

“Live It Out In The Community”

Philippians 2:12-18

This morning we continue on in our study called “Live It Out” where we are reminded that God calls us to live out our faith. Faith is a vital part of the Christian life. Without faith we can’t even be a part of the family of God. But, there is more to faith than simply having faith that leads to salvation. God calls us to live by faith from the moment of salvation until the moment He calls us home. In fact, **Hebrews 11:6a** emphatically states that “Without faith it is impossible to please Him (God).” God clearly wants us to have faith in Him and live our lives daily by faith. It is important, though, to remember that faith isn’t simply about our knowledge, our emotions, our wants, or our feelings. Faith is about our will. Faith is confident trust and obedience to God regardless of the circumstances or consequences. Many people claim to have faith because they think certain things in their mind. Many people claim to have faith because of the emotions that they feel over various situations. However, if faith is real and genuine it will demonstrate itself through works. **James 2:17** says clearly, “Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.” As we started this focus a few weeks ago, we saw this truth very clearly. The point that we must all remember is that we are saved only by our faith in God, but if our faith is genuine it will be demonstrated through good works. **Ephesians 2:8-10** clearly states, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” The key to our salvation is that we must have faith that depends on God’s grace and the work that He has already done for us. However, once we place our faith in Jesus we are changed and made a completely new creation. We are saved by grace, through faith, resulting in good works. We see this clearly in the passage of Scripture that we are focusing on today. Clearly, we must have faith in God and once we possess this faith we are called to live it out.

The question we must then answer is, “Where? Where are we to live out our faith?” To be clear, we are called to live out our faith everywhere. To everywhere we go and everyone we meet we should be living out our faith. But, we understand that “everywhere” can be quite vague. We need to identify clear goals, clear places, and clear ways that we can begin. We saw a few weeks ago how we should live out our faith in Jesus in our homes. We learned how God can use us to impact our family and friends for His glory when we live out our faith at home. Last week we looked at another specific place we must be intentional about living out our faith – the Church. We saw how the early church lived out their faith by devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. Today, we look at a third place that we are called to live out our faith – the Community. I believe God is wanting us to see clearly that our faith shouldn’t just impact our home and the local church that we are committed to. We are also called to live out our faith clearly for all around us to see. Here in this passage of Scripture we see this clear exhortation and from it God will show us how we are to do this effectively.

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Without question, one of my favorite books of the Bible is this little letter called Philippians. This is Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. These were people who he loved and cared for. As he wrote to them from a Roman prison, he was greatly limited. However, that didn't stop him. He knew that the Word of God wasn't imprisoned, and he knew that these young believers were also not imprisoned. So, he wrote to encourage them, to thank them, and to instruct them on what they were to do and how they were to act towards one another and to others. It is important that we started out our text this morning in verse 12, where Paul gives a powerful and insightful word of instruction. He said, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Can you picture the scene? Paul had ministered to many in Philippi who were saved by the grace of God. A church was established, but Paul experienced great persecution. As a result, he had to leave town, but he left his good friend Luke behind to encourage these new believers. So, Paul is in a place where he is separated from them. He can't get to them and, in fact, he thinks it is possible that he will soon die. It is in this moment that he calls them to work out their salvation. The phrase "work out" literally means to "work full to completion." In Paul's day the word was used for "working a mine." It meant that you would get out of the mine all the valuable ore that was possible. It could also be used of "working a field" in such a way that you would get the greatest harvest possible. This salvation is a gift from God that anyone who calls upon Him will receive. However, this salvation isn't a "one-time fix-all from sin and its consequences." It's not that we pray a prayer and have our fire-insurance. When we are saved and have received Christ as our Savior, then that salvation will continue to be worked out so that we experience all the joys, blessings, and privileges that come along with this great gift. ****ILL:** On June 21, 2003 I walked down an aisle and said, "I DO" to my beautiful wife. On that day I became her husband and she became my wife. Since June 21, 2003 I am a married man. Now, you know what I am doing today? I am working out my marriage day by day. Each and every day I'm learning and growing so that our marriage can be fruitful and precious like God wants it to be. We laugh. We talk. We enjoy each other's company. We have been united. We go through difficult times together. We go through joys together. Each and every day we are living and "working out" our marriage. Like a mine full of priceless gems and treasures, I must make the time, the effort, and do the work to discover all that is there. The same is true of our salvation. If you have been saved, you are to continue daily to work out your salvation. Enjoy what God has done and is doing. Talk to God. Listen to His Word and His guidance. You have been united to Him. It's as if Paul is saying, "You've been saved, now live it out."

