

Philippians (Part Five)

Philippians 2:1-14

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I am going to jump right into the book of Philippians, and I will go back a little bit. I am not going to go into a great deal of detail in things that we have gone over before until we get to verse 12 of chapter 2, and there I am going to slow down and we are going to go into that once again because the things that are contained in verses 12 and 13 are extremely important, I feel, to understand.

But I am going to go back as far as Philippians 2, verse 1 with just a little bit of a background. And that is that the apostle Paul has at least partly written this letter to these people because of two things. One, there is apparently some confusion regarding Epaphroditus and whether or not he was carrying out the responsibility that he had been sent by the Philippians to carry out, that is, to be a servant to Paul. Apparently the word had gotten back to Philippi that Epaphroditus was not doing his job. There was some gossip that was spread as a result of this that was wrong, and part of the purpose of this letter is to straighten out these people and to let them know that Epaphroditus indeed had carried out his responsibility, and we are going to see a little bit more of that as we move through chapter 2 and then again in chapter 4.

There is a far more serious problem though, but it is entirely possible that the serious problem was related to the thing with Epaphroditus. There were two ladies in the congregation who are named in chapter 4 as Euodia and Syntyche, and these ladies had a disagreement. And that disagreement, whatever it was over, I do not know. Nobody knows. But at any rate, the disagreement was beginning to divide the congregation, people were taking up sides. Some were apparently on Syntyche's side, some were on Euodia's side; some people were neutral, in the middle. But at any rate, it was the kind of situation that could have a very bad effect on a congregation.

Now, the problem was not bad yet. Please understand that. And it is very interesting to see the way the apostle Paul addresses the problem. It is a very

positive letter, one of the most encouraging in all the Bible. It is easily, maybe, except for Philemon, the most personal letter that the apostle Paul wrote, that is, of those letters that are a part of the Scriptures. There is a great deal of encouragement that is contained in this one book of four short chapters.

So in chapter 2 and verse 1, he begins to address how the problem can be resolved, and basically it comes down to this. There is going to have to be humility exhibited by both sides. And he starts off by showing that there is every reason why these people can be humble. That is, the two different sides, because as he says in verse 1, "If there is any consolation in Christ," any encouragement from the fact that they are in Christ, that is, a part of His Body, having His Spirit. "If there is any comfort of love," that is, if they have any of the love of God in them, that ought to give them reason to be able to resolve the problem. "If there is any fellowship of the Spirit," another reason why they should be able to do it. And here fellowship of the Spirit is looked upon as being a tool producing fellowship, so they should be able to have fellowship because they have the Spirit of God. And "if there is any affection and mercy," that is, even a natural affection that comes from being a part of the same Body. So He tells them then, "to fulfill [his] joy by being like-minded."

We are beginning to move towards something that is exceedingly important to understand about humility. He prefaces it by saying that "nothing should be done through selfish ambition or conceit." The apostle James also addressed this in James the 3rd chapter. But he says, "in lowliness of mind [or humility] let each esteem others better than himself." What we have to understand is that humility or, let us say, being humble (that is a little bit better), is a choice. It is a choice just like almost everything else in Christianity. It is a choice that is motivated by things, true. But we have to choose to be humble.

Now I took you to those verses back there in James 4 and I Peter 5, which showed very clearly that humility is a choice. You can tell by the context a person chooses to be humble. Now to illustrate this, he then gives the example of Christ, and he prefaces that by saying in verse 5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Then he shows very clearly that Christ, who was God, chose not to hang on to all of the, well, we would call

them today, all of the perks that go with being God: Power, glory, authority, eternal life. All the liberties that might come with being a spirit being. And He chose not to hang on to that. Now that is a very powerful persuader.

