

Christ like Examples.
Philippians 2:16

Colossians 3:12-25

1 Corinthians 2: 6-16

congregational 1John 5:1-5, 9-13

So I want to start out today by reading starting in verse 12, and going to 18 for now. We are going to be taking a look at a rather big chunk today because as we will see the last half of chapter 2 changes in tone and becomes more personal. So let us first read from verse 12-18.

So this is the 2nd book that we are going through that was written by the Apostle Paul, and we see a lot of similarities to the letter he wrote to the Galatians. While the book of Galatians was more of a letter of warning and instruction for them to combat against the false teachers who was among them, this book written to the Philippians is of encouragement and exhortation to strive together for the gospel.

But one thing that I think is cool about Paul and his letters is that they are always very practical in nature. Paul speaks of biblical truths that are very in depth, complicated, and he interweaves all of scripture together in this tapestry of words always pointing to the grace and glory of God, and Christ. Yet, despite the depth, and the fact that one can spend an entire lifetime studying his letters and still yet learn more about our Lord, , Paul does write in a way that is very practical and easy to understand for his readers.

Throughout his letters he is always chiefly pointing to doctrinal truths, and one of his central focus's is that of right doctrine. What it means to believe in God, and how important it is to have our belief built upon the word of God. Also Paul is always very focused on the grace of God, and the faith that was given to us as a free gift from the father so that we may believe. but not only that, in his writings through his example we see what being a Christian is all about, what it looks like, how we should act toward each other and the world. We saw these themes I guess you could call them all throughout Galatians and we see it here all throughout Philippians.

As I said each week I feel like I am up here saying a lot of the same things, and in reality that is true because what we keep seeing as we work through each of these books week after week is nothing more then the central core of the Christian faith shining through. We are instructed about correct doctrine, about God's love, and grace, Christs sacrifice, our adoption, and how that plays out in our lives. Everywhere we have been these have been the focus, and Philippians is really no different.

Last week we went through verses 12-18, so we won't spend a lot of time, but I just want to revisit a bit and maybe pull out a few things that we might have overlooked last week, and as always it serves as a quick reminder of last week so we can get the full context of what we are looking at this week.

So last week, we went into what Paul means by working out your salvation in fear and trembling. If you remember Paul is not saying here that we should live in fear of God's judgment if we don't live up to some standard setup by the church, or other Christians, or even ourselves. Like with the Catholic faith having much of their belief being based around the escape of judgment, or lessening God's judgment upon you by doing certain things. That is not what Paul is talking about here, he is talking about having a proper respect, and reverence toward God. Understanding who God is, and who we are in relation to him.

One thing I want to draw out here that we didn't talk about last week, is the working out of salvation. Paul says, not only as when he was with them, but also now that he is absent from them. We all know there is 2 kinds of obedience, we see it in our children, and we see it with our coworkers, and we see it while we are driving down the road. There is true obedience that obeys and does as commanded, or what is expected even when no one is watching, then there is the obedience that only obeys when they are being watched.

Much of the obedience we see in the world is that which only abides by the rules when they are being watched. You don't have to drive very far down the road until you see people breaking the law, but as soon as someone sees a police officer near by, they all of a sudden become the most obedient best driver around. Or we all have those coworkers who appear to the bosses to be great hard workers, but to the rest of us we see how they do the bare minimum, or cut corners and are not truly working as they should.

We also see this type of obedience when it comes to Christian's in their relationship to the church. People who attend on service on Sunday, who seem pious, and religious, but Monday-Saturday are no different than the world. Only appearing to be Christian when the pastor, and other Christians are watching. Paul instructs the Christians in Philippi to not be this type of believer, not to obey only when he is with them, but also when he is absent. True faith and obedience to Christ doesn't happen only on Sundays, but every single day. This becomes important when persecution and trials arrive. They are tests of faith, proving out if what we claim, is actually what we believe. When trials, hardship and temptations arise how we react when our faith is tested is not only seen by others, it proves out our faith. These things tend to separate those who have a true obedience to Christ, and those who only obey when they think someone is watching.

In Colossians Paul is talking about family relationships. We read it this morning, chapter 3, 12-25. We like to joke and make light of verse 18 here, where he says Wives to submit yourself to your husbands, and there is much arguing and fighting over what Paul means by submission, and there have been many poor abused wives, and families because of it being completely misunderstanding and not seeing the bigger picture. The key really is in the verses leading up to this verse, and the verses afterward. And not just this verse about submissive wives, but it is the key to the whole family dynamic. Real quickly, Verse 14, "put on love" verse 15 "let the peace of God rule in your hearts" verse 16, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" verse 17 "let whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him"

Then we see in the following verses what this looks like, if you put on love, if the peace of God rules in your heart, if the wisdom of God's word dwells in you, and your actions follow that of your words, then we get a better understanding of what Paul says here. "Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord, Husbands love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children obey your parents in all things for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." Once again what we really are seeing here is nothing more than God's love working through each member of the family unit, preferring one another over themselves just as Paul tells the Philippians to do.

But he doesn't stop there, and he continues on and this is really the reason why I wanted to come here. Verse 22, "Bond servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with

eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.” We see Paul here talking about proper obedience, he tells even the bond servants to do that which their masters command of them not only when they are around, but always. So we can see here this practicality in Paul's writing, while he maybe writing about family structure and relationships, he includes instruction to bond servants as well. Each and every one of us can take this teaching here, and apply it to our own lives and it gives a picture and shows instruction once again of how a Christian's life will look in the family structure as well toward our employers.

