

## Phil Ch 2 Vs 12-13

Letting Christ Live in Me

“Fewer things are harder to put up with,” (wrote Mark Twain) “than the annoyance of a good example.” and You know I have to concur with him on that; because they seem to set this standard that’s so far beyond my ability to live up to on any form of a consistent basis. Wiersbe wrote, “Admiration for a great person can inspire us, but it can not enable us.” You see unless that person can somehow enter into our lives personally and share his or her skills with us, we won’t attain to his or her heights of accomplishment. Because in reality it takes more than just a good example on the outside; it takes power on the inside.

You see Paul has just presented Jesus Christ as our example in lowliness of mind, of what it meant to do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but rather to esteem others as better than ourselves looking out not for our own interests, or the things of ourselves, but for the interests, or well being of others, for the things of others. He demonstrated how Christ exercised humility, therefore was highly exalted, how He went from the least to the greatest, how He set forth an example in obedience regardless of the cost, so that you might reap the eternal rewards and benefits of His submission to the Father. and So as we look at all of this, we’re in agreement with the reality of this mind set needing to be at work in our own lives, but how are we to get there, where does the rubber meet the road? But Paul doesn’t leave us with a riddle. His intentions weren’t to dazzle us with his theology and understanding of the Godhead, but rather he’s laying out a premise, or a principal and then demonstrating how it becomes practical.

So it’s not as though he’s saying here’s your standard, now do your best to live up to it; that would contradict his own theology, his own doctrine. What he’s done is lay out the divine *pattern* for what it means to have a submissive mind and now he shows us the divine *power* as to how it’s worked out in our lives. and We’ll see it in vs 13 when he writes, “for it is God who works in you both to will and to do.” So it’s not accomplished by mere *imitation* (this lifestyle of humility and lowliness of mind that esteems others as better than ourselves by placing their needs above our own) but rather by *impartation*, by the Spirit of God at work in us, by *incarnation* meaning as Paul would write in Gal, “Christ lives in me” so that it’s in fact Christ at work in me simply living out His own life through mine. Because I’ve died, and so now it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me and as Christ lives in me, my life emulates His because in reality, I’m just a shell or a vessel through which *He* lives and works.

Now the problem is the old man (who would be me in my flesh) tries to rear it’s ugly head all the time so that there’s a war going on in my members and thus we have the war between the Spirit and the flesh. and Paul had come to the place where Christ had worked so deeply in his life that he had allowed Jesus complete control, and so he could say “imitate me as I imitate Christ”. In other words, just watch the life of Christ through me and do likewise, allow Him to have the same place in your life and you’ll be ok.

I would have to say, imitate me except for when I don't imitate Christ, because of that old man of mine, insisting so often to have his own way and though my spirit is willing, my flesh is so many times weak (But that's another study). The point here is that as Jesus said, He didn't leave us orphans, He didn't leave us on our own to try and accomplish this standard, because I can't accomplish this standard. and So He's sent us the Helper, the parakletes, the Holy Spirit by which we're enabled to lead a lifestyle that reflects Him accurately because we're just surrendered to Him leading His own life (for lack of a better term) through us. So the Christian life isn't really a matter of up's and down's, but rather a series of "ins and out's" God works in, and we work out that which He's worked into us by the power of the Holy Spirit, and so we have principal at work before us of God's initiative and human responsibility. He initiates, we respond in obedience.

## Vs12

Now there are a few things that we need to address in this vs but we'll take 1<sup>st</sup> things 1<sup>st</sup>. and We shouldn't miss the connection here in obedience, if you're just reading through it, to me it can kind of seem like Paul turned the page here. He's speaking about Christ and how He's done all these things and how God has honored Him in it and then he says here in vs 12 (read) and you kind of go, where did that come from. Well the connection takes you back to vs 8, the emphasis being on the obedience of Christ to the Father and therefore all the more reason why they should be in obedience to the precepts and principles of God's word and will for their lives as well. and So the connection is on Christ's obedience and their need for obedience as well. That's what this word "therefore" takes us back to. and Here in vs 12 we find for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in this letter this phrase "my beloved" obviously an endearing term. and It seems as though Paul would use this term when he would have an earnest appeal to make to his readers, whenever he would desire that some serious change or line of obedience take place in his readers lives, he would so often use this term. Why, well I'm not sure. But I can tell you that an appeal out of love rather than a rebuke out of anger of frustration goes much farther in reaching it's desired end. The bible says that it's the love of God that leads us to repentance, and that the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