What He did was, in effect, *renounce* what He was. That is, He renounced His position in the Godhead. I want you to hang on to that word "renounce" because it becomes important later on in this book. And it is something that every single one of us is going to have to do if we are ever going to be like God. If there are ever going to be changes in our life that will change us from our self-centeredness, from our selfishness, from all the things that we do in looking out for our own interests. If there is anything that is going to change us, it is because of a willingness to not grasp what we are or what we have.

So we find in verse 7 that "He made Himself of no reputation." See, He did not hang on. He renounced. And "taking the form of a servant and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself." See, He made a choice. He humbled Himself. We might add here that He humbled Himself even further than He already had. "And became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." So the humbling of Himself did not end with giving up all of the perks that go with being God.

Now He did not give up being God because the nature of God came right through this self-renunciation. And when He was born, He was very aptly named Immanuel, which means "God with us." He was God in the flesh. We read that in John the first chapter, that God became flesh and dwelt among us. So the nature of God was there, but He was also a human being, and He was subject to all of the pulls of human nature as well. *He was a unique individual*. Nobody has ever been like Him, and that is why it says in the Bible that He was the only begotten Son of God.

So, when He emptied Himself, He did not give up being God, but He gave up all the prerogatives of being God, but He did still have the nature of God within Him. Now, if that was not so, you and I do not have a Savior, because the Man who was nailed to the cross was God. If He was not God, then His death paid only for His own shortcomings and sins, though we know there were none. But because He was God, His death then was sufficient to pay for all the sins of all of mankind for all time. So our Creator—God—died on the cross. That is what Paul points out in verse 8.

He not only gave up all the prerogatives of being God, He even subjected Himself in perfect obedience for the entirety of His life! Just an awesome witness to you and me that something as admirable and attractive as that could possibly have been done. Hang on to those words too, because that is important later on. It is important in regard to what we do with our life.

As a result of that, verse 9, "God also highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name." He said it appears as though that name is Lord, that is, the equivalent of the YHVH of the Old Testament. So this man became Messiah, see, and Lord. Savior, Messiah, Lord.

So He "gave Him the name which is above every name, 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, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Jesus, Savior; Christ, Messiah, the anointed One. Lord. YHVH. "To the glory of God the Father." And it was glory to God because what Christ did fulfilled a major point or step in the purpose of God. And when we do that, it brings glory to God as well. Christ did it to a degree that none of us will ever do.

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my beloved. . .

What he is saying here is, as a result of what appears, what Christ did, what Paul illustrated between verses 5 and 11, "Therefore" is a summary statement, and he is now pointing to the practical application to you and me of all this. See, because Christ did this, we have to do thus and so.

Philippians 2:12-13 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; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

As a result of what Christ did, our responsibility then is to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Now, we should be able to do that because it is God who works in us both to will and to do. Now, Paul is not rebuking these people at the beginning of this verse. He is actually encouraging them

to pursue the Kingdom of God without undue dependence on Him. I know that because of what he said in verse 13. It is God who works in them and us, not Paul.

Now, it is very possible for us unwittingly, unconsciously, to put our faith in a human being because this person may be a particularly strong personality, they might be someone of good character. They have admirable traits about them. They are selfless, maybe, in their devotion to the work of God, to the will of God. They are, you know, quite a person. But we cannot put our faith in them regardless of how good their character seems to be. Now, if that person stumbles and fall, it is very likely that we are going to have a very difficult time because we are going to get discouraged. We are going to begin to think, "Well, if they can't make it, if they can't live this life without obvious character flaws showing up from time to time, how am I ever going to do it?" We will get depressed, discouraged, maybe filled with a pretty good amount of self-pity and begin to think, "Oh, woe is me! I'll never be able to do it."

Well, now wait a minute. That is not the way it is to be. It is God who works in us both to will and to do. It is He who enables us to work out our salvation.

Remember when we were going through chapter 1, I showed to you, not in a great deal of detail, that salvation, as it appears in the Bible, as the apostle Paul wrote of it, has a past, a present, and a future. And Paul speaks of it as something, most of the time anyway, that is already accomplished. Now, he does not always speak of it as something that is already accomplished, as it shows very clearly here in verse 12—salvation has to be worked out.

