, and a deeper walk ? Then will you "*work it out ?*" (1)

## (2) WALK LIKE: THAT'S OUR GRACE

Do you recall that of our Lord Jesus Christ it was said, "*He was full of grace and truth.*" ( Jn 1:14 ) And we are to be like Him. That's why Paul in ( 2:14-15 ) underscores the quality of life that marks the child of God. Did you notice that he touches here on three spheres ? Paul touches on,

### (a) ***THE OUTWARD SPHERE:***

David Jeremiah tells of Daniel Webster the American senator and statesman that when he wanted to give a person the impression that he remembered him when he could not recall his name or where they had met before, he used a simple device. He would simply ask, "***How's the old complaint ?***" Nine times out of ten the technique worked. The person would begin to unfold some grievance that he had discussed with Mr. Webster on a former occasion, and sooner or later he would identify himself. Webster's technique should never work with Christians. They are to do all things without "*murmurings and disputings.*" Paul knew that before the Christians in Philippi could make an impact on their city, they had to straighten out the problems in their own assembly.

They could not be grumbling and complaining among themselves and at the same time be attracting people to Christ. Now do you realize that ? I wonder is your son

still unsaved and your daughter still unreached and its down to your " *murmuring spirit* ?" The word " *murmurings*," describes the low mutter of discontent. It describes someone who is never satisfied and is always complaining. Do you know someone like that ? " *Disputing*," means complaining and arguing with others, stirring up doubt and suspicions. My .... the children of Israel almost drove Moses to distraction with their murmuring in the wilderness. They did nothing but criticise and complain. They murmured against the food God fed them with ( Num 11:4 ) Against the leadership God placed over them ( Num 12:1-3 ) They murmured against the land God promised them ( Num 13:1-3 ) Against the way God led them ( Num 11:1-3 ) they were a multitude of murmurers.

Do you know the kind ? Those who are always grumbling and complaining ? *Those who form the devils playground in which he dances with delight over the strife and division which they cause* ? A certain man met his death. In conducting his funeral the preacher carried away with his own oratory, waxed eloquent in praising the deceased. He went on and on and on. At last the widow whispered to her son sitting beside her, " *Step up there and see if that is your father in that coffin.*" A man known for his constant complaining, inherited a large sum of money. When he got it, he complained about how it was not as much as he thought it should be. He bought a farm and asked his wife what she thought they should name it. She replied, " *Why don't you call it Belly Acres.*" My .... are you a belly acher ? Always murmuring about

something ? (a)

**(b) THE INWARD SPHERE:**

Paul uses two interesting words in ( 2:15 ) The word " *blameless*," means " *without reproach*," the same word is used to describe Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were chosen by God in their advancing years to be the parents of John the Baptist. ( Lk 1:6 ) The word " *harmless*," speaks of which is pure. The word means

*unmixed*," it was used to speak of metal without alloy, it was used to speak of wine without water. It speaks of the real thing, that which is genuine. Robert Ingersoll, an infidel notorious for his attacks on the Bible, had a godly aunt. He once sent her a copy of one of his books against the Bible. In the flyleaf he wrote the words, "*If all Christians had lived like Aunt Sarah perhaps this book would never have been written.*"

My .... in a world that is totally perverted are you living a life of simple goodness ? (a) (b) But in:

**(c) THE GODWARD SPHERE:**

Do you see that phrase " *without rebuke*," Do you know what it means ? It means " *to be without blemish.*" An unblemished life in a world of sin and shame. Why that was God's purpose for us when He chose us before the foundation of the world ? That *we should be holy and without blame before Him.* " ( Eph 1:4 ) Moreover does this not describes what God in the end will accomplish with the church when it will be presented to Himself " *a glorious church not having spot.*" ( Eph 5:27 ) Time and again I meet with

believers who tell me that they are nearly perfect. My .... we will never reach perfection this side of glory, but we are to strive for it. ( 3:12 ) We are to seek to walk like the Lord Jesus and that means a life of joyfulness, goodness and spotlessness. (2) But there's something else. (1) (2)

