

If Jesus is Our Lord...

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[0 : 00] There was a time in my life when I enjoyed getting up at four o'clock in the morning and driving from Pendleton to near Abbeville, Parsons Mountain, sitting out in the cold, black, dark, waiting on a buck to come out at daylight.

I don't enjoy that anymore. I don't like to be cold like that anymore. But I do miss some things about it. Some of you know this, even if you're not a hunter living out in the country or just living away from a place where there's just no light around.

On those cold, clear mornings in the woods before the first light of dawn, the stars just fill the sky with bright, flickering lights that really just illuminate against that black pitch, black, dark sky.

You know, that is an awesome display, isn't it, of God's glory, His splendor. Or are you aware that God wants us to live such Christ-like lives in this world of spiritual and moral darkness that we, you and me, that we stand out like stars in a pitch black, dark sky?

And we are awesome displays of God's grace and God's glory. I want you to turn with me to Philippians chapter 2 and see how God calls every one of us to so live our lives as followers of Jesus in this world that we do stand out as light in the midst of this world's darkness.

[2 : 01] Philippians chapter 2, and today we'll begin in verse 12. Paul says, Therefore, my beloved. Some translations say, therefore, my dear friends.

This is just a reminder now as we've gone through this study in the book of Philippians. Paul has a special relationship with these people. These are overall faithful Christians.

They've really supported him in a lot of ways. They've prayed for him. They sent money to meet his needs. They have been encouragers to him and he counts them as dear friends.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, arguing, that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ, I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain, even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice, sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

[3 : 38] Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me. I want us to note before we get into the body of the message, the word therefore in verse 12.

Paul intends as he starts this section for us to recall what he's just said, which is what we looked at last week. In verses five through eight, we saw last week how Jesus is the model of how to humble oneself.

He humbled himself by leaving the glory of heaven, coming into this world as a man, as a slave, and ultimately to die on the cross, to pay the penalty for our sins.

We also saw in last week in verses nine through 11, how God lifted Jesus from the grave and exalted him, elevated him to the highest place of honor in the universe at his right hand.

And there in that exalted place, Jesus is given the name Lord. And every knee in the universe will one day bow before him.

[4 : 47] Every tongue one day will confess, whether they want to or not, that Jesus Christ is Lord. Now what we find in verses 12 through 18 is a description of how we, as Christians, who willingly bow before Jesus, who wholeheartedly honor him as Lord, what we're gonna find in these verses is how we are to live now under the Lordship of Jesus.

So I want us to go through this passage with the understanding, what we're gonna be reading now is how we will live if Jesus is the Lord of our life.

Let's look first. If Jesus is our Lord, it will be evident by the way that we relate to God. It'll be seen in our relationship with the Lord. First of all, we'll demonstrate our ongoing faith in God.

We'll demonstrate that our faith is real, it's living, it's active, it is continuing from the time we were converted to this very moment. Look at the first phrase.

Paul says, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. We need to be as clear about what this does not mean as what it does mean. Let me just say point blank. Paul is not saying that we work for our salvation or anything like that.

[6 : 14] James Boyce, in his commentary, he makes this very clear. I want you to look at it. He says, this verse 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 his salvation out unless God has already worked it in.

Paul is telling us, we who are writing to Christians, believers in Jesus, people that God has already brought about a new birth, he is saying, you live like the Christian you are.

You show the world what it means to be a follower of Jesus. This is one way of him just saying, seek to grow and mature as the child of God that you really are by God's grace.

Now, I think it's important that we note here how the word salvation is used throughout the New Testament. A lot of times, people have the idea that the word salvation or saved is just talking about our initial conversion.

[7 : 38] We repent of our sin and put our trust in Jesus. We are saved. We think about that. That's what salvation is. Well, that's only a part of how the word salvation is used in the New Testament.

More often than not, in fact, the New Testament uses the word salvation to describe a process that takes place throughout our Christian lives. Let's look at it under three categories.

First, salvation actually begins when we trust Christ. The biblical word, the theological word, is the word justification. When a person puts their faith and trust in Jesus, God looks at them at that moment and declares them to be righteous, justified, if you want to use that word.

No matter who a person is, what they've done, how awful they have been, when they repent of their sin and trust Jesus, they become one with Jesus by faith.

And when God looks at that person, they've not done one thing to please God their whole life. God looks at that person and declares they are right because united to Jesus, the penalty for their sin has been paid.

[8 : 46] United to Jesus, they have His righteousness, His obedience credited to their account. So, salvation begins when we trust Christ and we might call it, we might describe it like this, I have been saved.

If you're a Christian, you might even say I was saved at a certain point in my life. That's good. But that's not the only way salvation is used.

