



12.2.2018

ADVENT – Sermon 2 | Philippians 2 – Rivers of Joy

Christmas Missions Offering

We LOVE this offering and its one of those things we started as a church plant in 2015 and we've done each year as a part of how we celebrate Christmas here. Bottom line, we love giving to God's mission. 10% of our budget already goes out the door to missions. CMO allows us to push forward in areas where we simply couldn't otherwise. It allows us to provide bibles and other supplies to Catherine Mitchell, a member of ours serving as a missionary in Kenya. It allows us to provide aid to partner missionaries working in closed countries in the middle east & south asia. And it gives needed support to some of the ministries we partner with right here in charlotte like the Charlotte Rescue Mission, and many others.

Here's how this works. We tell you about it today and we begin taking this offering up on the 16th. You have through the end of the year to give to it. And I'll tell you how our family thinks through this. Each year we tell our kids we want our biggest gift to be the one that goes to God's mission.

Christmas is meant to be a celebration of Jesus and we want

that on display even in, especially in, our gift giving. So that's what we do. Each year our church has exceeded expectations in this gift and I hope we do again this year.

Intro

Philippians 2.

This Christmas season we are walking through the book of Philippians. And the reason we are doing so is because this letter puts front and center where JOY comes from and how we can experience it. Here's why this matters:

1. Some people go through the motions of Christmas and its more about stress and people pleasing than it is a season of increased joy. I believe this is most people who will come through our doors this Christmas. Get the ugly sweater, get the white elephant, get the Christmas cards out, compare your card to the others you get, bake some pie, deep fry a turkey, and move on. And man...those are all good things. I love a good white elephant exchange. And there is a whole racket out there trying to distract us from THINKING about Christmas. And when I talk about an awakening needed in the soul of Charlotte this is what I'm talking about. **I'm talking about refusing to let Christmas distract us from Christmas.** And making this month a deep pursuit of and celebration of JOY! That's why if you are new, you should stick with us this month. It usually takes a few weeks to figure out if a church is right for you anyways. But my hope is you will experience the joy of Christ and you'll know if you do if Christmas doesn't exhaust you but instead breathes life into you.

2. But listen there is another group that needs this letter about Joy. See this letter was written to Christians who, according to the end of chapter 1, were suffering. Paul himself is writing it from prison. No white elephant exchanges happening there (Surprise...it's a dead rat.). No Paul was suffering. And so were the Philippians. And So are some of you. Maybe you are not being persecuted for being a Christian, I get that. But you are looking at Christmas right now & you really just don't want to. Maybe you are like my family. man we've lost two family members this year. People we did stuff with at Christmas. It's gonna be hard. Maybe you've got chronic pain or some bad memories connected to Christmas. Whatever it is listen you and I don't need sentimentality. We need the kind of JOY that can lift some really heavy burdens.

And today you are going to see

1) **Where real joy comes from.** Not talking about distracting fleeting happiness. not Christmas songs that distract you for a second, not peppermint mocha, Not 6 billion hallmark Christmas movies that only star Canadian actors...Not talking about temporary feeling of happiness that distracts you from reality. I'm talking about the SOURCE OF JOY. Joy that will give comfort and peace and LIFE.

2) **How it changes you** – We aren't talking about religious rituals when we get together right. We are talking about a transformative power that is extended to you to change you. Like, you will be a different person as a result of encountering this joy.

3) **Where it goes from you** – This joy...has a flow to it. To experience the joy God offers you in fullest, it can't stay with you.

Kind of like a river right? Joy comes from a source, changes us, and goes out to others. Different than a pond. A pond is a standing body of water. Doesn't go anywhere. Fills up when the rain falls, and then goes down during drought. Rivers though...rivers are moving. And this is, I think, my favorite picture to help explain why people miss out on the joy offered to them in Christ. **We think of our lives like ponds.** When things are going well, that's like the rain falling on the pond, rising the water level. Man I'm good! But when rough times hit...or maybe just after a long run of normal everydayness...we start to think the water levels are dropping and it's a spiritually low time. And that's how we function spiritually. It's how we talk about it. Ups and downs. And while good & bad times DO COME. Our lives were never meant to be defined by them. See what I'm going to show you today is that we are created to be rivers. And in a river, there is always fresh water. And I'm telling you today there is fresh water for you. The life God created you for is one where the grace of God is constantly flowing from the source! It's always moving TO us, in us, and through us. Ok So let's get into this and see it.