What this shows is that salvation, or we might use its synonym, deliverance, or we might use another term, conversion, is a process. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Some of us here are at the very beginning of the process. All of us, I would say the great bulk of us are somewhere in the middle. None of us have reached the end of that process and we will not until we either die or until Jesus Christ returns. So while we are in the process, it has to be worked out.

We find here that this process involves the working of both God and the individual. It is a cooperative effort. It is not something that God does alone.

It is not something the individual does alone. Now, whenever we were called and converted, what it did is that this calling, our repentance and conversion, the receiving of God's Spirit put us into a life that has obligations to it, duties, responsibilities. I will use that word, it ought to ring a bell. One of those obligations is to obey Christ as Lord. Lord means master. It is someone from whom one takes orders and then, you see, obediently responds.

We have to be careful here because one could get the idea that working out salvation means or equates with working *for* salvation because one is obeying Christ as Lord. That is not what Paul means at all. Nowhere does the Bible give any indication that anybody will ever be able to work for salvation, but everybody will have to work out his salvation with fear and trembling. Now what Paul means here is the making of the beliefs that God has given to us as a result of His calling operational.

You might recall that I have told you in the past, that eternal life in the Bible not only means length of days but it also means *quality of life*. It has to be that way. I mean, that definition has to be that way. Because demons have eternal life. They have length of days but they do not live the same quality of life that God does. Now what he wants us to do is to begin to live that way before we are given length of days. This working out of salvation is the practical application of head knowledge. That is, putting the knowledge of God, the knowledge of Christ, putting our beliefs into practical everyday situations.

Now, as any of you know who have tried to do this, that is not easy. It is not easy because we have deeply ingrained within us attitudes and habits that have just frankly come from Satan the Devil. It has come out of this world. We have just absorbed it. Now is God going to allow that kind of way of life, that lifestyle into His Kingdom? That is too silly to even consider. But you see, those things have to be worked out of our life and something else has to be worked in so that there are new habits of life, new habits—attitudes, inclinations, ways of thinking things. And so head knowledge has to be put into practical application.

Now that is what Paul is talking about. Putting into operation so that we are actually experiencing a way of life in practical terms in our own lives.

Working this out, as I mentioned before, does not depend on Paul but on God. And how is God working this out, this "to will and to do"? Well, I will tell you the answer before we even begin, at least a brief explanation. He does it by His grace. Another way of saying it would be, He does it by His Spirit through which the grace comes.

Hold your finger there in Philippians 2 and let us go back to I Corinthians 12 just as a preface.

I Corinthians 12:1-11 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. [That is, in the past.] Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. [He is working in you.] But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Now right here we have a very specific application of how God, by His grace by means of the Spirit, gives gifts to enable the church not only to exist, but the church to do a work, a work that would be in conformity with His will. Now let us examine this in another place back in II Peter. Here we have in II Peter 1, a little bit broader application.

II Peter 1:1-3 [it is addressed] To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness [the right doing] of our God [That is the only reason we have any faith. Because God by His grace gave us like precious faith by the righteousness of our

God] and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as [look at this] His divine power has given to us all things. . .

Peter is speaking here in a broad generality. Everybody who has the Spirit of God has been given power. Now the power for what? Well, we will see that as we go on.

II Peter 1:3-4 As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life [eternal life] and godliness [being like God], through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature. . .

Now what was it that enabled Jesus Christ to do what He did? Thirty-three and a half years without ever sinning, humbly submitting to God every act in His life so that He could be Savior. Well, we do not have to go through all of the scriptures regarding that. He had the Spirit of God without measure. But it was that same power that was given to Him, that has been also given to you and me, but we have not been given it without measure. But what we do have, I can tell you by the authority of God, is sufficient to carry out His will in your life to the working out of your salvation.

