

(Sermon 10)
The Implementation of Joyful Humility (Part 1)
Philippians 2:12-13
CRCC 4/2/17

Intro

If you could sum up the Christian life in one word what would it be? Joy, peace, fulfillment? What about one phrase? Can you think of one verse in the Bible that encapsulates the essence of the Christian life? I'm convinced that if Paul were asked that question he would respond by quoting himself in 1:21, "*For to me to live is Christ...*". But what does it mean to live for Christ? Well, as we have seen to live *for* Christ is to live *like* Christ. That's Paul's whole point beginning in 2:5 when he says, "*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.*" What sort of mind? Well, that of humility. So in one sense *humility* would be a great word to capture the essence of the Christian life. But as you know, the passage goes on to say that Christ's humility led to something else. Verse 9 says, "*He humbled Himself by becoming obedient.*"

Obedience is really the one word that best sums up the Christian life. When we say, "*For to me to live is Christ*" we mean that we live with a focus on obedience- obedience to God and His ways. A submission to Christ Himself through His Word.

Having just described the humble obedience of Christ, Paul now appeals to the Philippians to implement this in their own lives. Christ was obedient to the Father even though that included going to the cross. Therefore, the believer in Christ must also be obedient. Verse 12 in fact uses that key connector word **Therefore** to remind us that Paul is connecting Christ's obedience to our own obedience. He goes on to say in v12: **my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so no, not only as in my presence but much more in my**

absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

The connection should be obvious: humble obedience marked Christ's life, therefore humble obedience should mark the life of those in Christ. *Obedience*, we could say therefore, is the essence of the Christian life. *Obedience* is the one word that sums up the Christian's existence. And let's remember what we are talking about in the larger context. The theme of Philippians is joy in Christ. And we have seen that the key to joy is humility. Paul said in 2:2 that the Philippians would complete his joy (and thus theirs by implication) when they were "*of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind...doing nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count[ing] others more significant than yourselves (2-3)*". Paul's point is that humility brings joy in the community of God's people and thus joy to the individual Christian in the community. His point as he moves forward in vss 12 ff. therefore is that this joyful humility involves obedience to God. Inward joy in your heart will not come apart from your obedience to God. Outward joy in the church will not come apart from your obedience to God.

Holiness is the central goal of the Christian life. It's always been this way. Things have not changed. As we read earlier from Lev 19: "*And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy'*". The passage goes on to list all the ways Israel was to be obedient. And the list introduced with the phrase: "*Every one of you shall...(Lev 19:3)*". This tells us there are no exceptions. Obedience is required for every Christian. It is our duty. But the point of this passage is also that obedience is our delight. Humble obedience is part of having joy in Christ. This is Paul's larger point.

And, of course, we know that, or at least we sing about it: *Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

Now obedience- a life that pursues holiness- is a process. And this process is called *sanctification*. Sanctification is a theological word, which refers to the divine act of making the believer progressively holy in practical daily living. In other words, after salvation occurs you don't automatically become the most mature Christian overnight. It is a lifelong process. Obedience is a lifelong pursuit. It requires persistence, tenacity, toughness, and faith. It also requires knowledge- knowledge about how it works exactly. How does sanctification work? The passage before us tells us. The passage presents what appears to be a paradox. A paradox is a seeming contradiction. For example, in v12 Paul tells us to work out our salvation, but in v13 he tells us that it is God who works in us. Now which is it? Is living in obedience to God as a Christian completely dependent on the Christian working his salvation out? Or does the Christian trust God to do it because He is after all at work in us? The answer to both those questions is itself a contradiction because the correct answer is "yes". Yes, it is true that the Christian must put effort into working out their salvation. And yes it is true, that we can trust God will do it for us. Both are true. To put it another way: we have our part in sanctification and God has His part. Just because we cannot understand it doesn't make it untrue.

The Bible is full of these seeming paradoxes of man's part and God's part. Paul told the Corinthians that: *"by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain"*, but then went on to say, *"but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me"* (I Cor 15:10). Which was it Paul? Was it you or God's grace that made you the Christian you became? Paul would say both. I had a part and God had a part.