ALSO – Philippians is an AWESOME letter to learn how to read the bible. It's got a straightforward, logical progression. Which means its pretty straightforward, but still really deep. So, you should read it everyday this month.

1 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

Now this section of scripture is gonna be like a lasagna. Layer of pasta, layer of sauce, layer of pasta, layer of sauce. Layer of Jesus, Layer of Church. Layer of Jesus, Layer of Church. Verse 1 is the foundational layer. Jesus.

I want to soak in verse one for a little ok. This verse emphasizes something at the very core of the bible's teaching that we Christians often miss, or skip over, or assume.

Paul says IF. IF AND ONLY IF you have any encouragement in Christ...THEN you do whatever the action step is that follows. If you have received water from the source of the river, THEN you can give it away to others. You don't obey hoping that you will receive some fresh water from God.

Now...when you obey FROM joy...obedience can actually increase your joy. But when you obey from a place of guilt or a place of trying to manipulate God into OWING YOU something...it creates spiritual frustration and exhaustion.

IF I obey, THEN God will give me his favor. That's as silly as standing beside a pond doing a rain dance. If I do these things, then God will bless me. But listen we can function inside of church like that for a long time.

But the Gospel says this: You cannot CONJURE God's love for you. God's mercy on you. You will never do enough to where you can put God in your debt and force him to give you his

love, his mercy, his salvation. You cannot make it rain. And all your charitable behaviors, all your acts of kindness, all of your Christian checklist routines...when you are doing them with a heart that is saying "LOOK I DESERVE BLESSING...LOOK AT WHAT I'VE DONE FOR YOU GOD.." That right there is as silly as a rain dance.

You cannot earn God's love, but you can receive it. There is a source of his love. An unending rushing source of love. And all you have to do is receive it. THIS is who Christ is.

1 John 4.9-10

9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Soak in this church: You must receive love before you can ever give love. You must receive the love of God for you before you can ever introduce it to others. And the reason so many of us slip so often into religious moralism is because we are trying to OBEY our way INTO God's love instead of obeying FROM God's love.

Religion: We obey so that we can earn God's favor.

Gospel: We obey because we have received God's favor.

This is our core message here at Mercy. Your life as a Christian is a RESPONSE to the love of God for you given to you in Christ

Jesus. Which is why we talk about the Christian life being a Gospel-Centered life. That is: you never grow beyond the gospel, always deeper into the gospel. So take giving for example. Since I opened with the Christmas Missions Offering.

The same act, giving money, can be made with two entirely different motivations. One is religious rain dancing. I give to earn God's favor. And listen the way you know you are doing this is that your giving is motivated by guilt. Well, if I don't give...that will look bad. I will feel bad if I don't. So I'll give. The other says: I am a child of God. He sent Christ to die for me. What a GIFT! I have received JOY in my salvation! That was generous. I want others to experience that! So I'm going to give Joyfully. So that others can share in that Joy.

1 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

That's what Paul is saying. If there is any encouragement in Christ. Have you been encouraged in Christ lately? Have you been consoled by his love? Do you allow the Spirit of God to actively lead you? Church: When was the last time you sat in awe of God's love for you? You can't do that listening to a podcast in 1.5x speed while sitting still on 77 trying not to yell at other cars.

I'm taking half my sermon to DRIVE home this point: GOD LOVES YOU! AND WANTS YOU TO KNOW THAT LOVE! TO LIVE IN THAT LOVE! And his love FOR you is to be the fuel for your life. And that love...its available for you like fresh running water. TODAY. That's the source at the head of the river.

That's where joy comes from. I was surely dead in my sins and God saved me. And he holds me still now. And so I have JOY!

That love changes me. That JOY changes me. This is the secret of Christianity. Of real change. St. Augustine in his book *The City of God* said The key to life change is not in changing by an act of the will, but in changing the loves of the heart. How do you do that? Only by knowing his love for you!

2 make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

IF you have received that encouragement in Christ...THEN make his joy complete. He's their pastor you know. His heart will be full when he sees the gospel at work among them: when the joy of Christ goes to work on you...you think "the same way." Not brainwashing, but Christ becomes the greatest source of joy for you. And you have the same love as others...the love that Christ has for you. And you are united in spirit. He's talking about esprit de corp right. The energy and power that comes from a group of people sharing a common heartbeat.

