

Philippians #4
Obey, Workout, Rejoice
Phil 2:12-18

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Paul introduces himself as a servant; Philippians is a letter of emotion to thank these people. He's connected to them yet he doesn't know if he will get out of prison.

Three concepts stand out: obey, work out, and rejoice. But there are two THEREFOREs in verse 2:1 and 2:12, so we need to know what's happening. In Chapter 1 at the end, Paul is talking about suffering and rejoicing in suffering. There are four IFs:

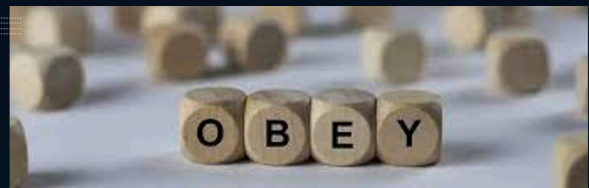
2.1&12 *Therefore*

1 **if** you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, **if** any comfort from his love, **if** any fellowship with the Spirit, **if** any tenderness and compassion,

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

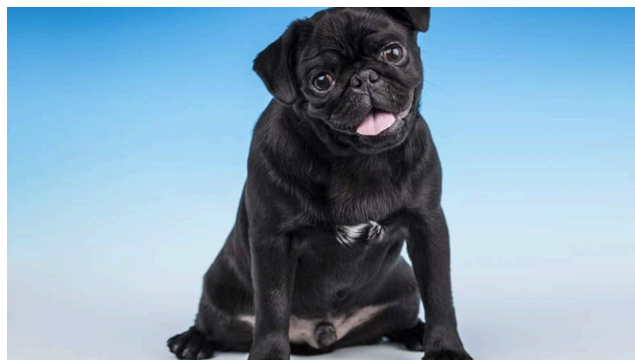
Paul is deeply concerned about how suffering impacts community and how it shapes how we understand ourselves. No matter what the cause of the suffering, if you cannot connect yourself to the affections of Jesus, it will be destructive to community. That is why it is critical to have the same mindset as Jesus.

Then comes the next THEREFORE in verse 12:



12 my dear friends, as you have always **obeyed**—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence

I think obedience is not a problem with just children: it exists in our hearts. For example, this dog, Perky:

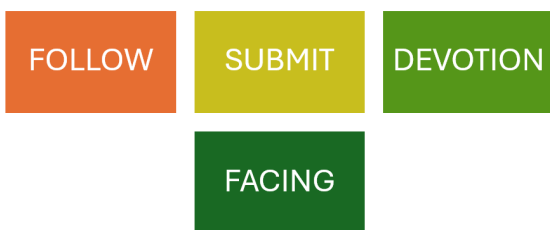


Perky was a wild dog that I would occasionally house sit for. I was determined to make Perky obedient. First, I used a magazine and threw it down hard next to Perky whenever she was disobedient. It took 2 days; Perky was an amazing learner! He became my devoted servant. When I left their home, however, Perky went back to his old ways. Yet when I visited, Perky obeyed!

We are all Perky: we can obey and be devoted when there are boundaries and someone is watching us. Yet Paul wants the Philippian church to obey even if he isn't around or never comes back.

Obedience entails FOLLOWING. Next, it means to SUBMIT, be DEVOTED, and FACING. Facing is almost non-existent in our culture: texting, phone, online is not face-to-face.

Obey



Obedience means keeping our eyes on Jesus, locked and focused on Him

The next part of the verse:

Work Out

12 . . . continue to **work out** your *salvation* with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who **works** in you to **will** (desire) and to **act** (ability) in order to fulfill his **good purpose**.

A blue dashed line curves around the bottom right of the text.

Work out means to join someone in what they are doing. This really means to continue to join Jesus in your salvation which is a reality, This is sanctification. It requires our participation. This means that I was born a Cepin yet I didn't really understand what that

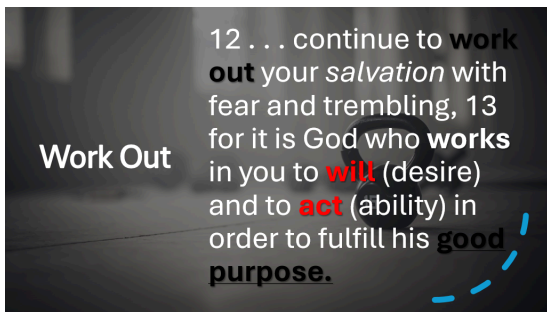
meant. Before too long, though, I encountered a choice to resist or participate. This is also true with salvation.

