

**Text: Philippians 2:12-13**  
**Title: “Unchained Holiness”**

I think if we were completely honest many of us would have to admit that we struggle under the notion that the Christian life is my working hard to measure up to all the demands God has on my life. And again, if we are honest, we will admit that we feel like we're not really measuring up. And that's why many believers have just given up and settled into defeat and the continuous guilt that goes with that. I'm here today with God's Word that will unchain you *from* that notion ... and a word that will unchain you *for* true holiness and obedience to God. You see, the Good News is that real holiness is possible ... obedience to God is possible ... but not just in our human strength. Look again at the verses in Philippians 2 which Devon read earlier. **Read Philippians 2:12-13.**

The Apostle Paul is saying in this ancient letter to some dear friends, “I want you to be free of a religion where you obey only when I or someone else is present and watching. I want you to be unchained for a kind of holiness that comes from a different motivation ... not working hard in order to measure up, but rather joyously working out something that God has already worked in to you.”

We're talking here about God doing a work in us where our impulses change ... to where our impulse, our instinct, is to love, not hate ... to forgive, not hold on to bitterness ... to be kind, not indifferent ... guys, to look respectfully upon a woman, not lustfully. We're talking here about our impulse to give, not take ... to be merciful, not judgmental. Wouldn't you like to live guided by a new set of impulses? Wouldn't you like to live a life where holiness and obedience to God is not just desirable ... it is actually possible?

God designed the Christian life to work in a way where the pressure is not all on me to perform. Christ did all the measuring up for me. When I put my trust in Him He does a supernatural work in me that changes me from the inside out. And God does this in two great movements in our lives:

**1. SALVATION ... the act of God to cancel our sins**

**Philippians 2:12b - Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,**

So when we put our trust in Christ, repenting of our sins, God cancels our sin debt ... the debt we all owe because we have sinned against a holy God. We are

justified in that we are declared not-guilty. The guilt of our sin was heaped upon Jesus on the cross, and His righteousness was heaped upon us. Now when God looks upon us He sees the righteousness of His own Son.

But this is not just a *transaction* where I trade my sin for Christ's righteousness. Salvation is also *transformation*. Salvation actually changes me. That's what is described in ...

**Philippians 2:13 - for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.**

This is where it starts. The miracle of salvation is God working in you something supernatural ... a new life. It's not just you deciding you're going to try to clean up your life. It starts with God changing you on the inside.

**ILLUSTRATION** – It's like telling this glove to pick up my Bible. It's impossible. There is no life in that glove. I can threaten and warn and yell all day long, but because there's no life in the glove it can never do what is demanded of it. But if the life of my hand moves into the glove everything changes. That glove is able to do what was impossible before. It's the same glove with a new life operating inside of it. That's what happens when are saved.

**2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

Has that happened for you? Are you "in Christ"? Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ and He is living in you by His Holy Spirit. If not, before this service is over just come before God with your whole life, sin and all. Give your life to Christ. Put your trust in what He did for you on the cross 2000 years ago. Turn your back on your old way of life and start your new life with Christ today. And then watch the supernatural change that God brings to your life

So the first great movement of God in us is what is called salvation where God acts to cancel our sin debt. But here's the other great movement of God in our life:

**2. SANCTIFICATION ... the act of God with us to conquer our sins**

This is what vv.12-13 describe:

**Philippians 2:12b - Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,**

Don't stop half-way; go on until the full experience of Christ is realized in your life ... go on until Christ has defeated every last bit of anger, lust, self-pity, or pride or whatever.

**Philippians 2:13 - for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.**

This working out (with God's help) what God has worked in to us is what the Bible calls "sanctification." The "good purpose" toward which God is working in our lives is our sanctification. Paul writing to the church in Thessalonica, a city not too far from Philippi, applied this to area of sexual purity:

**1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 - It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable,**

**1 Thessalonians 4:7 - For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.**

The word "sanctification" is connected to the word "holy." And it is the process where God works with us to conquer sin in our everyday life. So when God works salvation in us He energizes the desire in us for holiness. If you are saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit then you will have the desire to kill the sin that keeps you from acting according to his good purpose. Why? Because that is what salvation is intended to accomplish. That's why Christ came to begin with.

**1 John 3:5 - But you know that (Christ) appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.**

Why would I want to hang on to what Christ came to take away. Why would I not want to conquer the sin that Christ has already canceled by His death on the Cross.