Salvation continues. Our salvation, your salvation, continues as we follow Christ. The theological word is sanctification. To be set apart.

You are a saint if you're a Christian by virtue of God declaring you to be a saint. But from the moment He declares us to be righteous, a saint, He begins to work in us through His Spirit.

When God saves us, He puts His Holy Spirit in us and from that point on He works in us to actually make us like Jesus. Now it's a lifelong process.

[9 : 52] In this room, we are spread out along the continuum of growing in Christ's likeness.

Some people are just, you know, haven't grown a whole lot. Some have shown great strides in Christian maturity by God's grace. We're all somewhere on that line.

When God saved us, put His Spirit in us, He began the process of making us more like Jesus. We could say like this, I am being saved right now as God works in us, developing us, our character to make us more like Jesus.

Third way salvation is used, salvation concludes when we go to be with Jesus. One day, we're all going to die. If we're Christians, we're going to go to be with the Lord or He could return before we die.

That's when we will be glorified. That's the word, the big word, glorification. That's when we will actually be made like Jesus without blemish.

[10 : 59] We've already talked about in a previous study. That's when we'll overcome our sinful nature will be totally eradicated. We may describe that as I will be saved.

Salvation will be complete. Paul is using the word salvation here in verse 12 to describe how we continue to follow Jesus after our conversion.

He's talking about our sanctification. When he says, work out your salvation, he could say, work out your sanctification. He's describing our growing relationship as children of God developing the character of Jesus.

Jesus. Now, what does that mean? What does that look like if we grow? Well, in verses 14 through 16, Paul is explaining what it means, what it'll look like as we grow like this, as we work out our salvation.

Look at this. He says, after he said, work out your salvation with fear and trembling for God works in you to will and work for his new pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.

[12:30] That's describing how we're to live, how we're to grow, how we're to mature, how we're to change. Now, let's just stop here for a moment.

Look at yourself. Can you see signs that you are growing like these signs? Can you see signs that you are growing in living a Christ-like life?

Can you see signs of spiritual growth? Think about it this way. Are you, more often than not, somebody who just grumbles, complains, whines, likes to argue about everything under the sun? Are you just basically a negative person? Do you easily take offense at something somebody says or the way they look at you or slight you?

Do you like to talk about how life's not fair? You get the short end of the stick all the time. Deep down, you're halfway mad at God a lot of times because life doesn't work the way you think it ought to work, at least for you.

[13:51] more, now let's just be honest. Everybody gripes and complains at times. Everybody has a pity party at times.

Everybody thinks life's not fair to me at times. Let's just be open and honest about that. But is that just the way you are? Is that your nature? Is that your character?

Or, are you more often than not seeking to obey God? I mean, you really want to.

You put forth the effort to do what you know God wants you to do. Do you more often than not see the needs of other people, think about other people, or instead of just always thinking about yourself?

Do you more often than not not take offense? Not wear your feelings on your sleeve? Do you more often than not count your blessings, be thankful for what God has and is doing, what He's promised to do, rather than be disappointed?

[15:11] Are you quick to forgive? Well, cooperating with God as He works in us to make us more like Jesus, if we do that, we won't be doing all this grumbling and disputing, but we'll be developing this more blameless Christ-like character.

That's just a fact. So look at yourself, evaluate yourself and where you are in your relationship with God. Now, as we do, as we cooperate with God, as He works in us, we need to take this very seriously.

Look at what else He says. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. God has graciously saved us, He's made us His children, and God wants us to know Him as our loving Heavenly Father.

He wants us to have a close relationship with Him, be able to come into His presence and talk to Him, fellowship with Him, praise Him, thank Him. He does that.

Jesus even taught us to pray, our Father. So, I don't want to minimize in any way the fact that we as Christians have a close relationship with God as a Father.

[16:41] But even as our Heavenly Father, God never ceases to be the God that He is, the holy, the pure, the awesome, the glorious, the sovereign God who's created all things and for whom everything exists.

we must never lose a healthy fear or reverence for God no matter how long we live as Christians. We, you and me, as children of God, we should never cease to be in awe and wonder of who God is. A long time ago, I watched a movie that centered around the personal life of a fictitious President of the United States.

The President's closest advisor was his lifelong friend. Late one night, they were in the White House shooting pool together, no one around, and talking about a serious issue.

The advisor kept calling the President Mr. President. Yes, Mr. President, Mr. President, this and that. The President finally looked at him and said, we have known each other practically all of our lives.

[18:09] You are my closest friend. No one is here but you and me. Please quit calling me Mr. President and call me Phil.

And without hesitating, the advisor said, yes, Mr. President. You see, he knew there are some relationships that we just must never lose sight of our superior's authority and dignity.