It's like when your in panther stadium and the guy starts beating THE drum. 4th quarter close game and we all start shouting KEEP POUNDING....KEEP POUNDING. And if you know the story of "keep pounding" you know it was a pre-game speech by Sam Mills, a former panther linebacker who got cancer. And he said hey when I got cancer I could either quit and die or I could keep pounding. I kept pounding. And you need to keep pounding. Every play."

Well you hear that and you think...that's inspiring. Then you get in that stadium and there is this unity. Well that's just fan unity. NOTHING compares to the unity of a local church when it is locked arm in arm serving each other with the love of Christ and then TOGETHER focused on their one purpose. That's a church I want to storm the gates of hell with.

That's gonna get Paul excited for sure! Ok keep going:

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. 4 Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Lasagna layer. Now that we have a layer of Jesus, time for some one-anothering. Paul is reminding us our natural instinct is SELF over OTHERS. I mean just think about this holiday season. If your family is like mine, you are going to be taking some family pictures. Every year my aunt takes a family pic, and a bunch of others, and then heads to walgreens to make a calendar out of all of them. And we get the calendar as a Christmas present and who is the first person I look for in the family picture? ME! What was I wearing, did I smile? Etc.

My point is: We are always thinking about ourselves. And Paul says do NOTHING from selfish ambition or conceit. Instead look after the interests of others. And interest is such an open-ended word. Whatever they've got going on. Financial affairs, family, health probs, education, career...don't just work hard on your own...but work at serving others in all those areas.

It's Paul's way of saying Jesus' command to love your neighbor as yourself. He's saying make the good of others the focus of your interest & work.

BUT...How do we get there? from self-obsessing to self-forgetting? It isn't easy. So Paul says...I'll tell you how. Look at Jesus. You catching a pattern with Paul? He's always talkin' about Jesus. Always thinking about Jesus. (John 3.30 he must increase) And he says ok look at Jesus and that will show you what I'm talking about. And what we get next is one of the first Christian hymns. It's the gospel:

5 Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, 6 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.

Big thing here: The bible teaches that there is one God. The supreme all-powerful, all knowing, all present spiritual being. And John 1 tells us this one God is Jesus. Couple of weeks back when we were going through our Genesis series we talked about how the God of the bible is one God in three persons. God the father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Can't unpack that now and that's not entirely the point here. The point here is how verse 6 finished. While he had EVERYTHING...he didn't consider what he had as something that was to be exploited. Great word translation here for us. It wasn't to be used for his own advantage. Instead...what did he do?

7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity.

Now let's be clear. When it says "emptied" Paul is not suggesting that Jesus gave up his GOD-ness. He didn't STOP being God. Notice the qualifiers. Even in writing a song their theology was spot on. He assumed the "form" & he took on the "likeness" of humanity. This is talking about Christmas! Joy to the World...the LORD has come. God cloaks himself in human form. And not in the form of someone to be feared right? He didn't come to a king's family. No, to a young couple sleeping with the animals because they couldn't even get a room somewhere. He came in the form of a servant. Matthew 20.28 says that EMMANUEL – GOD WITH US...He came not to be served, but to serve. And give his life as a ransom for many.

You see the posture? God who had EVERYTHING...emptied himself of pride, of status. It's an important word because that's going to be how he operates in human form. He's going to keep emptying himself. There is an intentional downward progression that reaches it's lowest point in verse 8...

And when he had come as a man, & he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death —even to death on a cross.

NOT Exploit others for his gain, but empty himself for the gain of others. Notice the last lyric. Even to death on a cross. It is possible that if you know the bible, your familiarity with the Bible may keep you from seeing the surprise of this verse. Why not just speak of Jesus's obedience to death and move on, without mentioning the cross?

Because death is one thing, but a crucifixion is another. The first-century Jews who read this letter and sang this hymn would have shuddered to think not only of their Savior dying, but also of the way he died.

It is hard for us to fully comprehend just how awful the crucifixion was. It's not just the torture, but the representation—what the cross meant—that was so awful. In a culture built on a code of honor and shame, the cross was the most shameful, most embarrassing way to die.

- Here he was, nailed to a cross by soldiers whom he created!
- He was raised up into the sky on beams of wood—from the trees that he made.
- He looked into the eyes of the people who killed him, and he knew their names, their histories, their destinies.

The Creator was slain by his creation. The shepherd was slain by his sheep. Talk about obedience unto death! The Creator of life submitted to death. This is ultimate humiliation.