Now we all have what are called "besetting sins," sins that are particularly troublesome to us as individuals. And we need to be well enough acquainted with our souls to know what those besetting sins are. Some may struggle with lust that leads to sexual immorality, while others may struggle with greed that leads to overspending. And we need to be ruthless in battling those sins. But we need to be

just as ruthless with the sins that are more respectable or acceptable (if there is such a thing). I'm talking about sins like gossip, or worry, or unwholesome speech, or moodiness, or bitterness. We need to be ruthless in dragging those sins out into the light. As the psalmist prays:

**Psalm 139:23-24 – Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.**

So we're back to...

**Philippians 2:12b - Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,**

What does it mean to work out our salvation “with fear and trembling...”?

**ILLUSTRATION** – Suppose I called you up here with no advance notice and asked you to sing the National Anthem in front of all of us. Now if you were just sitting out in the crowd you could sing it perfectly. But something about being up in front of others puts a pressure on us to perform. You would stand here in fear and trembling ... and probably forget the words. But that's not this is. But suppose that Adele (started to say Lady Gaga, but maybe not) was standing beside you singing. You would still have fear and trembling, not because you afraid of messing up, but that you are getting to sing with Adele.

And when the Bible talks about working out your salvation with fear and trembling, it's not the fear and trembling that we will mess up or not measure up. It's the fear and trembling that comes from realizing that we are strenuously working toward holiness because God is strenuously working for our holiness. As we are working out our salvation we are working with Almighty God ... working in the presence of God ... working in the power of God. What an awesome, breathtaking thought!

So this gives us hope that real holiness and obedience to God is actually possible.

**1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.**

To win the battle with sin we have to F.I.G.H.T. In closing, let me just walk you through the battle and show you how to fight:

### **Flee the situation.**

**ILLUSTRATION** - Suppose your doctor tells you that you have severe diabetes and if you take one more bite of Blue Bell Ice Cream you will die. So what do you do? You go to the freezer where you have a dozen tubs of ice cream and you throw them all out. Can't have that temptation so close. And when you go to the grocery store, you don't walk down that aisle anymore. No need to torture yourself with the temptation.

**2 Timothy 2:22 - Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

### **Intercept the sinful thought within 5 seconds (II Cor. 10:5).**

We have control over our thoughts. So when the thought comes to your mind that your life is not complete without that new pair of shoes, you immediately intercept that thought. Five seconds is long enough for you to realize that's a lie. The completeness of your life has nothing to do with your shoes. The same thing is true with thoughts of worry, or lust, or selfishness, or pride or whatever.

**2 Corinthians 10:5b - Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

### **Guide your mind to Scripture (Ps. 119:11).**

The psalmist shows us how to take back control of our minds and our hearts.

**Psalm 119:11 - I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.**

Most of the time we won't have a Bible readily available, so that's why it's important to have some great verses loaded in our memory to grab on to. The Bible says that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit ... the sword that we desperately need to fight the battle with sin every day.

**Hold the truth in your mind until the temptation is gone (Phil. 4:8).**

Grab for truth and hold on to it until the temptation passes.

**Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.**

Again, believe it or not, you have control over what you choose to let your mind dwell on.

**Turn to a Christ-exalting activity (Ps.34:14).**

Singing a spiritual song or a hymn is a Christ-exalting activity. Listening to worship music is a Christ-exalting activity. Turning to encourage another person or showing kindness to a hurting person is a Christ-exalting activity.

**Psalms 34:14 - Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.**

So FIGHT sin every minute of every hour of every day, not to appear righteous to yourself or others, but because God is working in you toward righteousness.

**Philippians 2:13 - for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.**

This is the grace of God working in us. We need the grace of God for salvation. The Bible says it is by grace we are saved. But we need just as much grace for our sanctification. We can't do it without God. And God won't do it without us. When we are saved God's grace creates in us the will (desire) to obey and the ability to act according to His good pleasure. God's grace calls us to change and then gives us the power to actually pull it off.

This is the vision of God for your life. When God saves you He envisions for you this life ... the life of Christ. Here's the deal about God's vision for us ... it *will* be accomplished. What He envisions when He saves you will take place. He will bring you to glory. One day you will be presented perfect before the Father. Why? Because God is working in you both to will and to act according to His good purpose.

**Philippians 1:6 - being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**

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