It was God's grace working in me that produced in me labor to grow in holiness. Or what about Gal 2:20 where Paul says: *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God"*. Which is it Paul? Are you living your Christian life, or is Christ living it for you? Paul would say both. I am living the Christian life in the power of Christ who lives within me.

These verses protect us from two pernicious errors seen in two false statements one might make after studying these verses: 1) "If I am to work hard in relationship to salvation then I contribute my own part to it". 2) If God works in me, then I don't need to work hard at following Christ." Both of these statements are wrong. These verses teach us that what God has worked in, the believer is responsible to work out. As Christians, we are to show outwardly what God has done to us inwardly through the gospel. On the one hand, we must never believe that salvation is by works, but on the other hand we must certainly believe in a salvation that works. This was James whole point wasn't it when he wrote: *"...faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works'. James says, 'Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works...O foolish man...faith without works is dead"* (Js 2:17-20). James whole point was that you can't pit faith and works against one another. Someone who is truly saved will produce a life of works, or we could say obedience. And if someone professes to have faith, but has now works, then he just proves that his faith is dead. It's not real. It's not powerful. It's not life less.

It should be painfully obvious to us that Paul would never have promoted works salvation. Our Scripture assurance of pardon was taken from Romans 4

where Paul wrote, “*to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly; his faith is counted as righteousness (4:5)*. He gives the details of his hopeless effort to achieve salvation by works in chapter 3:1-11 and Paul says there that he counts these works as rubbish (or manure). It’s only those who fail to understand that God demands perfect righteousness who believe in works salvation. It’s a failure to see God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness. Works salvation is no more possible than defying gravity is possible because there is none righteous the Bible says, no not one. So when Paul says in v12 that we are to work out our salvation, it must be balanced by what he says in v13, which is it is God who is at work in us. And therein lies the value of these two verses. These verses provide the most concise treatment of sanctification in all the Bible. So in one sermon, you can understand how the essence of the Christian life works. Before you leave today you will know the part you are to play in the Christian life, as well as the part that God promises to play.

Perhaps you are struggling with a besetting sin. There is something *you* must do about it. But there is also something that God promises *He* will do for you. Maybe you struggle being disciplined in your prayer life, apart from which holiness is not possible. There is something *you* must do. You cannot afford to be passive. But there is also something that God promises *He* will do for you. Or maybe you are being tempted in ways nobody understands. You have stood on the brink of giving in. There is something *you* must do today about that. The Bible says emphatically that you are to “*strive...for holiness without which no one will see the Lord*” (Heb 12:14). Your giving in to temptation will not make you lose your salvation. But your giving in to it may reveal you never were saved to begin with. Without holiness you will not see the Lord. Therefore, you must take steps today to do something about

it. But also rest in the fact that God has promised to do something for you in the midst of that.

Proposition: The outline is simple this morning. It shows us *2 realities*. V12 shows us man's part in a life of obedience for the Christian. And v13 shows us God's part in a life of obedience for the Christian.

I. Man's Part: *Working Out* (12)

Paul begins with your responsibility, lest you think that you can just "let go and let God" and spiritual growth in holiness will just "happen" apart from any effort on your own. He reminds us that our part in living an obedient life involves several elements.

A. Holy Consistency, 12a

The first element of an obedient Christian life is what we might call *holy consistency*. Paul begins v12 by saying: **Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed.** Paul marks out the consistent obedience here of the Philippians. He says they **always obeyed**. The word **obeyed** (ὕπακούω) is partially made up of the Greek word from which we English word *acoustics* derives.

We are always concerned with the sound system here at the church, if you want to call it that. We're looking into getting something better. Why? Because we want people to hear the Word. Why? It's not merely so you aren't straining to hear the announcements, or where to go next in the bulletin for the order of service. It's not merely to be able to record with better equipment. It's because hearing leads to obeying.

Paul is clearly speaking here about the Philippians obedience to the Word he preached to them. He's saying what he said earlier in the letter that from the

first day until now they were partners in the gospel. Through the gospel God had began a good work in them that He would complete (1:5-6). What was the key to their consistent obedience? The Greek word refers to placing oneself under what has been heard by obeying it. God's Word is absolutely central to a life of obedience.