I know that I Corinthians 10:13 tells me nothing that comes on us is too great for us to overcome because we have a faithful Savior at the right hand of God and God the Father who is watching out for our welfare. And we have His word that there is enough power inherent in the Spirit that He has given us to enable us to carry out His will in our life. Because, you see, now we have the divine nature. That is how the grace of God comes.

II Peter 1:4 . . . having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

I know I am doing something that is repetitious, but I feel this is just so important we understand it. Let us go back again to John the 16th chapter. Here is how I am showing you in practical ways how God is working in us so that we can make the faith that He has given to us operational, so that we can experience His way of life right here and now. We just have it in tiny

amounts. We are not living it in its fullness. We never will, as long as we are in the flesh. But what He is looking for is the application of His way of life within the parameters of the Spirit that He has given to you and me. Now it is obvious that He does not give as much to you and me as He gave to the apostle Paul. Paul had a different job to do so he was given gifts that were commensurate with the responsibility that God gave him to do, and there was enough for Paul to carry out that job.

John 16:7 "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you."

Comforter, the Paracletus. It literally means "one who goes alongside." Now what does the one go alongside for? It is to help you work out your salvation. It is a guide. Now we find out in another place, John 14 (which we will not turn to at this time), that this helper is actually in us. It is not a matter of it being detached from us. But because it is in us, because it has joined with our spirit and we are now begotten, impregnated by it, the divine nature is actually in us.

John 16:7-11 "But if I depart, I will send [it] to you. And when [it] has come, [it] will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe Me, of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you will see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

As I mentioned to you the last time, what we see in verses 8, 9, 10, and 11 is part of a process. It is not taking place all at once, but as God calls people out of the world, He begins by revealing Himself. Any of you remember what the work of Elijah was? Elijah revealed the true God to Israel in a time of crisis. Remember he said, "How long stand you hopping around there between two opinions? If God be God, serve Him. But if not, serve the Devil." That was the implication, that Elijah was sent in order to reveal the true God. With that revelation begins to come into our minds an understanding. an apprehension, a comprehension of the difference between Him and us. And we begin to become convicted when we begin to understand the righteousness and the holiness and the purity of His character, of His mind, of His nature, of His attitude, and we begin to reflect on Jesus

Christ and His unselfishness. We begin to see how attractive and admirable that is and we begin to become convicted.

Now when we get to that point, we begin to reach a crisis. Because we have to ask ourselves, what am I going to do now that I know this? We are faced with the challenge of renouncing what we are in order to become like He is. See, God is working in us both to will and to do. He is beginning to move our will in a direction without taking over that will. There is a delicate balance there because He has to leave us a free moral agent, free to choose which way we will go. And so it is almost like He possesses us because He tells us that we become His—His slave. But the possession is not so great and demanding that He takes over our mind. He leaves us free to make choices. And because He does that, His law, His mind, His heart, His character, His attitude, His unselfishness, can all be written in our heart. You see, He is working on this will.

He also convicts us of righteousness. That is part of the same process. He shows us what is right. Brethren, it is right that you should be here tonight. You see, a lot of you have been choosing not to be here and you have been maybe not so subtly telling God that you do not care much about His Word. It is important that you be here. It is not a life and death thing. But here is where His Word is being dispensed. And it is by His Word that eternal life comes into our minds. Because that is what sets the will. It is not word only. I will get to that just a little bit.

And then a judgment as well, because judgment plays a part. He convicts us and lets us understand that we are going to have to stand before Him. And we begin to understand that judgment is now on the house of God. Two aspects of judgment.

Let us go to John 1.

John 1:9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man.

You see, light gives direction. It gives shape and form to things that were formerly either not seen at all or shadowy. What he is talking about here are things that are real as opposed to things that are vanity. What is important to life, eternal life, as opposed to things that we might think are important but

are less important and maybe important only as far as physical life is concerned. But Christ gave light, He gave shape and form to every man. Again, a process, who comes into the world.