Likewise, imagine if we went to a class and they told us the first day that we already had an “A.” For the rest of the semester, our job was to live up to being an “A” student. The word WORK means energy. We get the desire and ability to work out our salvation from God

John 14:23

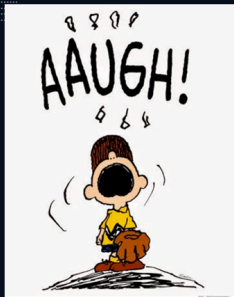
23 Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, **and we will come to them and make our home with them.**

Remember being a mobile home for the Gospel? This is what John 14:23 is saying. Think about working out your salvation as being with God and participating with him. This is exciting because in order to fulfill this, you must know that God really loves you and that he is super excited to transform you and see the works you will do with him. He’s not going to sit back and not give you what you need! This is what working out means.



Exercising and working out means NOT grumbling and arguing, like the Israelites did in the desert.

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, (Num 14:2-4) 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a **warped and crooked** generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you **hold firmly (obey)** to the **word of life.**



I find I grumble a lot and I can find other people who will grumble with me! It’s easy to end up there...Paul wants to put a stop to the grumbling...**working out is enhanced when you don’t grumble.** This is actually a prayer from Chapter 1 about this: it makes me blameless! And innocent...not innocent as in a visible innocence in a court of law. It’s purity that

isn't about motives. If you mix wine and milk, it curdles. If you grumble and complain, your motives are impure.

It also develops your identity as a child of GOD. This is a sacrificial word: without blemish like an animal to be sacrificed. Jesus was without fault and was a sacrifice poured out. There is a contrast between us as Jesus's followers and the world.



Proverbs 2:14
who rejoice in
doing evil and
delight in the
perverseness of
evil, 15 men
whose paths are
crooked, and
who are devious
in their ways.

If you grumble and complain, your bent changes and no longer are you pointed to purity but instead to evil and caught up with the joy of evil and its violence.

Grumbling is a communal activity. But in the midst of working out, it's tightening our grip on the gospel in private and in public. We are tightening our grip when we are in the world; we must tighten ourselves around the story of the gospel. It looks like we are rehearsing what God is doing in our midst.

This brings us to Rejoice!



Paul wants to brag about these people. A side note about Paul:

If you were to hang out with Paul, I think he would be talking about Jesus, sports, and tents. There was a huge gym in Ephesus where Paul would hang out with the philosophers. Paul has coached people: he

doesn't want his work to be in vain and he hopes his work is worth it! He wants them to hold onto the gospel and work out.

Rejoice

16 . . . And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or **labor in vain**. 17 But even if I am being **poured out like a drink offering** on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Philippi was mostly retired soldiers who had a culture where you offer wine before and after you eat. Paul wants to be poured out on their faith even if he doesn't get out of prison. He wants them to be glad even if his suffering is his death offering.

Rejoice: to make much of things, to be happy. For Paul though, it's not a feeling, it's a reality. For this, he can practice rejoicing: repenting and being restored, standing up for what is wrong and being misunderstood, yet rejoicing. Rejoicing is the continual telling of God's story but without minimizing pain and suffering. There is Paul's honest pain and suffering behind his words throughout this book.

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(1 Corinthians 11:23-26 NIV)

The key to rejoicing is being a person who can articulate the affections of God. This motivates us to get into the spiritual gym and lead us deeper than surface obedience. It's not ignoring the wild turkeys underneath us.

Questions to think about: how have you experienced God's affections? Can you articulate them? How has the Holy Spirit stirred up in me the issues of complaining and grumbling?

Q: How does grieving compare to complaining?

A: Grief is a place you will put your clip (if you were rock climbing): God is good. Complaining is putting your clip on "God is not fair, God is not good, I deserve more."

Q: When are times to be silent and when are the times to talk about our suffering?

A: In community, if you are asked how you are doing, vulnerability is important. But check your motives: if your motives are to get another person to make you feel OK, maybe it's time to be silent.

