

What Paul is expressing is to equip Christians. If we become cool and distant to the things of Christ, we feel that we have run for nothing. We need to be running as a torchbearer would run, holding his torch and not being distracted by any difficulties around us. We need to live shining before this dark generation. Paul also speaks about Christian conduct in terms of rejoicing.

Finally, Paul speaks about this rejoicing. Paul says, *“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. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.”* (17-18) Why is Paul always rejoicing? Why does he make a big deal out of joy? Is it because everything is going with him? It is just the opposite. Paul is in prison. Everything has gone against him. He does not know how his trial is going to come out. He is there in prison facing the possibility of death, yet his true joy came from the strength of the Lord. That is why Paul knew joy.

When our joy is in the Lord, we really experience joy. Paul uses an unusual term. He says, I may be poured out like a drink offering. (17) Paul was using this phrase to speak of his own martyrdom. He might be killed for the cause of Christ yet he said even in this I am glad and I rejoice with all of you. He said in the midst of all this, I am glad and rejoice and he said I encourage you, I urge you to rejoice in the same way. When we work for something to make a difference before this dark world, we must do so with joy. Even when the circumstances aren't going our way, it is time to live our Christian lives with joy.

All throughout the Bible God's people are always linked to joy. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that whining is equivalent to the nearness of God. It says just the opposite. The joyful life is interlinked to a true relationship with God. We need to remember that joy should be a part of our Christian life.

As Christians, we need to remember that our lights must shine before a dark world. If we are not truly living close to Christ, our lights are not shining. When we really live for Christ, our light becomes very bright before a dark world. This begins when you put your faith in Christ. Christian conduct is first and foremost based on a relationship with Christ. Whine or shine? – it is your choice!

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Philippians (6): Whine or Shine
Philippians 2:12-18
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There was a family who had trouble getting along with their neighbors. They argued back and forth many times. Finally, one of the neighbors was about to go on vacation. They hoped that this might reduce the tension between the two. After the neighbor left on vacation the family still at home noticed that their dog had gone from their yard into the neighbor's fenced yard. Not only had the dog gone into the neighbor's yard, but by the time they saw the dog it had the neighbor's pet rabbit in its mouth and was shaking it. When they finally got their dog back into its pen, they discovered the neighbor's pet rabbit was dead. The family was afraid that this incident would cause more tension, so they decided to clean the rabbit up, give it a bath, dry it off with a hair dryer, comb it and put it back into the rabbit cage. They thought that this would cover up any more problems that could arise between the two families.

When their neighbors returned from vacation they went into their back yard. There was screaming coming from the neighbor's yard where the rabbit cage was. The family ran to the back yard and asked the neighbors, “What is wrong? Did your rabbit die?” The neighbors told them that before they left on vacation the rabbit died and they buried it in the garden. Now the rabbit is back in the rabbit cage again.

Sometimes we need a lesson in Christian conduct. Paul wants to give the Philippians guidance in their Christian conduct. He tells them about living the Christian life. In verses 1 to 11 Paul talks about the example of Christ. Then today's text begins with the word, *“therefore”* (12). This whole passage is connected to the example of Christ. Paul is saying to the Philippians, Jesus Christ is God and he humbled himself as no one ever has. He became obedient and demonstrated the greatest example of humility. That word *“therefore”* means now to live under that lordship of Christ who was exalted.

Paul uses Christ's example to tell the Philippian Christians that they need to be living under the Lordship of Christ. They need to have the right Christian Conduct in their life. Paul says to them, *“You have always obeyed”* (12). Paul refers to their obedience in the past. Paul reminds them of that in the past they had been obedient and faithful to Jesus.

Then we come to a phrase in Scripture that might startle some of us. Paul says, “... *continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*” (12). Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-9, “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.*” He has talked about salvation by grace all this time and now Paul says work out your salvation? Paul is not talking here about initial salvation. He is talking about one who became a Christian and now goes on in the Christian life. He is talking about salvation in the sense of living the Christian life.

There are three aspects of salvation that the Bible speaks of. Salvation past, that point in time when we become a Christian. Salvation present, that is after we become a Christian and we go on living the Christian life. That is what Paul is talking about here. There is also a salvation future. That time that we spend with God in heaven. That glorification time is salvation future.

Here Paul is speaking about salvation present. We sometimes refer to this as sanctification. He says, “*work out your salvation.*” We don’t become Christians through doing good works. It is by the grace of God, by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. But once we become Christians, then we have the need to grow in our Christian lives by the good works that we do. Becoming a Christian is not the end result. That is only the beginning. Once we put our faith in Christ and become a Christian, then we only begin to live the Christian life. We must do our good works and grow in relationship from the faith that we have in Christ.

Paul said we are to live out our Christian life with fear and trembling. He is talking about a legitimate fear and reverence of God. When we live our Christian life, we must do so holding a healthy respect for the holiness of God. It would cause us to be aware of pride and take away self-righteousness when we live out our salvation with fear and trembling, remembering the righteousness of God.

Paul begins to bring the other side to this truth. Not only does he call on us to work out our salvation, but he reminds us that, “*It is God who works in you to will and act according to his good purpose*” (13). In other words, that while we as believers are doing good works, the Holy Spirit dwells in our lives and we need to be submitting to Christ so Christ can work through us. When we love our enemies, it is Christ through us loving our enemies. God works in us to will and act according to his good purpose.

Here is a balance of two truths: Our own good works and God working through us. You know before we become a Christian, God does not work through us. He may work on us, but not through us. The Holy Spirit is doing a work of conviction in our lives. When we become a Christian, God is in us. When we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in our lives and God works through us to bring about these good works he has prepared for us. These truths represent our human freedom as individuals, yet it keeps in mind God is sovereign and all-powerful.

Paul tells the Philippians that they are to do everything “*without complaining or grumbling*” (14). Grumbling is not worthy of the Christian calling. The theme in Paul’s letter is joy and the opposite of joy is grumbling. If we are going to live for Christ, it must be out of joy and not out of complaining. We need to be careful that we don’t serve God in an attitude of grumbling. Our attitude is to be that of joy. If we complain and grumble, then it is a sign of an inward spiritual problem. If we do what we do out of grumbling or complaining, then we are not truly as God wants us to be. We need to be right with God and that means having joy in our life.

Paul begins to talk of the world. He says the world is “*crooked and depraved*” (15). Paul talks about the culture that he lived in nearly two thousand years ago. It was depraved and crooked. Paul knew very well the condition of Philippi. He was arrested and beaten for preaching the gospel there. He knew they were living in a crooked and depraved city. Even today we can say the same description holds true for the society around us. There is corruption around us. Paul says in his day his world was crooked and depraved and in our day our world is almost the same as well. Then what are we to do? Paul says, “*Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky*” (15). We are to live as lights before this dark world. The more darkness that prevails, the more opportunity we have to shine as Christians. That is what Paul tells them to do, shine as stars

We live where the darkness prevails. At the same time it becomes an opportunity to shine our lights. Wherever we go, work, school or in the marketplace, we have an opportunity to shine our light for Jesus. We can be on the cutting edge. The condition the Philippians were in is also much like what we have, darkness around us. It is an opportunity to shine like stars against a dark sky. Paul felt the success of his own life was intertwined with that of the Philippians. Paul said to them, how you live your life is going to make a difference. Paul was willing to sacrifice his own life, but he had a purpose that those Philippian Christians would be truly living their lives for Jesus Christ.