John 1:10-12 He was in the world and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him [you and me], to them He gave the right [My Bible translates it. Other Bibles say authority. Other Bibles say power.] to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

Now you are beginning to see how God works in us both to will and to do. He is working on our mind. As the Bible would say, He is working on our heart, meaning the seat of intellect, the seat of emotions, the seat, you might say, of the rational personality. Now by His intervention in our life, He gives us the power to become a children of God. So it is there for us to take advantage of.

Let us go to I Corinthians 15.

I Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God [there it is] I [Paul] am what I am. . .

Before he was a persecutor, now he is an apostle. It was the grace of God that changed him. It was God messing around in his brain. It was God scrambling his thoughts about himself. The way Paul looked at himself, the way Paul looked at God, the way Paul perceived life, the way Paul perceived eternity.

I Corinthians 15:10 By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Those gifts were working in Paul, but Paul had to put forth effort too. He labored more than they all. The same as we do. Because though God works in our mind to educate us and to give us beliefs, He does not *make us* do what we should do. We have to put effort forth to overcome what we are.

There is a struggle that takes place and many sacrifices have to be made. But if God was not working in us, to help us set our will, we would never do what we do. As a Christian, I mean. And then we find out that not only does He help us set our will, but He gives us the power to do His will. Because none of us could keep the law the way Christ did without the Spirit of God. And that is the direction that we are aimed at.

Now what part does God do? And what part do we do? Does He do two-thirds and we do one-third? Does He do 90% and we do 10%? Does He do 99% and we do 1%? Well, it would be awfully nice if we could just look somewhere in the Bible and see a clear and distinctive formula. $E=mc^2$, you see, something like that. But it does not work that way. It cannot work that way because everybody is different. Everybody does not have the same problems. They all follow the same principle, but everybody does not have the same problems. Everybody did not grow up in exactly the same way. Everybody does not have exactly the same handicaps or strengths. Everybody does not have the same education. Everybody is not the same sex. Everybody is not the same race. Everybody does not speak the same language. You can see there are just a lot of differences and so God does not put down any formula. We can only see it in broad principle.

What we have in us is the grace of God in much the same fashion that a child or a person has in regard to the influence of his family. Or we might even say the influence of a strong personality that one admires, the principle is the same. But most of the time that influence comes from family. That is God's intention that it be that way, and it is one of the reasons why He instituted marriage and the family. Because He wants that influence to come from a family. Now what a family does is that it both creates and influences a willing response in its children, while at the same time, the child also acts on his own and he responds.

Now grace is much more than graciousness. Grace means gift. We might say *a* gift. But gift is better, it is broader. Because we saw in I Corinthians 12, there are a lot of gifts. Every one of those gifts is a power that God has given, in some cases, to serve the body, in other cases to serve to glorify Him so that we can overcome and be a witness for Him.

Grace though is something that can only be added to us. It is a gift that is added. It is not something that we have inherent within us. It is something that comes from the outside, in this case, God, and is given to us. And I think as I mentioned, it is something that we can only be grateful for. We cannot generate it, we cannot humanly work it up. It is something that is given to us because we now have the Spirit of God.

The way I illustrated this the last time is to compare it to the powers of nature. Now all the powers of nature are, in this sense, part of the grace of God. They are a gift that is given. They are not something that we can work up inherently. I used the example of sailing a boat. A man can build a boat. He can put a mast on it and he can attach a sail to it. But what is it that moves the boat? Well, it is the gift that God gave, wind, that is working with laws. And that wind acts on the sail, and the sail acts on the boat, and the boat goes through the water. Now would it go anywhere without the wind? Without the gift that God has given, it would be totally subject to the current that was there.