Then on the heels of this instruction, Paul gives a word of explanation. What he is about to call them to do is humanly impossible without God. What he is about to call them to do is impossible by good will and noble intentions. So, he reminds that it is God who is at work in them working for His good pleasure and purposes. For all believers, we must believe and remember that God is working in our lives through His Holy Spirit. Jesus said in **John 14:16-17**, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." It is He who is at work in us, energizing us to pursue the things that please God. So, how do we live out faith in Jesus in the community that He has placed us in? I believe that the text points to three simple but powerful actions. This is not a comprehensive list, but it does encompass a great deal.

I. **Live It Out by Guarding Your Conduct (vs. 14)**

If we are going to impact our community for Christ, we must first consider our conduct. How do we live in the community? How do we act and behave around others? To be perfectly clear, we are not called to live so that we will be seen by men. We are to live our lives to bring glory and honor to God. However, we are all being seen. The question for us to consider is simple: What are our actions telling others about Jesus? For much of the world, they don't know Jesus as Lord and Savior. They can't see Him. They can't touch Him, feel Him, or grasp Him. They can't believe what they can't see. However, they do see us. They do hear us. They do know us. As a result, for all who claim to be followers of Jesus, by our conduct and actions, we should be showing them Who Jesus is and what He is like. **1 John 4:12** explains this clearly saying, "No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." In other words, just as God was incarnate (personified, embodied, in the flesh) in the person of Jesus Christ, and everyone could see and sense the presence of God because of the character and conduct of the Lord Jesus, in the same way God is indwelling us. What this means is that as we show this love to others, they will see Him. They will see God in us. Men cannot see God, but they can see us. If we abide in Christ, we will love one another, and our love for one another will reveal God's love to a needy world. God's love will be experienced in us and then it will be expressed through us. The life of a Christian who abides in God's love is a powerful witness for God in the world. Because of this, Paul instructs us to completely do away with two things:

A. **Live Without Complaints**

The Greek word that is used to describe a "complainer" means "one that is discontented." There are many things that may cause us to be discontent, but ultimately it stems from a heart of pride. We are discontent because we didn't get what we wanted, what we thought, what we perhaps even thought we deserved. The specific word that was used in verse 14 literally means "to grumble." This complaint isn't a loud complaint spoken harshly but an undertone of murmuring which is spoken against men, not God. ****ILL:** Have you ever been there? It's the person that you know is grumbling and complaining but they are saying it silently under their breath. You know there is an issue, but they would rather grumble and complain about it than work through it. The problem is that it avoids and ignores the truth and, like a cancer, it spreads in their heart and leads to further issues. Perhaps we look at this like it is no big deal, but God says it is a sin. In fact, if you read through the Old Testament you will find the Israelites constantly complaining against God and, as a result, they experienced great judgment and consequences. The point is that we must not grumble and complain. **1 Peter 4:9** even commands, "Be hospitable to one another without complaint." Instead of complaining about others, let's love them enough and love God enough to go that person in private and seek to be restored. In fact, that restoration will be a powerful illustration of the Gospel and grace. But if we complain against one another, we are showing the world that we are no different than them.

B. **Live Without Contentions**

Next, we are to avoid disputing. We are to have unity in the body of Christ. This was one of the issues that the church of Philippi needed to be reminded of. Before their testimony for Christ could ever be effective in the community where they lived, the Philippians needed to set some things straight in their own assembly. Evidently the believers were complaining and arguing with each other. It can be so easy for us to allow our flesh to rule and we allow Satan to get a foothold in our hearts. But, brothers and sisters, I remind you that we are family. How we relate to one another says something to the community about the Lord we know, love, and serve. Sadly, much of the Church in America today has a huge black eye because of the ways that we have related to one another. When churches are known for business meetings that end in an uproar, church members who can't get along, church gossipers that talk all through the town, etc. then something is terribly wrong. Friend, we must remember that the world sees and hears these things. If there are disputes and arguing, the world knows about it. We must abstain from complaining and arguing both face to face and on social media. We must live in harmony and unity. The souls of people in our community are at stake. **Ephesians 4:1-6** is a powerful reminder, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." **Psalm 133:1** sums it up perfectly, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!"