So what we see in verses 12-17 in Colossians, is instruction, in verse 18-23 we see how it plays out in our lives, and in 24 and 25 we see the reason for it. Verse 23, Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, why? Because we know that from the Lord we will receive the reward of the inheritance for we serve Christ, not man. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.”

So with this in mind, let us go back to Philippians 2, verse 12” Therefor 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.” Why? Well because in verse 13, “ it is God who works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure.” This ties right into the end of Colossians 3, Do all things as to the Lord, and not to men because we serve Him, for his good pleasure and glory.

And this continues right into verse 14, “ Do all things without complaining and disputing.” We look at the examples Paul gives in Colossians, wives submit, husbands love, children obey, bond-servants obey, and we are to do all this without complaining and disputing so that in all these things you may be found blameless, and harmless children of God. This faith is a life changing faith, it goes against our very nature, calls us to be that which we can not, causes us to do that which we can not on our own, making us rely constantly on our Lord and savior to be that which we are to be.

The biggest effect of living out this faith in truth and in love acts is that it acts as a light to this world. God has called his people to be a light to this world, to shine in the darkness, and to stand as a witness to him. If we have the type of obedience that only obeys when we think we are being watched we are seen as being deceitful, hypocrites, this is not the type of obedience that shines as light into a dark world. Just think of the examples again in Colossians, how weird it looks to the world for wives to be submissive to their husbands, infact the world tells us this is abuse, and no one should be submissive to anyone, ever. Or we see that husbands are to show love toward their wife and not be drawn into lusting after others as the world does, or the instruction for children to obey and to not be rebellious. And while we may not have bond servants today, the same applies in the workforce. Even how we work at our jobs can shine a light into this dark and rebellious world. This is all true faith working in the lives of God's people, while it may make us look weird to the world, we stand as a light and a witness to the love of God who shines and works through us.

Paul tells the Philippians in verse 16, “hold 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. 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. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”

This word of life, is the gospel. It is the very message that brings life to the dead soul. Paul is reminding us that this is central and core to everything that we are. He tell us to hold fast to it, to believe it, to guard it, to defend it and to keep it the main thing. Paul even says here that because of the gospel, because of this word of life he is even rejoicing in the possibility of his own death. This shows Paul's love for the brethren, that he is not only willing, but rejoicing in the opportunity to die for their sake, and he implores them to be of the same mind, likewise rejoicing with him in the word of life, even if it means persecution and death.

So starting here in the passages we are going to be focusing on today, in verse 19 Paul shifts his focus away from instructing, and goes into an introduction of Timothy, and Epaphroditus. This letter becomes very personal, and we see a glimpse of Paul and his love and concern for the brethren. So let us read here verse 19 to the end of the chapter. Once again we can see here this example that Paul sets forth for us to follow. We see in chapter 1, verse 8 how he cares and loves the brethren. "For God is my witness how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ." Then we see how he prays for them in verse 9 "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment."

In verse 12 and 13 he stands as an example of how a Christ centered life, and faith is a light to the world during trials and persecution. "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ."

We see in verse 19-20 that no matter what happens his life is centered on Christ. "For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" In verse 23-24 we see that Paul is selfless "For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And lastly in 2:17-18 we see that he is even happy to die as a sacrifice for the benefit of the Philippians church.

This is all important, because he turns and says, that he is sending Timothy to them, and he says that he and Timothy are like-minded. So having this picture of Paul, of who he is, gives us a picture also of Timothy. I find the next few verses here interesting, He says that Timothy is like him, and he is sending him because there is no one else like minded who will sincerely care for them. For all seek their own will, not the things which are of Christ. This is interesting because it alludes back to what Paul writes in his letter telling the Philippians to be of one mind striving for the gospel and here he is saying that Timothy is an example of that.

Verse 22 "But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me." Timothy was with Paul when he first went to Philippi, so they would know him. But I think more importantly Paul wants to send Timothy because as he says he is the only one like minded, Paul is confident that since he is unable to go himself, that Timothy will be a good alternative.

But Timothy is not the only one that Paul mentions and sends back to them. There is also Epaphroditus. Verse 25. "Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother, fellow

worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to me need, since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death, but God had mercy on him, and not only him but on my also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefor I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.”

It is likely that Paul is sending him back to Philippi with this letter so that they may have an updated report on how things are going with him. We see that Epaphroditus had become very sick, and word had gotten back to the church at Philippi and Paul was eager to send him back so that they may rejoice upon his return and so that Paul may no longer be saddened knowing of their concern for him.

Because this last half of the 2nd chapter here is not the typical instruction or encouragement we see from Paul but rather a very personal message there isn't much to spend a lot of time on digging into, but that being said in verse 29, Paul says, “Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem.” I think it is important to have these people who are examples of the Christian faith, not only in the bible but also in our own lives.

Having those that we can look up to, those that we can go to for guidance and instruction is a very important part of the Christian faith. One of the ways that we learn how to grow and how to live as Christians is by observing mature Christians. We see how they handle trials, we see how they rely on God, we see how they lead, and how they serve. Just like Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus are people who we can read about their faithfulness, their zeal, and their love for God, and the church. They stand as examples, as pillars of the faith.

This is another reason why Christian fellowship is so important, why it is important to gather together, to get to know each other and to be involved in the lives of others. Part of the Christian walk is to imitate those who have the mindset like Paul, or Timothy, or Epaphroditus, which is nothing short of the mindset of Christ that Paul encourages us to have.