

Philippians 2:12–13 (NKJV)

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

This morning I hope to move outside our norm a little. But don't worry. It isn't anything crazy.

I would like to refer to all that we have studied in Philippians so far to answer the question- **Why obey?**

Why obey? (We are going to look at **16 reasons to obey**. It is a little long.)

Do you find it hard to obey Christ?

Do you find it easy to come up with reasons to give into our excuses?

Do you find excuses for disobeying so powerful?

Do the desires of your flesh seem just too powerful at times? The desire for pleasure? The desire for revenge? The desire to make someone pay for what they did to you? The desire for escape in whatever form we choose? If I missed your favorite, please add it here.

Do those things sometimes determine what you do? Do you feel compelled to follow some of your more base or selfish desires?

I think the assumption in scripture is that, even though it is the ultimate expression of foolishness to disobey God, we are all prone to do exactly that.

As I have been pondering our texts up to this point something important dawned on me. While Paul is covering all kinds of territory, he is also doing something else. He is giving us a **whole bunch of reasons** to obey our Master.

Do you want to go into this week, this YEAR actually, with more reasons to obey Christ than you have ever had? Do you want to have more reasons to trust Christ this week? I do.

And even as I say this, I wish that the **lack of information** was the biggest problem in my life. Do you know what I mean? I wish there was one piece of information that once I knew it, it would turn every corner in my life. If just knowing the **right thing to do** and all the **right reasons to do it** would guaranty from that point on I **would do it**.

Ignorance is sometimes a part of our excuse. But it is rarely the **whole reason** for our disobedience. We know that most assuredly by **this evidence**. Once we hear what is true, and fully understand it, we often **still** do that wrong thing. Check your history. Knowing what **sin is** does not change us. Truly knowing God changes us.

Think about it from where God sits. God saw fit to have a book written that every word was inspired by God. He protected that book through every generation. Faithful ministers gave their lives to put that book in our hands. Even those who know nothing about Christianity know that the Bible is our... well Bible. It is the book we go to to find out what God wants.

We are all aware that 90% of what the Bible says is easy to understand. Any middle school child that knows how to read could read the epistles and tell us what God is for and what God is against. They may not know all the words that aren't usually used in our culture, but aided with a dictionary they could easily complete the assignment.

So God gave us this book at great expense and care by Him and His people. We understand that it is **His book** to tell us **how to live**. And we have a terrible tendency to have that book sit on a shelf as we go about making daily decisions about what we think will make us most happy.

So at that point, **ignorance** is not the biggest issue. **Apathy** is the biggest problem. I don't **know** and I **don't care** that I **don't know**. Because I trust myself to be the authority for my decisions. "Reading the Bible to answer the questions is too hard. I don't understand how to do it. I have no practice." Things like that. So my point is, our biggest failure does not come from **not knowing**. It comes from not **believing** that **God knows what we need** for all of life. It comes from us not running to Him for all matters of life.

So as we look at reasons to obey this morning, what we are looking at is **mental ammunition** for the battle that runs inside us. The ammunition is more and more truth to refute the lies our flesh gravitates to. It is a tremendous aid on facing the temptations and trials and struggles we will face, things we will face even maybe before leaving this building this morning.

So what has Paul given us **so far**?

I know that I do not encourage you very often to follow in your Bibles, or whatever you use as a Bible, but it really is a good practice. Make sure that what I **say** the Bible says it **really** says. And it gets those words **in our eyes** as well as **in our ears**. That all helps.

Ok let's start a verse 1&2 and answer the question, why should I obey Christ?
Philippians 1:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

***Our **first reason** to obey is that God cared enough **about us** to make sure to have Godly men **address us**. While Paul was writing to the Philippians we know that God was writing through him to us. And all of us here have been given that same resource. We should obey because God cares enough about us to send us **His guidance** through **His people**.

Next

Philippians 1:3–5 (NKJV)

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

***The **second reason** to obey is that God has people who are **rooting for you** and **praying for you**. They are **behind** you. This may not be true for every believer, but it is more likely to be true for every believer who is in a good church. Sometimes we can evaluate our fellow believers wrongly and determine that they are not **as much for us** or for us in the way **we want** them to be, but if you are in a church that is a church, there are people there **rooting** for your success, for your **growth**, for your **overcoming**. And to some degree they are praying for you. We should obey because **we have support**. We have people for us.

Next reason

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV)

6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

*****Third reason**- We should obey because we know that God **has initiated** and **empowered** our obedience. God recreated us **for** obedience. God **began** the good work. Our theology gives all the credit to it being **God** who selected us from the beginning of time to be His child. If God **began** that work, most of our excuses fall limp in their logic.