And here, Paul is saying: *This is God. This is what God is like. Rethink everything you have ever thought about God in his power and majesty and watch that dying Man, nailed to a tree, gasping for breath, and see in his death the God of self-giving love.*¹

¹ Trevin Wax "The Most Surprising Lyric in Philippians 2: 'Even death on a cross.'" Posted on 4.13.2017 at the Gospel Coalition Website.

9 For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow —in heaven and on earth and under the earth — 11and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now the song skyrockets upward for the finish. Death didn't hold him of course. So now God the father sets Christ the son back on the throne in full glory. And one day...right now not everyone does but one day...everyone in every spiritual realm will see Jesus and confess that he is Lord. Not all will do it gladly on that day. He's just saying the battle between good and evil will end and everyone is going to see whether they were on the right or wrong side of the battle. then Paul says ok here's what this means for you:

12Therefore, 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 own salvation with fear and trembling.

Don't let that scare you. He's not saying work FOR your salvation. He's saying work FROM your salvation. In fact maybe this will help you: God calls you to work FROM your salvation, not FOR your salvation.

See I told you this was a Jesus Lasagna. This is the last layer. It's just like the top two. IF there is any encouragement in Christ...work that.

13For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.

As you seek to work from that salvation...he's actually going to be right there working in you. Changing you. Supplying you with joy & strength and renewed purpose in life.

14Do everything without grumbling and arguing,

Can I say here...grumbling and arguing...I think this is a good way to describe the type of person who has missed the gospel. And by God's grace this is rare here in the Mercy fam. But, just see this. You may need to ask some people you trust if you are a grumbler. It's a great English word because it's got that onomatopoeia going for it. Grumbling is disagreement and bitterness without the rage. It's just a passive, less visible form of pride but it will corrode your soul. Don't let it. Work FROM your salvation. Abide again. Find JOY again. And when you do obedience to God will actually INCREASE your joy.

See you gotta have both. Joy without obedience is sentimentality. Obedience without joy is empty religion. Christianity is Joy-filled obedience. So are you obedient to God but grumbling right now? You need to go back to the river. Are you one who gets excited about Jesus but never obeys him? You are just in need of him. He obeyed the father to the point of death. You cannot claim to worship a God you refuse to obey with your life. That's hypocrisy. The answer to both...abide in Christ again.

15so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world, 16by holding firm to the word of life.

This reminder is so critical. See we the church must love one another so selflessly, must humble ourselves, must consider others over ourselves SO THAT...the world can see God.

Francis Schaeffer said it this way:

We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians. – Francis Schaeffer.

Love, Schaeffer said...is the final apologetic for the truth of the gospel. It's the mark of the Christian. That's what Jesus said in John 13. It's the way you and I love each other that will be the undeniable message that God's love is real. Cause they will SEE it. Oh and how do you keep this up? Hold firm to the word of life. Because God's word is living and active and if you keep yourself in it...you will begin to, more instinctively over time, love others like Jesus did. So, can we just all agree an action point of every sermon is to read your bible every day?

Let me talk a little more about some handles for this though. Philippians 2 is showing us a much deeper meaning of Christmas than we often deal with so let's talk about how you find real joy this Christmas

Look Deeper at Christmas. Joy to the world, the lord is come. REFUSE to let that be only a song lyric. Dive into the meaning of Christmas. That God came on a rescue mission. Which means you can't understand Christmas unless you see it as a part of the gospel story. God came for you. This isn't a ritual, it's a celebration of the love of God for you!

To use our word picture today...if we are to be rivers...we must receive the joy of Christ that is constantly available to us. Constantly rushing towards us. The love of the gospel will change you. Religion tells you to obey and it becomes exhausting. But the gospel...it changes you. It supplies you with the love & joy you were created for. And it never stops! The more you look into it the more you are transformed by it!

There is an old Christian saying often attributed to English pastor John Bunyan from the 1600s. Nobody knows for sure but it's point is so good: *"'Run, John, Run,' the law commands, but gives me neither feet nor hands. Better news the gospel brings; it bids me fly and gives me wings!"*

The Gospel calls you to fly...it calls you to a new self...and supplies all the power you need for the task. My family does an advent calendar where we read the story of the coming of Christ over the course of 25 days. Again this could be as simple as reading philippians every day this month. This chapter holds the meaning of Christmas! Look into it! What will happen when you do...is an increased desire to know and walk with this God who has saved you. You will experience the Joy of Christmas. And Paul says your obedience to God...when you obey from joy...will shine brightly in this dark world. Which leads right to the second take-away...

Give your Christmas to others.