Of course, notice carefully that Paul opened the verse by calling them **my beloved**. That term refers to those within God's redeeming love. Paul is not speaking to unbelievers. God's voice, and thus God's Word, only means something to the true sheep. True sheep follow after the voice of their Shepherd and feed off His Words. Jesus said, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*" (Jn 10:27). Lydia heard Jesus' voice in Paul's preaching and followed after Him- her and her household. The same was true with the Philippian jailer and his household. They heard the voice of Jesus their Shepherd in Paul's voice and followed after Him.

Paul's words here remind the Christian of a very well known but important principle about living in consistent obedience. *A life of holy consistency concerns the hearing of God's Word.* The reason you have not grown beyond milk to meat is because you don't value the Word. It's not because you aren't a Christian. It's because you don't value the Word. You don't read the Word every day. You don't pray the Word every day. You don't meditate on the Word. You don't expose yourself and your family to God's Word in family worship. You don't sing or listen to Christian songs that are filled with the Word and its truths. And thus when you come on Sunday, you don't hear the Shepherd's voice that clearly. The volume of His voice is turned down during the preaching because you don't value His Word. I dare say that your lack of obedience may not go beyond this central fact. You care not for His Word like you should. And without His Word- without hearing His voice- you will

not live an obedient life. You know this truth all too well, we are sanctified in and through truth that's precisely why Jesus prayed that in John 17. He didn't pray that we would be sanctified (or grow) through doing good deeds, feeding the poor, or merely going to church. He prayed that we would grow through our hearing and knowing the truth because that's the only prayer that would be answered because that's the only way a Christian grows. Peter was adamant that the Word of God is our nutrition; it's our milk that we are to long for to grow spiritually (I Pet 2:2).

Trans: If you are working out your salvation in a life of obedience, then your life will be marked by holy consistency. A holy consistency that cannot come apart from the Word. But a life of obedience will also be marked by...

B. Holy Character, 12b

What you do when nobody else is looking is the real you. Holy consistency is not good enough to be considered living a life of obedience, but also holy character. We are to obey God when others are watching and when they aren't watching. We are to obey God when our leaders in the church notice it and when they don't. We are to obey from right motives. This is what Paul is getting at when he urges them to continue obeying, as he says, **not only in my presence but much more in my absence.**

Paul repeats what he had just said in chapter 1:27, "*Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.*" Paul urges the Philippians to obey not just in his **presence**, but also his **absence** because true growth in holiness comes when we obey when others be it our pastor, the other elders, our spouse, or our kids are watching.

Some people just smell godly. They exude a certain holiness about them that can be, at times, intimidating. Dr. Whitney is one of these people. Godliness oozes from him. He never speaks out of turn. He barely makes one movement without carefully thinking about it. He's just godly! And there we sat at a red light that had a sign preventing cars from making a U-turn. But we *needed* to make a U-turn. Now I have been at that stop light many times. It makes no sense that you can't make a U-turn. The intersection is wide. The fact is, everyone makes a U-turn at this intersection. Even police do. Therefore, police do not pull people others over when they make a U-turn. So there I sat next to Dr. Whitney in an "ethical dilemma". Do I make the U-Turn or not? Well, isn't that sometimes how we live life? We base decisions and actions on who is watching. Paul is saying here that true obedience is concerned about what God thinks because He's always watching.

You aren't as holy and obedient as you might think if you live your life only doing what's right when others are watching. There is never a situation or time in which the believer is "off the hook" from doing what's right. True obedience, therefore, includes this matter of character and integrity. In fact, obeying only when others are looking will never result in consistent holy living. Eventually, your true colors will come out. You don't treat your wife with gentleness because when she isn't looking you are having lustful thoughts. You aren't respectful to your husband because when he isn't looking you are feeding angry thoughts about him. We don't obey God when it comes down to it because we aren't thinking about Him, praying to Him, hearing His voice in the Word. True obedience involves holy character of inward thoughts and desires. And holy character will then lead to holy conduct. Doing what's right when nobody watches leads us to do what's right when everybody watches us.

Trans: But the next little statement is the main one of v12.