And we always show respect. That's the way it should be in our relationship with God. call him father. Think about how much he loves us, loves you.

How he called you to be his child. Enjoy closeness with him but never cease to also see him as the holy God that he is.

And that we must always in how we approach him, talk to him, live before him, treat him with the utmost reverence and respect. If Jesus is our Lord, it'll be seen by our ongoing, continuing faith in God.

[19:27] Always remember, saving faith is continuing faith throughout the Bible. But also, if Jesus is our Lord, we'll demonstrate our ongoing obedience to God. Look at this next verse 13.

For it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. This explains how we are to work out our own salvation because God is at work in us.

We work out our own salvation with fear and trembling because God works in us giving us the desire and ability to please him.

I put an article in this week's newsletter by Paul Tripp. It explains this verse, this whole concept very well. I especially like the way he describes some signs that God is working in us to will and work for his good pleasure.

Look at this. Tripp says, so when you have a hunger to know what is right in God's eyes, think about this. Do you ever have that?

[20:37] So when you have a hunger to know what is right in God's eyes, when you care about his glory, when you willingly submit to his will, when you forsake your plan for his plan, and when you find joy in surrendering to his lordship, you know that you have been visited by rescuing grace.

Do you see signs in your life that God is giving you true desires, an act of the will kind of desire, and the ability to please him?

Think about it. Can you look at your life, the way you think and the way you live, can you point to signs? I see that God is working in me, giving me these kind of desires to please him, enabling me to act on those desires.

Let's think about how it actually would work out. Do you have a real desire to please God as a husband to your wife? Do you have a true heartfelt desire as a wife to be the kind that a wife or your husband that God wants you to be?

As you think about being a parent at any age, do you have a desire to be a godly parent, to have the influence on your child that God wants you to have, to teach them and train them according to the way God has taught us in his word?

[22:18] Children, boys and girls, many of you in here, you would say, I am a Christian. Some of you I've baptized. Do you have a desire to honor your parents, to obey them because you know that's what God wants you to do?

Do you have a kind of desire to be a Christian friend? you go to work tomorrow or today? Do you desire, have that God-given desire to be an employee or employer that truly honors God by the way you treat people and interact with people?

Now, let's take it a step further. Do you act on those desires? do you willingly and regularly, nobody does it perfectly, nobody does it all the time, but do you willingly and purposefully say no to getting your way in your relationships at home?

Do you willingly put forth the effort to serve your spouse, your children, your parents? This takes an act of God, your brothers and sisters.

If we are Christians, the Spirit of God lives within us. What Paul is saying here, he gives us the desire, the will, the want to, to actually do or live this kind of life.

[24 : 09] Now, I want to be clear about what Paul is saying here in verse 13. Be clear. God is the one who gives us both the desire and the ability to live an obedient Christian life.

So we are dependent upon God. We don't just muster this stuff up. God gives us the desire and then the ability to act on that desire to live a faithful Christian life.

So we are dependent upon God. But we do have to, you and I, we have to act on the desires. We have to actually put forth the effort to do what God calls us to do.

So we must discipline ourselves in order to obey God. The Christian writer Jerry Bridges says that faithful Christian living requires that we practice dependent discipline.

Now here's a good example from the life of Paul. It comes from Colossians chapter one. He's talking about his ministry, his preaching.

[25 : 16] He says, he, that is Jesus, is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

To this end, I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

I want you to see, Paul is saying that he disciplined himself to work hard at his ministry. I strenuously contend.

If you read in the book of Acts and some of his letters, Paul worked hard knowing he was going to be arrested, beaten, put in prison.

Sometimes he had to support himself. He was a tent maker. And so sometimes he'd work all day and preach late at night or he would preach throughout the day and work late at night to support himself.

[26 : 22] Paul worked hard to the point of exhaustion at times. That's what the word is talking about. In order to be faithful, in order to fulfill the desires that the Lord gave him.

But he never thought it was all about him. He knew he was dependent upon the Lord to enable him to do whatever he did. That's that last phrase, with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

I want you to understand. If you're a Christian, it's by the grace of God. God chose to save you.

You heard the gospel. You repented of your sin. You trusted Jesus. God put his spirit in you. And from that moment on, God's been working in you to cause you to desire and be able to grow as a Christian.

We'll put it that way. God gives you those desires. And as people of God, it is our responsibility to act on those desires, even if it means it's hard, we have to rearrange some of our schedule.

[27 : 44] We just have to do it. I don't know a better way to say this. We have to learn to suck it up and do it.

You know, there's tomorrow. Everybody in this room who's going to go to work, everybody's not going to want to jump up in the morning and just go to work. Sometimes we just have to make ourselves go and do what we need to do to work, to support our family.