In other words when you yell and rant and rave at someone because you're sick of their actions and you want them to change, that method doesn't usually yield much (if any) fruit. But when out of serious compassion and the motive of love and concern I appeal to someone on the basis of how much I love them and am concerned for their well being (be it physical or spiritual or whatever) generally speaking they're at that point much more open to reasoning. Prov 15:1 says, "*A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.*" and So Paul has an appeal to make to them, again he used this term "beloved" consistently, why, because that was his heart, he genuinely loved and was concerned for the people that were apart of his life, and even those who weren't. He used this term twice in vs 1 of ch 4 in this letter urging them to, "stand fast in the Lord."

In 1 Cor 10:14 we read, “*Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*” and Again in 1 Cor 15:58, “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*” In 2 Cor 7:1 we read, “*Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*”

So this “term of endearment” so to speak was often used by the apostle and it was generally followed by an appeal to exercise godliness and flee from worldliness and vs 12 of Ch 2 of the book of Phil is no exception to that rule. and We’ll see that appeal in a minute, but before he gets to his appeal he inserts this little phrase to encourage them in their obedience to the exhortation and it reminds us a bit of vs 27 of ch 1 regarding our conduct being worthy of the gospel, and for them it was an appeal that he desired of them whether he was present or not. and So in like manner we read here (read up to absence).

So before the exhortation comes the commendation, he commends them for their eagerness to obey the word of God. But he’s encouraging them to make sure that it’s not for eye service, just when he’s around so as to be a man pleaser, but that it’s a deep reality in their lives. Because they know the reality of the fact that it’s God that their aiming to please and He’s always around. You see Paul knows the mentality and the persuasions and patterns of humanity. and We have this tendency to really do things right when we think the “boss” is around, and unfortunately that mentality can creep easily into the ministry.

Now we all know that we’re all co-laborers and that in reality no one is anyone’s “boss”, in ministry, we all serve Jesus Christ But God has established order and “authority” in our lives for the sake of accountability, now they can’t force us to do anything, but authority can exhort or encourage us in and towards godliness as Paul is doing here. But what I find is that so many times people lean too heavily on that authority and they begin to relate their accountability to that authority at the expense of their accountability before God. and So when the Pastor is around, or when someone in leadership is around, we have a tendency to kind of straighten up a bit and walk the straight and narrow in their presence. But when they’re not around our lifestyles sort of sigh and we relax a bit, meaning we relax our standards or our morals and ethics. Or it can backfire so that if that person in authority should stumble, the whole church splits, or when theirs a change in leadership the local church body falls apart and ½ of them slip back either into the world or find a different church.

Why, the focus is off, now again I never want to alleviate or somehow belittle the awesome responsibility held by those in leadership and we should be striving (by the grace of God) to come to that place where we can in truth say imitate me as I imitate Christ. and The example of the leadership to those in the body is absolutely critical, that we be of 1 mind, standing fast in 1 spirit, having the same love and striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Your relationship with Christ should never be forfeited or deprived of growth and maturity due to the behavior or bad example of another. Because then we're playing the blame game and looking for some sort of justification in our own lives, people say, "I don't go to church because it's full of hypocrites." Well, you're going to hate hell then because it'll be full of them there to, and the only perfect example is found in Jesus Christ That's why He never said, "follow My people" because even His people will let you down if you watch them close enough, long enough. He said, "Follow Me." and So is in essence saying here, for the sake of applying it to us, don't base your integrity and your relationship to the Lord upon your leaders, obey the word of God whether they're around or not, that's why it's called a "personal relationship."