C. Holy Commitment, 12c

Paul goes on to say, **work out your own salvation**. This tells us that an obedient Christian life involves above all holy commitment! The Greek word for **work out** (κατεργάζομαι) is a command in the present tense conveying the idea of continually working, laboring, taking pains at something. It speaks of expending spiritual energy in practical holy living. This is why the Bible speaks of the Christian life as a race, a fight, a contest we press on in. Paul tells them to **work out** their **salvation**. In Scripture **salvation** is defined in three different ways. It speaks of our past salvation (justification), our present salvation (sanctification), and our future salvation (glorification). To put it another way, it is true that you have been saved because when you were justified you were immediately saved from the penalty of sin. And it's also true that someday you will be saved from the presence of sin when the Lord returns. In the same vein, today you are being saved progressively from the power of sin over your life. It's this sense that Paul is speaking when he uses the word **salvation**. Paul is telling us Christians that we are to work out the salvation that God has already worked in and will bring to final fruition at His final coming.

Every thing in life requires energy and effort. Anything that's worth anything in life requires a sacrifice. You want a good marriage? You have to work for it. You want to make a lot of money? You have to work for it? You want a degree? You have to work for it. Blood, toil, sweat, and tears is required (on this side of the fall) to have any sort of ultimate joy. Energy is required just to survive. It requires energy and effort to wake up on time and go to work. It takes energy and effort to dress the kids, feed the kids, get the kids off to

school. It takes energy and effort to cook, to clean, to do yard work. It takes energy to pay bills, and make important purchases. It takes energy and effort to look presentable (the older we get the more so). It even takes energy and effort to do the things we enjoy be it sports, working out, fishing, hunting, painting or sewing. So what makes us think that it will not take energy and effort to live the Christian life? What sort of lies has the devil propagated to make us think the Christian life will come easy? You ask me, “Pastor Andrew, is the Christian life easy?” I will give you a two word answer, “No way!” It’s hard. It requires effort to read your Bible, to pray, to pay attention to a sermon, to teach your children Biblical truth, to model before them Biblical truth, to love your spouse, to love your neighbor, to be a good employee or employer. It’s requires effort to avoid temptation, resist temptation, repent from sin, and wake up and do it all over again the next day. Otherwise, Paul’s command to **work out your own salvation** would be hollow words. Don’t let anyone tell you anything but that the Christian life takes commitment. A lot of it. So the question is, what is the energy drink or the fuel to keep me going at this obedience? Well Paul addresses that next.

Trans: We’ve seen that we have a part to play in living an obedient Christian life. Several elements will mark an obedient life: holy consistency, holy character, and holy commitment. But it’s a holy concern that drives the Christian life.

D. Holy Concern, 12d

We aren’t do just obey, there is a certain attitude that should accompany this obedience. What is to be our holy concern? Paul says that we are to work out our salvation with certain attitudes. We are to work it out, he says, **with fear and trembling**. The word **fear** (φόβος) describes terror or dread, but can

also refer to reverential awe (Acts 2:43; 9:31; 2 Cor 5:11), which is the way its being used here. Paul is not speaking about a hopeless dread of God's eternal wrath. Remember, he's speaking to believers, not unbelievers. The type of **fear** he speaks of is a **fear** that takes God seriously. I was never fearful that my father would abuse me physically, but I did fear that I could provoke his just discipline. I did fear that I would disrespect him or bring him dishonor if I disobeyed the rules of His house. We live in an age and culture where God has been feminized and domesticated. God is viewed as a kind and gentle grandfather with a gray beard who sits in heaven cheering us on like we're his grandchildren at a soccer game. Christian calendars, bookmarks, and wind chimes don't usually speak about fearing God, but usually convey some sentimental verse about God taken out of context. But Prov 1:7 among other places tells us, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*".

But we are to also work out our salvation with **trembling**. This word (τρόμος) speaks of a quaking before God. It's where we get our English word *tremors*. You should quake in holy awe at God. Again, this way of thinking comes as a shock only because we are more worldly than we like to admit. But consider Isaiah's view of God. When He stood before God he exclaimed, "*Woe is me!*" He later recorded God as saying: "*To this one I will look to him who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at My Word*" (Is 66:2)

Living with **fear and trembling** before God includes an awareness of your weakness apart from His strength, the offensiveness of your sins (even the little ones) to a holy God, and a dread of doing anything that would dishonor Him. We should possess a healthy, holy fear of God that causes us to tremble at the thought of dishonoring Him in any way.