II. **Live It Out by Fulfilling Your Calling (vs. 15)**

It is important for us to realize that we aren't just avoiding these things because it is a noble pursuit. We aren't striving for some means of self-righteousness. We are avoiding these negative things because we have been called something. We have received a calling from God and now we have both the privilege and the responsibility of living out that calling.

A. **What We Are Called**

The Scripture says clearly here that all who believe in Jesus are called "children of God". **Galatians 4:3-7** tells us what God did so that we might be adopted into His family saying, "So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." Think of this amazing truth. Without Jesus we are slaves to sin and destined to experienced God's judgment and condemnation. But when we believe in Jesus and what He did in our place then we are forgiven, cleansed, and adopted into God's family as a son or a daughter. This describes our relationship with Him, but it also describes what we are now called to do. As God's children, we are now to live as His children. ****ILL:** It's amazing to me that children naturally emulate their

parents. For better or worse they pick up their expressions, mannerisms, etc. As we spend time with our heavenly Father, we begin to look like Him. So, God says as His children we should prove ourselves to be blameless and innocent. The word for “blameless” here literally means “harmless” in the Greek. It’s the idea that our actions aren’t bringing any blame or any harm to the name of Jesus. Then we are also to be “innocent.” In Romans 16:19 this same word is translated as “simple.” It’s the idea that we are to be simple when it comes to determining and living out what is right or wrong. We often try to complicate things by stretching our freedom as far as it can go. We try to live in the gray. But, we must remember that the lost world is watching. It is important that, as God’s children, we should simply and sincerely seek to honor God in all that we do. Friend, this doesn’t mean that we are to be perfect, but it does mean that we are live our lives above reproach. There’s not one of us who is perfect, but we should all strive to be Christ-like in every aspect of our lives. I pray that our lives would be lived like the believers in Antioch. Their words, attitude, and actions so closely resembled Jesus that the community began to refer to them, for the first time ever, as Christians. They were so much like Jesus that it was the only way to describe them. May God help us to love Jesus and live for Him and like Him to such an extent that people will see Him in us.

B. Where We Are Called

Notice where we are to live out this calling. We are to live it out “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.” We are to live it out in our world today. The “world” can be defined as the culture and its influences that surround us. It’s the teachings, attitudes, values, and philosophies of the culture in which we live. The world would have us to believe that what God has spoken against is ok. The world would have us to believe that you can do what is right for you and be accountable to nobody – ultimately making each individual his own god. The world would have us to believe that there are many ways to heaven. However, Jesus calls us to live for Him and through Him, not like the world around us. The world around us is full of sin and darkness, and those who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior are living in darkness. But, believers, though we physically live in a world full of darkness, we are now spiritually walking in the light. **Ephesians 5:8-10** explains it well, “For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

Spiritually, we are now in the light, but physically we still walk among a crooked and perverse generation. This shouldn’t surprise us. In **Matthew 17:17** Jesus Himself looked out at His generation and called them an unbelieving and perverted generation. **John 3:19-21** gives us a summary statement of all humanity. “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.” Men still love darkness over the light because their deeds are evil. This certainly is a crooked, perverse generation. All

one must do is turn on the TV, listen to the radio, or open your eyes to the world around us to see this. However, God doesn't look at us and say, "Well, you stay here in your holy huddle until I can get you out of this mess." He doesn't say, "Well, just hold on tight, I will have you out of here soon." He doesn't say, "Well just hide away in your Christian club." No, God says, "I have called you My child, and I have placed you in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." Why? What are we to do while we are here? The next statement tells us.