It's not a vicarious relationship that they have with the Lord through you, it's yours and yours alone and it's God that you are to fear, so have personal integrity before the Lord, and then the lifestyle you live before man will take care of itself. and So the commendation: as you've always obeyed, keep on doing that, when you come into the understanding of what God desires in your life, be obedient to it, just as you always have, even when I'm not around. and The exhortation: work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Now this vs has seemed to have brought considerable confusion to people over the years and *really* there's no reason for it. and It's primarily due to those who desire to entangle you with a yoke of bondage that neither they nor their fathers could bear. They tend to translate this vs in a works oriented context there by making it necessary for you to do certain works in order to be saved, a works righteousness trip. But not only does that contradict the totality of the scriptures in general, but even Paul's own theology. As a matter of fact he dedicated an entire epistle to the Galatians emphasizing the fact that there's no amount of work that you can do to either earn, merit, or maintain your salvation. Gal 3:2-4 *"This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"*

Are you going to perfect, or even sustain the work of the Holy Spirit of God in your life through the efforts of your sin infested flesh? God forbid, it's not going to happen, but you see the error is in the way that they read into this vs, from people who don't rightly divide it. They interpret this vs to mean work "for" your salvation with fear and trembling, but I looked in 8 different bibles and an interlinear bible that shows the Greek and then it's English translation, and I couldn't find 1 of them that translated or interpreted this vs, or even suggested in any way shape or form that we were to work "for" our salvation. #1 If you take this vs with in it's total context then we immediately have to succumb to the fact that Paul is writing to Christians, so why then would he say, you who are already under the blood of Jesus Christ work for your salvation, you see that defies the very context of the vs. and There are 3 absolutely vital, and critical rules that apply anytime that you're interpreting or expounding on scripture, context, context, and context.

You cannot take apart, apart from the whole, that's where you begin to get into trouble and come up with heretical doctrines, like there's something you have to do in the flesh to be saved because in reality the cross isn't sufficient for you. Listen, that's what that doctrine implies. Because if the cross were sufficient for you, then why would you need to do anything to be saved, or even to sustain your salvation? and To say that you or I have to work for my salvation is to tread on the dying words of the Lord Himself, "it is" (what) "finished", the work of atonement is complete, paid in full, there's no amount of debt left that you have to make up through baptism, or a lack of make-up or a certain dress code, or some legal self righteous regimented routine or anything else.

Now, having said that I need to be careful not to give license to your flesh, I'm not implying that once you give your heart to Christ that you can live like hell (in the literal sense) and still expect to go to heaven. That's exactly what Paul is teaching here, we're to work out our salvation, we're to be responsible to see it through all the way to the end, but you can't work *out* what hasn't already been worked *in* and that's the key. So it's not working *for*, it's working *out*, you see God has a plan for your life, even the details of your life, but you're responsible for your own actions so as to lead a life that as much as would depend upon you doesn't quench the Spirit (through willful disobedience) and maintains a sensitivity level to the Spirit so that His plans for you, your salvation can be worked out to His desired end, all the way to the end throughout your entire life. That's what Paul is speaking about here and God's plan for your life is where those works will come in, but not to secure or sustain salvation but more to substantiate salvation. It's been said that faith alone saves, but faith that saves is not alone. . In other words it's by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, *not of works*, lest anyone should boast. But the harmony is clearly presented in the very next vs Eph 2:10 "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*"

So there are good works to be done, and God has prepared them beforehand and ordained that we should walk in them, but not before we're in Christ. So we're to be working out, that, which God is working in us, which in the direct context according to my understanding would be like-mindedness, again having the same love and being of one accord, he's speaking about unity in the body. This is something that should be being worked out in our salvation, Paul is saying that whatever the schism is there in Philippi it needs to be worked out, but it could be applied to virtually any area of our lives, work out that which God is working in. Prov 10:16 says that, "*The labor of the righteous leads to life, The wages of the wicked to sin.*" Jesus said that we should strive to enter the narrow gate, because many will seek to enter and not be able to. Why, because they're trying to get there by means of their own merit rather just resting in the finished work of the cross. But God wants to prove out His character in your life. and He's prepared those good works for you so that when people see your lifestyle, your Father in heaven will be glorified, that's what Jesus taught. and So the works that God has prepared for you simply substantiate your faith.