This is exactly the logic in Ephesians 2:8 and 9

Ephesians 2:8–10 (NKJV)

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

God **initiated** the good work so that we will **do good works**. The work He did was **DIRECTLY** associated with the work that we will do. Our regeneration and our sanctification are forever linked. So we should obey because that is what we were born again **for**. That is what we were **recreated** for. We cannot hardly say,

“I cannot do this”, without directly insulting the one who created us for “doing this”.

Next reason:

Philippians 1:7 (NKJV)

7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

*****Fourth Reason**- We should obey because we are where we are **by grace**. We are **fellow sharers** of the grace of God. What this means is that we can never use this logic with God.

“I deserve having a higher position than I have been given. I deserve an easier life. I deserve to have you take away this difficulty or this temptation.”

There is no **deserve** with grace. Grace is favor we get where there is no deserve. We **deserved** punishment. We **received** favor.

So we should obey because whatever is in our life, we cannot say **I deserve** something different.

And the other side of that is gratitude. If I am the recipient **of grace**, nothing **I could ever give** could be as valuable or costly as that **which was given to me**. I have every reason with every breath to **thank God** that He has saved me with the cost of His son. He has brought me into His family. And He has destined me to live forever in a perfect happiness environment. All of our God shaped dreams will literally come true.

So we should obey because we are where we are by grace.

Next

Philippians 1:9–11 (NKJV)

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

*****Fifth Reason**- We should obey because God is still very active in our sanctification.

Prayer is asking God for something, and in this case, something Paul can pray **by faith** because Paul knows for absolute certain that this **is the will of God** for the believers at Philippi. He can pray expecting to receive what he asks for.

So the implication is that God is going to answer Paul’s prayers.

And what is Paul praying for?

Isn't it, at the end of the day a more **fully informed** and **enriched obedience**? He prays that they will grow in **knowing God** and knowing **about** God and knowing what **is** and **is not** of God, so that they can **pick the best things** and live in a way that **does not offend God** nor **cause others** to offend God.

Paul perfectly expects that this is EXACTLY what God will produce. So we can know that God is currently **empowering** the very things **we need** in order to be **more fully obedient** to God.

I was thinking of an illustration to explain this. We often speak of the spiritual life as a life of swimming up stream, because we never accomplish anything without a great degree of effort. And that is all true. In the Christian life we must go against all of our worldly and fleshly impulses. So when the river is the world, we swim upstream.

But when the river is the **will of God**, obedience is also like **swimming downstream**. The very current we are in **empowers** our obedience. God is not only **enabling** our success but He is actively **empowering** it. If you want to grow as a believer, God is actively **cooperating** in that process. **Your efforts** are even **more effective** as you cooperate with **His** sanctifying efforts.

Now next. Why obey?

Look at the end of verse 11

to the glory and praise of God.

*****Sixth Reason-** We should obey because obedience gives glory and praise to God. We hear a lot about worship. And a lot of the discussion is talking about different styles of worship services. But here is what worship is **all about**. Doing things to the glory and praise of God. We have spoken before about a better way to think about worship is worth-ship. How **we live** is a much more important aspect of worship than **what we do for the few hours** we gather on Sunday morning.

What is God worth to us? And we show **what He is worth** by how much we elevate those things that He says are **important to Him**. We show our worship by our submission and obedience to His stated will.

And that kind of worship grants glory and praise to God, even if we never lift our hands or sing a song. Although we probably **will** do both of those things as we become more enthralled with the person of Christ.

We should obey because it gives **glory and praise to God**. And He is infinitely worthy of both.

Next. Why else should we obey?

Philippians 1:12–20 (NKJV)

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, 13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; 14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: 16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

*****Seventh reason-** We should obey because **God will use it to further His kingdom.**

Think about it. Paul did not know what God had in mind when he faced the circumstances he faced. And if he whined and complained and pitied himself what effect do we think that might have had for the gospel? If Paul responded the way we are tempted respond to difficulty, what would have happened in his ministry? What would the guards have thought about Christianity?

Fortunately Paul obeyed. He faced his circumstance through faith in the character of God. And he overcame.

And God used it dramatically.

You and I have **little idea** why God allows us to face all kinds of things in our lives. Right now we are probably facing things we do not understand. God has not let us in on exactly what He is doing. But we know that if we **face it in faith in the character of God**, that He **loves** us and **intends us good**. If we face it with the mentality that it **draws us closer to God** in our dependence upon Him to face this difficult thing, **instead of** using it as a reason to distance ourselves from God. If we face it **with faith**, God will use it to **show Himself off** in our lives. God will use it to **draw attention to His son**. He will use it to **expand His kingdom**. He will use it for opportunities for the gospel to be told.