C. What We Are Called To Do

This world around us is dark, but as Christians we are now in the Light and we are called to shine as bright lights for Jesus. Listen, friends, if God wanted us right now with Him in heaven He would take us. However, if He allows us time here, He does so for a reason. We aren't called to sit here and wait on heaven. We are called to shine bright for Jesus. Many believers spend much of their earthly life looking forward to heaven. I pray that we will spend our earthly life doing all that we can to get others to heaven. While we live in this dark world, we must consider how we can shine bright to point others to Him. Jesus said it this way in **Matthew 5:14-16**, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The text is very clear. We are called the light of the world. The world has nothing to offer humanity, but we can shine bright and point others to Jesus Who can give them eternal life. We are to shine like a city that is set on a hill. When I think of this, I think of a very simple and practical illustration. ****ILL:** I think of the large star in Roanoke. At nighttime as you drive into the city from almost every angle you can see that star off in the distance sitting up on that hill. You and I are to be shining the Light of Christ like a city that is set on a hill. As we serve the Lord, our differences from the world will stand out. And as we stand out, people will be drawn to the Light within us. But we must remember that it isn't us they are being drawn to. It is Jesus in us that they are being drawn to. So, we must make sure that we are pointing them to Jesus. We aren't shining the Light of Jesus to get personal attention. We are to shine the light of Christ so that others may glorify Him. "The point of your life is to point to Him." - **Francis Chan**

The only way that we can effectively shine the Light of Christ in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation is by clinging to the Word and by giving the Word to others. Notice, what is the key to life? It is God's Word. Paul used a special word to imply a two-fold application of God's Word. First, it means that each of us should hold to God's Word because it is the Word of life. There is absolutely no way that you and I can shine a light in this world unless we are fellowshiping with THE LIGHT of the world. We must be in God's Word. God's Word is truth and, therefore, keeps us from error. If we fail to spend time with the Light by clinging to His Word, then we can't effectively shine the Light of Christ. Not only should we hold the Word of God in our hearts for our own benefit, we must also hold it out for others. The most common use of this Greek word, in its secular

sense, referred to wine that was offered to a guest at a banquet. The idea is that you held it out to offer the very best. And here, Paul is saying in the midst of this crooked, perverse generation we should hold out the Word which shows the way to eternal life. This means that we are to hold out the Word and share it without wavering. This requires boldness. We are to stand firm and not back down. We must put forward the Word of God so that others may experience the joy of eternal life.

III. Live It Out by Paying the Cost (vs. 16-18)

It sounds odd for Paul to mentioning joy and rejoicing, but this is something that all of us long for. Many believers think of joy being what they will have when they are in heaven and all the worries of this world are gone. But, I want to remind you that we don't have to wait for Jesus to return to experience this joy. Paul says, "Rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me (TODAY)." This sounds great, doesn't it? Enjoy life. Live life to its fullest. Enjoy all the blessings and benefits of this life. But, friend that isn't found in the way that we often view it. We often think we find joy in fulfilling the American dream. Get the big house and the car and everything our heart desires. But then what? We find our joy in our hobbies – fishing, hunting, sports, and all sorts of hobbies, but none of this is eternal. We find joy through our children. The little things they say and do that just bring you joy, but they grow up and move on and changes take place and, as wonderful as that is, that alone can't be the source of our joy and celebration. Notice, Paul said that he found his joy in something very profound. He says, "I am being poured out as a drink offering for your faith and I rejoice." Paul here is talking about the sacrifice that he is making so that others might come to know Jesus. He is rejoicing because he knows that his sacrifice is leading to their response of faith.

One fact of life is that following Christ in complete surrender isn't a popular thing. In fact, you will most likely face many trials and persecution. Paul had been beaten, fastened in the stocks, and was now sitting in Roman jail. However, we don't hear him complaining. We don't hear him regretting living for God. We don't hear him blaming God. Paul doesn't look to the possibility of him getting out of prison. He feels that he is at the end of his life, yet there is no sorrow. Instead he says, "I rejoice." In fact, as Paul was in prison for preaching, on sixteen different occasions in these four chapters he speaks of joy and rejoicing. See, Paul understood something that is amazing. He understood that there is deep, amazing joy that comes when we give of ourselves sacrificially for the glory of God and the good of others. Paul knew that this earthly life was temporary. But, he knew that eternity was coming. Because of this, he was willing to pay whatever the price and suffer any cost in order that the world would hear the Good News of Jesus and would believe in Him. Notice then his final statement. He not only says, "I rejoice." He now looks at us and says, "You, too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me." Paul is calling us to give our lives to serving the Lord and reaching others for Him just as Paul himself did. Joy in our lives can become a present reality today if we commit to serving Jesus and sacrificing our own lives for His will. The question is, "Are you willing to pay the price?" My prayer today is that we will surrender completely to Him, that by His grace and with His help we will live out our faith in the community so that the lost are saved and the Lord is exalted!