Of course probably the most famous vs' in regards to this subject is in the book of James, you show me your faith with out your works and I'll show you my faith by my works. True faith will produce a true work in your life; and some of the works that God has prepared for us are obvious and they canvas all of us because they're recorded in His word. For example Rom 13:11-14 Paul again exhorting us writes, *"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."* That's something that God wants to see worked out in all of our lives as it pertains to our salvation, that we cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, that we walk properly, which is to say that we wouldn't be walking in revelry or drunkenness, lewdness and lust, strife and envy or making provision for the flesh on any ungodly level.

So you see God makes it very clear for us the direction He wants to take our lives, and our salvation is worked out primarily through obedience, that's what Paul is calling us to in this vs, obedience to the precepts and word of God. But there's something else I want you to notice in this vs before we move on. Something that you and I would do well to underline and remember, and that's that the exhortation to work out salvation or allow it to come to it's desired end in your life is personal and it's emphatic. Work out your own salvation, I don't know if maybe this little dispute in Philippi had a couple of brothers disputing over a certain issue or one saying hey, you're not leading your life the way you need to and being somebody else's Holy Spirit. But Paul says hey, work out *your own* salvation; don't be bugging into other people's lives.

In 1 Thess 4:10-12 we read, *"we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing."* Now again there are times that if it's blatant sin love will have us confront the issue, and read Paul's letters you'll find that he was all about confronting sin. Maybe one fella saw his brother speeding in town, or rolling through a 4 way stop and he said, hey, how can you even call yourself a Christian if you're going to be all the time breaking the law like that? That's a horrible witness, and this whole uproar was the result of it, and Paul is saying mind your own business. How many times we focus on what other people are doing, and when they don't hit the standard that we've laid out for them in our own minds, we're so quick to call them to the carpet. To cast a shade of doubt on their witness, and it's so easy to nit pick our brother and sister's splinter that's in their eye when we've got a 2x6 in our own, Paul said in Rom 14:4 *"Who are you to judge another's servant?"* (In other words that brother or sister isn't our servant that needs to hit our standards of performance) *"To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand."*

That's basically where Paul is headed here when he gets to vs 13, because we'll read where he says that it's God who will work the standards that He has for your life, and your brothers and sister's lives in your lives whenever He wants, however He wants and the appointed time, to the appointed degree that He wants, that's not our job. Now again I'm not alleviating accountability or obvious scriptural breeches of integrity, but my convictions are my convictions and they're going to differ from your convictions because God is working differently in my than He is in you and I need to recognize that. Now ultimately we'll arrive in the same place (again that being in Christ likeness) but that avenues and convictions that He chooses to use to get us there will vary to some degree simply because we're different people.

Even Paul when he said imitate me, the stipulation or prerequisite to that was only as he imitated Christ. But here's the clincher that he throws onto the end of this vs, because having said all that we can so easily say, yeah, so back off me man. Let me work out my own salvation (and we use such words to seek to justify sin in our lives) Paul says, yeah work out your own salvation, but make sure it's with fear and trembling. Make sure that it's with the proper reverence, humility and respect that is due the Lord, liberty in Christ is not a license to sin, it's liberty *from* sin, not liberty *to* sin. The bible says that we're to, "*Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.*" and Again Heb 12:28-29 "*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.*"

It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and so as we're "working out our own salvation"; we need to do so with godly fear and reverence and in humility. and We need to be careful that our "liberties" line up with the scriptures. and This whole exhortation is in the light of the example that's been set before us in Christ.

Vs13

He will not contradict His word as He is working in your life. (and We'll pick up here in our next gathering) My Salvation will be "worked out" as Christ simply "works in" or "lives in" my life, so my responsibility is to simply be letting Christ live in me.

Maybe this morning you're here and God hasn't yet begun a work in your life, and yet God has called you here that you might hear of His love for you in allowing His only begotten Son to die on the cross on your behalf, and raising Him from the dead that you might live forever with Him. and This morning He wants to begin a new work in your life, the bible says that if any one is in Christ he's a new creation old things pass away and behold all things are made new. You can have a new life in Christ this morning if you'll call upon His name and receive Him into your heart. It doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done God loves you and wants to forgive you and make you brand new.