My father told me, “Son, unless you score a certain grade on your next test, I will not let you play in your next basketball game.” That night he quizzed me for a couple of hours in preparation for the test the next day. The pressure of letting my teammates down by not playing in the game because I didn’t get a certain grade weighed heavy on me. The disappointment of the teacher who had already spoken to me a few times about needing to bring my grades up was not something I wanted to face again. But most of all the thought of disappointing and shaming my dad was the biggest reason I wanted to do well. After receiving the grade that I knew my dad would disapprove of, I headed off to practice. It was the most miserable basketball practice I’ve ever had. There my dad sat on the bleachers watching practice, and waiting for me to tell him my grade after practice. I practiced with fear and trembling, not because I was afraid my dad would yell at me because he wouldn’t. Not because I would not be allowed to play in the next game. That was incidental. But because I had let my dad down. I had failed to live up to what he required. I failed to obey him. I failed to honor him. That is the type of fear and trembling for our heavenly Father that Paul has in mind here. It’s a holy preoccupation, or concern, with His honor, glory, and desire for us.

I hope you are able to see that you have a part to play in growing spiritually. You can’t afford to walk through life glibly thinking that you will just grow spiritually without applying any effort. It will take spiritual sweat. It will require discipline and diligence. Paul said that we are to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness (I Tim 4:7). You can’t sit back and say, “I’ll just let go and let God”. It doesn’t work that way.

This concept of synergistic working- the working of man with God is seen in the OT. When Pharaoh’s army threatened Israel, Moses confidently cried out to the people, “*Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which*

He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent” (Ex 14:13-14). But do you know how God responded to this? God essentially told Moses, don’t just stand there, do something! We read in the next verses, *“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land’”*. It was simply not right for God’s people in that moment to passively stand by and keep silent. They are to participate in accomplishing God’s victorious purpose for them. We could say that He accomplished His purpose through them.

Trans: You have a part to play in your spiritual growth and holiness. You must do your part. But this sermon would be heretical if that’s where it ended. You have your part, but let us not forget God has His part. And it’s a big part.

II. God’s Part: *Working In* (13)

God’s part doesn’t require as much explanation because, well, God is the one doing it, not us! This morning you must do your part. But the other side of the coin is that you just need to recognize by faith what God is doing in you. Note first that God has worked in you:

A. Holy Drive, 13a

Continuing his thoughts in v13 Paul says: **for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** The first little part of this verse reveals the holy drive God has worked into you: **for it is God who works in you.** The word **work** though different than the Greek word used in v12 is like the verb in v12 in the present tense, which tells us that just as we

are to continually work out our salvation we can have the confidence that God is continually working in us! We aren't to be passive in our spiritual growth because we know that God is not passive! **Work** (ἐνεργέω) is where we get the English word *energy*. God energizes us. What Paul said earlier was indeed true that He who began a good work in the Philippians would bring it to completion (1:6). And that's true for you and me as well.

Once again, this **work** of God in us does not contradict our work. Paul said, "*by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me*" (I Cor 15:10). He also told the Corinthians to "*be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain*" (I Cor 15:58). The Christian's labor is powerful because it's done "*in the Lord*". You should be able to say with Paul, "*I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me*" (Col 1:29).

To return to a point mentioned earlier, you will be tested when nobody is watching. There will be times you don't feel you have any one to lean on for support; your spiritual leaders will be absent as Paul was from the Philippians. But when you were born again, God removed your stony heart replacing it with a soft heart of flesh alive and responsive to God's commands as Ezek 36:25-27 tells us. God's Spirit is within you, His law has been written on your heart, and He is causing you to walk in obedience to His Word. God's grace in salvation does not destroy the Christian's responsibility to be obedient; rather it makes such obedience become a reality in the believer's life.

Trans: But God works in us not just a holy drive, but also a holy desire and a holy diligence. This is reflected in the next phrase. God works in us **both to will and to work**.