Consider others more important than yourselves. Look to their interests. Have the mind of Christ.

We are to be rivers. And if you want to break free from the ups & downs of the pond, you MUST step into your calling to

give the joy of Christ to others. Of course this is applied beyond Christmas but let's just talk about the next few weeks. Look at the people in your life and ask this question. Maybe this is your question this Christmas. Identify someone and figure out...

The Christmas Question: "What can I do to serve _____?"

how can you empty yourself for their gain? I don't care how old you are, or what life stage you are in. 9, 19, 90...don't care what age...you can do this. 90 year old couple: you can take your spouses dentures out and clean them for them. He he. That's real love. Find a way to tangibly put the gospel on display. Work out your salvation. IN JOY consider others more important than yourself.

Surrender your life in such a way that others find life this Christmas.

COMMUNION.

Emptying instead of exploiting. And when we do that TOGETHER...we

I know how absurdly basic that sounds. But when you are looking deeper into the gospel and then giving the joy you find there to others...Th
(END OF SERMON)

Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn't run or labor for nothing. 17But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18In the same way you should also be glad and rejoice with me. -- Philippians 2:1-18 (CSB)

Those who suffer for their faith in Christ are strengthened by knowing that in Christ they will also be vindicated by God for their suffering.²

So Paul's reminder of *any comfort from love* (2:1) should be taken as an inclusive reference to the experience of love within the community empowered by Christ's love.³

² Hansen, G. W. (2009). [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#) (p. 107). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

³ Hansen, G. W. (2009). [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#) (p. 109). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

⁴ Hansen, G. W. (2009). [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#) (p. 109). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

The third *if*-clause refers to *any common sharing in the Spirit*. The word translated *common sharing* is *koinōnia*. Paul's first reference to *koinōnia* is to joyful thanksgiving for *partnership in the gospel* (1:5). *Partnership* unites Paul and the church in Philippi in the joint venture of proclaiming the gospel⁴ The *koinōnia* of believers is more than *partnership*; it is "communion in the Spirit," *common sharing in the Spirit*.⁵ In Paul's world, the term *koinōnia* referred not only to voluntary association for the purpose of a joint venture, a business partnership, but also to common possession as a result of inheritance. Common possession did not entitle each heir to only a piece of the property; each heir was part owner of the whole property. Believers in Christ are heirs to the Holy Spirit; they have common possession of the Holy Spirit. A helpful way of understanding this concept of common possession of the Spirit is to turn to the teaching of the OT that the Levites were not given an inheritance in the land because the Lord was their inheritance (Deut 10:9). God has given his Spirit to the church as their inheritance.⁶

⁵ Hansen, G. W. (2009). [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#) (p. 109). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

⁶ Hansen, G. W. (2009). [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#) (pp. 109–110). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

In other contexts, Paul employed this word to refer to God's compassion (Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 1:3). Ultimately, God is the source of all compassion. In the context of this letter, however, Paul's use of this word focuses on the agents of God's compassion, "the sympathy of the Philippians."²¹ The church in Philippi displayed their concern for Paul (4:10) by sending Epaphroditus to bring gifts to him while he was in prison (4:18). Paul motivates his friends to be united by reminding them of the *tenderness and compassion* "that he and they have toward one another." These "descriptions of the access, the open, inner road between Paul and the Philippians" provide a strong incentive to build unity in the community.²³ The memory of past intimacy should heal present disunity. Paul pleads with them, "If we were such close friends concerned to help each other in the past, let us tear down the walls that divide us and be reunited in love."⁷

Paul designed the entire letter to build a stronger, deeper friendship with the Philippian believers. Paul begins this letter by thanking God *with joy* for his partnership—*koinōnia*—with the Philippians (1:5); he ends the letter by telling them how he *rejoiced greatly* because of the way the church continued their partnership with him throughout his ministry even when he was in prison (4:10–18). The joy that comes from his relationship with his friends (2:17, 18) makes them his *joy and*

crown (4:1). But because friendships are fragile and even close friends are all too easily divided by pride, selfishness, and preoccupation with personal interests, Paul appeals to the Philippians to make his joy complete *by being like-minded*. In this appeal he is voicing the heartfelt desire of a true, committed friend. He is not an aloof apostle, untouched by the painful divisions in the church. Disunity among his friends diminishes his joy. The unity of his friends with each other will complete his joy.⁸