So we should obey because **God will use it to further His kingdom.**

Next reason

Philippians 1:21–23 (NKJV)

21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

*****Eighth reason-** To obey is our highest and most ultimate purpose.

When we see our very reason for existence as being **all about Christ**, we are at the peak of the **best way** a life can be lived. This is a real struggle for us. For it is difficult to not allow those **good things Christ gives us** to take the sole place that **only Christ** should have. When “to live is Christ” is **truest** in our lives, we are making the **wisest** decisions possible for human kind. It is truly what **the human** is designed for. Then all the other things like family and church and marriage and children and hobbies and work take their proper place. We enjoy them with an open hand before the Lord.

Ultimately we should obey because **when we obey** we are fulfilling the **highest destiny** we could have. When we obey we are in exactly **the position God would have us in** every moment of every day.

When we live in a way where it is true of us that **“to live is Christ”**, life at that moment cannot be lived any better. That is the ultimate. That is the mountain top of our created design.

When we feel we have little purpose we should examine what we are living for. Is it a mixture of Christ and other stuff? Or is it **Christ**, and all the other stuff flows from that?

Next

Notice what is in verses 21 and 23

to die is gain.

To be with Christ, which is far better.

*****Ninth reason-** No course of action has a **higher return on investment** than obedience.

Say we have a block of free time that we can do anything with.

How do we make the decision of **what we will do with it?**

Ultimately do we not decide at least partly due to what we think will **make us the most happy?**

The point here is that the Christian life, and all those things done through faith in Christ, all those obediences are sure entries into our eternal bank account. Now

obviously we are not talking about cash. But we are talking about **treasures**.
Eternal enjoyment.

How can you live so that everything you do is ultimately assured to grant you the **most pleasure?**

The answer? **Obey Christ.**

We will one day see Christ and **on that day** our past faithfulnesses will be **gifts** we have to give to Him. I think we will all be just overwhelmed and enthralled by the grace of God and this amazing new reality that we are being invited into.

I also think, somewhere in that mix, will be our **great pleasure** to have those things to lay at Christ's feet, to display to Him just **how worthy** we regarded Him in our lives. The gain we will experience in that environment will be astronomically higher than our **greatest imaginations**. Life at its absolute best, a maintainable and sustainable happiness that is not interfered with by any of the remnants of sin.

And in that moment, there will be **nothing more important** about our past life than **our obediences** done by faith in the Son of God. Those will be our crowns.

Do you want to make that day **better? Obey now.**

Regard every moment you breathe as an opportunity to make that day even better. Live for that day.

Next

Philippians 1:24–26 (NKJV)

24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, 26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

***The **tenth reason** to obey Christ- By obeying Christ you will **help others**.

Paul's life effected the progress and joy of other believers. Had Paul started a saddle business and expanded to multiple cities, he may have **had some effect**.

And that actually **could be** someone's calling. But Paul's calling poured his life out on people. He was very targeted with his efforts. And he knew as he kept obeying, it would have the effect of **helping people be** what they **should be** in Christ.

And notice there is **mutual joy** in this process. Do you want to be loved and needed and cherished in life? Well, think about the adults you love and need and cherish in your life? Are they not most often people who actively and continually **look out for your best interest?** Are they not people who are obeying Christ by **taking care of you** in some way?

Not only is there an **eternal** reward for this kind of obedience. There is often an **earthly** payoff on the deepest levels. Are we not **most happy** when we are **most helping someone else**? That is not the primary reason for serving others, but it is one with a built in **immediate reward** in many cases.

So we should obey because we will help others.

Next

Philippians 1:27 (NKJV)

27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

***The **eleventh reason** to obey Christ Obedient people live in unity.

A church will never have unity without obedience. Because the unity is not due to being a social institution. It is a group of people with a **shared Lord** and a **shared vision**. Living worthy of the gospel is living in a way **obedient** to the **word of God** which contains the Gospel. Not only will people with this shared vision get along, they will be **united** in a **shared effort** of obedience. Their lives are all about furthering and submitting to the gospel. Which is ultimately living obediently to Christ.

Next

Philippians 1:28–30 (NKJV)

28 and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. 29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

***The **twelfth reason** to obey Christ- Obedience keeps us from being afraid, or giving into our adversaries.

Who really wants to **live in fear**? Yet fear is a **choice**. It does not **happen** to us. The initial feeling of it might. But a state of maintained fear does not. We **choose** it.

Obedience protects us from that. As we live with the **highest priorities** in their proper place, the **secondary things** are seen in the proper perspective. While it is easy to expect that those who do not know Christ live in such a way that their lives are the most important thing to them, we **do not** live that way. Obedience assures that. So the things that **threaten them** do not **threaten us** in the same

way. In fact, the **highest** is so much more important than the **second highest** that we are willing to spend everything for **the first thing**. That is how obedient people are to live.