B. Holy Desire, 13b

The **will** to pursue holiness in a life of obedience was put there by God as we saw from the Ezek 36 passage. Your **will** speaks of your desire. When you make a will you are declaring your desire as to who should get your possessions when you die. God has changed your will to desire the things of God if you are a Christian. Your stony heart has been replaced with one of flesh, but that doesn't mean your heart can't grow cold. This is why the Psalmist prayed, "*Incline my heart to Your testimonies*" (*Ps 119:36*). Even a Christian's heart will grow cold toward God's Word and ways from time to time. One way to warm it up is to pray like the Psalmist. God may also warm your will to do what is right through a holy discontent in sin. He grants both repentance and the will to give sin up so that we exclaim with Paul, "*O wretched man that I am!*" (*Rom 7:24*). It's painful to let sin go, but God causes holy discontentment in sin to lead to repentance so our wills are in tune with His so that we walk in greater holiness. We can't even take credit for our repentance from sin. A desire to do God's will in giving up sin is put there by God. God has worked that desire in you. And I should say that if a desire to give up sin is not there, then you aren't a Christian.

C. Holy Diligence, 13c

But God not only works in you a holy desire, but also a holy diligence. He not only works in you **to will**, but also **to work**. So all the effort or **work** you put into growing in holiness that we talked about from v12, guess what? It was

really all empowered by God. Sanctification is rooted in the same grace that salvation was. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ and that not of ourselves, for we are God's "*workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*"

No human illustrations can convey this synergistic work between God and man in sanctification. But when I was in college, someone had a motor bike that was manual and automatic. You would wind the thing up by peddling for a while, and then it would run on its own. It had a small engine that was empowered by fuel. But it took a human empowered by sweat to make it go. Once you peddled for a while and got it going, you could sit back and enjoy the ride. In some sense, that's how spiritual growth works. God is the engine. He fuels us to go. But He asks us, commands us, expects us, to exert some holy sweat in the process.

Trans: But it's God working in us isn't it? He works in us a holy drive, holy desire, holy diligence, and also a holy delight.

D. Holy Delight, 13d

God provides spiritual energy for believers to work out their salvation **for His good pleasure**. The supreme purpose of all believers is to glorify God. Why should you pursue holiness? If for no other reason than it brings God **good pleasure**. Though He is infinitely self-sufficient, we somehow add to His delight when we live holy lives. It would be unthinkable if the Bible didn't say so. But God hates sin in His people and loves holiness so much that He graciously makes our spiritual growth possible. He does this for His **good pleasure**. And the whole point of Philippians is that we too can have joy in Christ. One of the ways in which we find joy in Christ is by living like Christ. When our lives are marked by obedience after the pattern of the

obedient One we experience the **good pleasure** of God as well. God the Father's **good pleasure** becomes ours because we are being conformed to the image of His Son. And we delight to honor our Father in this way.

God works in us so that we may work out what He has worked in. That's the point of this sermon. There is an illustration I would like to close with that shows how our part and God's part in living an obedient life go hand in hand. There was a revival during the days of King Hezekiah. This revival began with the restoration of the temple. The people consecrated themselves and the temple. The princes of the city assembled and went up to the house of the Lord, the temple, and then all the city came together and "rejoiced over what God had prepared for the people" (2 Chron 29:16). King Hezekiah then sent a decree throughout the country calling the people to celebrate the long neglected Passover. There was both a promise and a warning in the decree. It said: "Do not stiffen your neck like your fathers, but yield to the Lord and enter His sanctuary which He has consecrated forever, and serve the Lord your God, that His burning anger may turn away from you...For the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate, and will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him" (2 Chron 29:8-9).

And Scripture tells us that the people obeyed the decree because, v12: "the hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the Word of the Lord". Here we see that God commanded His people to return and gave them the heart to do it. He energized their ability to obey the command. This is the truth that Paul spells out in Philippians 2;12-13. To God, therefore, belongs the glory.

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Tis not that I did choose thee,
For Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee,
Hadst Thou not chosen me.
Thou from the sin that stained me
Hast cleansed and set me free;
Of old Thou didst ordain me,
That I should live for Thee.”