We have to suck it up and go. If you ever play sports, they're going to run you and condition you and put you through more than you ever really wanted to do. But if you want to play the sport, you got to suck it up and do it.

God saves us by his grace. God puts his spirit in us who gives us the desire and will give us the ability. But we got to suck it up and do it.

Serve. Suffer if necessary. Be inconvenienced if necessary. In our home, at church, out in this world. Because we're supposed to shine like light in the midst of the darkness.

[28 : 55] When it comes to living a faithful Christian life, we are totally dependent upon God. The desires and the ability, it comes from him. But even God's supernatural work within us does not make our efforts to discipline ourselves unnecessary.

If you're a Christian, we'll wind this down and think about some serious things here. If you're a Christian, you are about as spiritually mature as you want to be.

And so am I. You say, that's not true. Well, it is. Think about it. God has saved you by his grace through faith in Jesus.

He has forgiven you. He has made you his child. He has put his spirit within you to give you the desired ability to please him. The way you respond to what God is doing in your life shows how serious you are about your own personal spiritual growth.

How can you argue that? It's convicting, isn't it? It is to me. If Jesus is our Lord, it will be evident in the way that we relate to God.

[30 : 19] In our ongoing faith and in the way we obey him. But I will look at one thing. We're just going to look at the title here. If Jesus is our Lord, it will be evident by the way we relate to people.

There is no relationship with God that doesn't correspond, work out in relationships to people. If Jesus is Lord, it will be evident by we relate to people. First, we will work on having healthy relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

That's what we were talking about in verses 14 and 15, about not grumbling and arguing and fussing and carrying on. And then we'll work on being positive witnesses to unbelievers around us. We shine. We stand out in the midst of a very dark, sinful world. Now, Paul Tripp concluded that article I had in my newsletter with this statement.

Every moment of our obedience is an evidence of and a celebration of the grace that not only forgives us, but rescues.

[31 : 23] And not only rescues, but transforms. Look at that. Every moment of our obedience is an evidence of and a celebration of the grace that not only forgives us, but rescues, and not only rescues, but transforms.

Now think, how many moments during the week do you actually live in obedience to God? How much do you really live your life, seek to live your life in obedience to God?

What does that say about your desire to please God? If we don't really desire and put forth the effort to please God, what does that say about us?

What does your obedience say about the way that you discipline yourself to act on the desires that God gives you to please Him?

Think about that. Or would you have to admit that you don't really have a desire to please God, bottom line? Let's be real honest. Would you say this morning, I don't really have a desire to please God, and that's why I'll ever put forth any effort to obey God.

[32 : 59] If that is your true, you know, if that's a true description of who you are, you're not a Christian. Because the Holy Spirit doesn't live within you.

And Paul tells us in Romans chapter 8, if the Spirit of God's not in us, the Spirit of Christ is not in us, we're not Christians. But if He's in us, what Paul is saying here, He works in us to give us the desire and the ability to obey God.

So if we never have that desire and ever put forth the effort to obey God, how could we be Christians? But I will say this, if you tell me, I know exactly what you're talking about.

I do believe I'm a Christian. I have had those desires in a day gone by. I put forth the effort in a day gone by. But the truth is right now, I am, I'm rebelling against God.

I've, I've turned away. And I don't desire like I used to. And I certainly am not obeying.

[34 : 05] If you're truly a child of God, God will discipline you. Because Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 13 tells us, 12 tells us that God disciplines His children whom He loves.

So I'm going to encourage you, if you're not a Christian, let this be a wake-up call. Don't think about you profess faith, you've been baptized, you're a member of the church, or anything like that.

Evaluate where you are in your relationship with God right now like this. Do I have a desire to please God? And do I desire to put forth the effort and actually do to please God?

That's a sign of a Christian. If you don't, it's a sign you're not a Christian. If you're not a Christian, that bothers you. You want to be. This is a wake-up call for you. Humbly bow before God.

Repent of your sin. Trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Call upon Him to save you now. And if you'd say, I am a Christian, but I've fallen far, let this be a wake-up call to you.

[35 : 07] Come back to the Lord humbly and confess your sin. Repent. Draw back close to the Lord and ask Him to just reawaken you, your conscience, your heart, so that you will have those desires again.

And as you have those desires again, act on them. Ask God to help you to follow through on them. Because that's how we are to live in this world.

If Jesus is really our Lord. Let's pray. Dear God, show us now how we should respond. Show us now, Father, how we can leave here this morning demonstrating that Jesus is the Lord of my life. Let's just, in attitude of prayer, listen to God. And then do what He's telling you to do. Respond as He wants you to this morning.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. See you.