Obedience teaches us to expect opposition by the people who would hate Christ if he showed up in our situations.

We not only **do not fear it**. We **embrace** it. Obedient people can **cheer** when they are chosen to receive the same treatment that Christ experienced.

Next

Philippians 2:1–2 (NKJV)

1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

*****The thirteenth reason to obey Christ-** This is really 4 reasons, but we are running long today. **Christ offers infinite resources to His children.**

if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy

So why should we obey?

Because there is infinite **consolation** in Christ

There is infinite **comfort of love**

There is continual **fellowship of the Spirit**

And there is always **affection and mercy**.

We talked about this list earlier. We laid out what all of these things mean. But they are all things that either God gives us **directly** or **through His people**. They are the blessings we have that **meet** some of the **deepest needs** of our lives. The world runs around looking for love or demanding it. They often make tremendously stupid decisions in trying to get their deepest needs met.

Christians, on the other hand, receive those deepest **need-meeting provisions** by virtue of being in Christ.

In the end we are left with no reasons Not to obey. Obedient people are having their deepest needs met by the provisions offered them by being in Christ's family. They need not be distracted by running after those things. They are **promised**. And again, not always in the way we might **imagine it** or **idealize it** or even think **they need to be**. We are not told they will all meet up to our self created expectations. But what we really need will be provided if we will simply be obedient.

Philippians 2:5–11 (NKJV)

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

***The **fourteenth** reason to obey- We should obey because the one we obey has **shown us how**.

This takes care of two obstacles.

First we might ask why should I obey. And Christ answers by saying, "I obeyed and I did it perfectly." How can we respond to our Savior and say, no I want another option. This is too hard. If **Christ**, the king of kings and lord of lords obeyed, it is perfectly expectable and demandable that **we too** should obey. And second, if we are not sure how to go about it, he solved that one too.

Christ never asks us to do anything more than He already did. If we want to know how to obey, it is simple. Look at how Christ obeyed. Then obey like that.

We are even told the inner workings of how Christ processed it. He was the greatest and He accepted limitations and humiliations of all kinds. He is our example of how we too should obey.

Christ led by example. **His example** proves both that **we must obey** and we must obey **like He obeyed**. We are to follow His example.

So why should we obey? Because Christ obeyed and showed us how to obey.

Next

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

***The **fifteenth** reason to obey- God richly rewarded Jesus with honor for obedience.

We do not need to read far in scripture to know that God rewards obedience in heaven with honor. We are told what makes a person great in the Kingdom of God. We are told that those who are faithful in little things will be rewarded with greater things. We are told that there are positions of authority in heaven. I am not sure how all of that works out. But if you want a high position in heaven, it will be achieved by lowering self and elevating Christ and the people of Christ in your life. Your honor will come later by your humble obedience now.

Now the last reason to obey.

Philippians 2:12–13 (NKJV)

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

***The **sixteenth reason** to obey is very similar to the first reason.

We should obey because God is working **our obedience** to cause **His own pleasure**. We should obey because **we can do it** and **it will please Him**.

Have you ever known someone who was impossible to please. So after a while you just give up? You just accept that you will never please them.

God is not like that. He is **easily** pleased. That does not mean it is **easy to please Him**. Because it is not always **easy to be obedient**. But **if** we are obedient, doing the right thing for the right reason, we always know **how God will receive that**, how He will **respond**, what **effect** it will cause in Him. He will **always** be pleased. That is such a good thing to know about God.

And not only can obedience **please** God. God is always at work **making that goal attainable**. He continues to **empower** us to do it. He is empowering **our** willing with **His** willing, **our** doing with **His** doing.

We have looked at 15 reasons to obey, and this is in just the first 1 ¼ chapters of **one letter to one church**.

Now we might have **all kinds of reasons** for not obeying God at times. But not a single one of them is a **good** reason. At the end of the day **disobedience** comes down to **unbelief**, a lack of trust in God, a lack of belief in God, a lack of trust in God.

Praise God that every act of disobedience is **100% forgivable**. That should drive us to quickly run to God and ask for His forgiveness when we disobey. Every disobedience is forgivable. But not a single disobedience is **excusable**. When we are being empowered every day by the Holy Spirit to do that which we are commanded to do, we have no excuse.

I hope these reasons we looked at this morning are a massive encouragement to all of us to drop **our self talk** that **allows** us to sin. I pray that it drives us to a greater truth-based look at our lives. And that more and more we see that we **can please Christ**. And Christ truly is pleased. Even if there is not a single person in our lives that we can please, and that is rarely the case, that Christ **chooses to be pleased** by our **every act of obedience**, our every act of.... Well.... Worship.