### **(3) WITNESS FOR: THAT'S OUR GOAL**

I mean what is God's objective for us as we live in a world that is crooked ( bent) and perverse ? Distorted and twisted. Well, Paul says we are,

#### **(a) TO SHINE:**

We are living in a dark world. All around us are people whose lives are bent and warped by sin and God has set us in this dark world as lamps. One night off the Florida coastline a terrible gale was blowing. The violence of the wind was so terrific that it drove in the glass of one of the sides of the lantern of the lighthouse set to guard that part of the rocky shore. The keeper of the lighthouse had no other glass to cover the gap and shield the lamp and so doing his best he put in a sheet of tin. In the storm that evening a harassed ship was being tossed to and fro, trying to find harbour, and not finding a light that he knew should be there, the captain of the ship got confused, and ran his vessel onto the rocks, where the ship and all the crew were lost. Why ? Because the lighthouse had one dark part.

In ( Lk 11:36 ) the Lord Jesus says, " *having no part dark,*" for oh, the damage, even the shipwreck we may

cause to another life, if by some wretched inconsistency, some slack behaviour, some " *part dark,*" obscuring the light, we bring loss to others. My .... is that home dark where you live ? Then shine the light ? Is that office, that factory dark where you work ? Then shine the light ? The light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. My (a) But that's not all. For we are,

#### **(b) TO SERVE:**

" *Holding forth the Word of life ....,*" ( 2:16 ) You see, we are not only to witness by our walk, but by our talk. Do you know what " *holding forth,*" means ? Labour to the point of exhaustion. My .... if this message is life-giving is it not worth giving our lives for ? I tell you from the moment Paul met the Risen Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road he renounced all for Christ. He was ready to go anywhere, to do anything, to pay any price if it meant the honour of Christ's name and the extension of Christ's kingdom. Paul's motto was " *All for Christ, and Christ for all.*" My .... is this how you're serving the Lord ? I mean so often we simply give the Lord the leftovers. The leftovers off our time, energy, talents, money, after we spent most of it on ourselves. But not Paul, for he had grasp that Gods goal for him was (a) (b)

#### **(c) TO SACRIFICE:**

For he says " *yea, and if be offered .... all.*" ( 2:17 ) In Old Testament times, when a person brought an animal sacrifice to God, he also brought wine to be

poured out as an accompanying libation. Paul saw his converts at Philippi as consecrated believers who had presented themselves to God as a living sacrifice. As a holocaust to God, they were being consumed on the altar of sacrifice and service. ( Num 15:4-12 ) And upon that burnt offering, Paul was pouring out, as a libation, the wine of his own life blood, which he anticipated would flow in martyrdom. What a man. A man who does not live for time, but eternity. A man who had his eye on the rapture ( the day of Christ) and the rewards at the beam judgement seat. I wonder is your eye on that day ? That day, Christian when you will stand at the judgement seat of Christ ?

The late Mr. Vaughan who had the privilege of teaching young pastors and preachers used to say to them in his last lecture to them, " *Gentlemen, whatever else you are and do make sure that you so order your life and ministry that when you get up yonder there shall many a one who shall take you by the hand and lead you to the throne and say, `Lord in Thy power this man brought me here.'*"

*Must I go .... and empty-handed ?  
Thus my dear Redeemer meet ?  
Not one day of service give Him,  
Lay no trophy at His feet*

Fleshing out your Faith. (1) (2) (3) Jonathan Edwards, who lived in the early 1700's was one of the key figures in the intellectual history of New England. He was converted at the age of seventeen and died from the effects of a smallpox injection at the young age of

fifty-five. More than most of his contemporaries, Jonathan Edwards believed that salvation and sanctification were wholly of God, but he also understood his own responsibility. He used to make resolutions. One of them was this " **Resolved, never to do anything which I would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.**" Did you get it ? " **Resolved never to do anything which I would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.**" Like Paul, he lived a godly life with his eyes on the future. Will you do that ?