This spectrum of meanings indicates that this verb speaks of the dominant attitude and settled disposition of the entire person. So when Paul calls his friends to *think the same thing* (*being like-minded*), he is not asking them to have the same thoughts or feelings about everything. They are not called to be ditto marks of each other. Paul is not squelching human creativity nor is he prohibiting personal diversity. He is calling his friends to "seek the same goal with a like mind." He identifies the common goal of the community in the next phrases (2:2–4), and illustrates the common goal by the supreme example of Christ (2:5–8).⁹

⁷ Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (p. 110). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

⁸ Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (p. 111). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

⁹ Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (pp. 111–112). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Christ's death on the cross and his universal Lordship are not abstract theological concepts far removed from the nitty-gritty problems of everyday life. Reflection on the cross of Christ, the exaltation of Christ, and the universal worship of Christ leads to reconciliation in the community of those who confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.¹⁰

Paul desires to be totally eclipsed by Christ: *to live is Christ* (1:21). When Paul commends believers for their obedience, he is affirming their commitment to live the kind of life that corresponds to the gospel of Christ by obeying Christ. Obedience is defined not in legal terms but in relational terms as knowing Christ, being like him, and serving him.¹¹

"It is this 'long obedience in the same direction' which the mood of the world does so much to discourage." When the path of obedience to Christ becomes steep and dangerous, pleasure seekers look for an easier way. Religious tourists hunting for sensational entertainment, instantaneous enlightenment, and emotional excitement will jump on the newest rides and take quick shortcuts, but they will not be found with pilgrims on the long, hard road following in the footsteps of Christ, who was *obedient to death—even death on a cross*. Paul's call to unflagging, Christ-like obedience will not be popular in a world that so highly values going fast and

¹⁰ Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (p. 170). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

¹¹ Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (p. 171). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

having fun and so quickly rejects enduring pain and submitting to authority.¹²

In order to understand what Paul is saying here, we need to remind ourselves that his interest in this context is social harmony in the community of believers. The entire context for Paul's imperative to *work out your salvation* has to do with unity in the church¹³

In the light of Paul's focus in this context on unity in the church, the command to *work out your salvation* "is to be understood in a corporate sense. The entire church, which had grown spiritually ill (2:3–4), is charged now with taking whatever steps are necessary to restore itself to health, integrity, and wholeness."

The plural form of the verb *work out* and the pronoun *your* can be seen as corroboration that Paul's command should not be interpreted in a merely individualistic sense as a requirement for each individual to work for personal, eternal salvation but in a corporate sense as a call for the whole community to rebuild social harmony. Paul's consistent emphasis on unity in the church in this context compels us to see that Paul's call to *work out your salvation* has an

¹² Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (pp. 171–172). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

¹³ Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (p. 172). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

ecclesiological reference: it is a call to restore harmony in the church by serving one another.¹⁴

On the basis of his readers' present experience of salvation and their anticipation of future salvation, Paul urges them to express in their community life a dramatic demonstration of the salvation given and promised to them. "What Paul is referring to, therefore, is the *present* outworking of their *eschatological salvation* within the *believing community* in Philippi."¹⁵

I love Christmas! I love putting up lights and I love getting our tree and I love the music and I love the Jesus stuff obviously...and I'm telling you I love the presents. Because there is nothing more honest in life than the moment where a 5 year old opens a present. Because you KNOW the 5 year old is going to give you, the present giver, INSTANT and HONEST feedback on the quality of your gift. When you get it wrong, man their innocence is savagery on your soul. Give them a gift and they tear through it expecting to have their greatest expectations met and then they see Connect 4. The old game that's now being re-sold as a "classic." And they say...AWW

¹⁴ Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (pp. 172–173). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

MAN. What is this!? Vertical checkers or something? And it crushes you. And you realize right then how much your happiness is wound up in their happiness. And you just drop your head in shame. Now...when we get it right...oh man they get so elated...overwhelmed with joy...they go nuts. They jump up & down and you, the gift giver...feel like the greatest person on earth. Basking in the praise given to you.

Now since we love the praise feedback & fear the negative feedback, whenever we are giving gifts to kids we do what...we try and talk to their parents or whoever to figure out what they like. So that the odds may be ever in our favor. Because the parents know them best.

When we get older, we are still a kid when it comes to presents we just put a better face on it.

2 Corinthians 8.9 says the one who had everything...

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. -- 2 Corinthians 8:9 (CSB)

*Became poor...not saying he no longer owned the cattle on a thousand hills. The whole world is still his. But he voluntarily

¹⁵ Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (p. 174). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.