I used the illustration of growing vegetables. Those powers that are inherent within the soil, within the water, within the sunlight, within the seed, all of those things are given. All that a man does is work with what is already given. Man has yet to create his first seed. It is something that is given.

That is the way it is with the grace of God. That is the way it is with the powers that come by His Spirit. It is like a swimmer that is supported and moved by a strong tide. But if the swimmer does not put forth any effort to swim, what happens? He sinks. And so it is with Christian life and working out your salvation. A person must put forth the effort to swim, but it will be the power of God's Spirit that will move the person toward the Kingdom of God. If you do not swim, you sink. That is about as simple as I can make it and still, I think, make it be right.

Now Christianity is a moral religion and yet it is a great deal more than that. There are a lot of moral religions in the world. I mean, ideally. Muslimism is intended to be a moral religion. Buddhism is intended to be a moral religion. But they will never work, and they will never work because they have the wrong spirit in them. They are not empowered by the Holy Spirit of God.

They are empowered by the spirit that is in man and so they are only capable of producing the righteousness of a man, and that will never prepare a person for the Kingdom of God. That spirit does not have the gifts, the grace of the Spirit of God.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, . . .

It is important to understand this because this is what makes it possible for us to have the grace given to us, the gifts, the powers of God's Spirit. It comes as a result of the work of Jesus Christ in our behalf.

Romans 5:2 . . . through whom also we have access. . .

This is exceedingly important because once we have access, that gives us the possibility, the potential for the process to be continued because it brings us into contact with God on a very personal and intimate basis, almost as if it were face-to-face. You might recall in the sermon that we heard last Sabbath, Dr. Hoeh mentioned under the Old Covenant, under Old Testament ritual and regulations, the people had contact with God through the high priest. But there were very severe limitations to that because the high priest himself only went into the presence of God one time a year. That was on the Day of Atonement.

Brethren, what kind of access to God is that if you can only get into God's presence one day a year. But, you see, as the book of Hebrews explains, we have access to God every single day, any time, day or night, 24 hours a day, because our High Priest is always in the presence of God. We always have access and through that access there is contact with the source of power that it takes to work out this salvation.

That is why we keep trying to hammer it into you that the important thing is the relationship with God established by faith in Jesus Christ. And this makes the importance of prayer and Bible study to be beyond magnitude. It cannot be measured. That is our contact with God. That is our contact with the power that it is going to take to overcome. We cannot neglect prayer, we

cannot neglect Bible study, or we are going to fall by the wayside because we simply will not have the power to continue. It is like a man walking in a desert who never eats or never drinks. What is he going to do?

Romans 5:2-5 . . . through whom, also we have access by faith into this grace [gifts] in which we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. [There is our hope, to have the glory of God, to have glory as God has glory.] Not only that, but we also glory [that is, we take the right kind of appreciation] in tribulations [trials, pressures, the word literally means. Pressures that come upon us as a result of trying to overcome, trying to get rid of bad habits.], knowing that tribulation [or pressure] produces perseverance [or a character that is tried and tested, steadfastness]; and perseverance [builds] character [or integrity, or fidelity or faithfulness]; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God [the most important gift of all, the one that enables us to get rid of this self-centeredness that so dominates our thinking, dominates our life, and makes us concentrate always on our own interests and our own pleasure] has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit [which] was given to us.

So it is the grace of God that comes and motivates our mind and our will. And family life illustrates this about as good as any. All life comes from pre-existing life. All life flows from God. We are seeking eternal life. Now you and I came into existence because mother and dad existed before us. They gave us life. And so our life was derived from other lives. Now those lives that gave us life influenced us, and very likely they are continuing to influence us. And they have motivated us for good or bad. But they have influenced us, influenced our mind and our will.

I remember reading one time of a young man. He was about 25, I guess. He had a pretty good character. It was carnal character, but it was pretty good. And he was asked, because it was known that he was not a religious person, What was it that held him on a steady course when he had to make a choice on ethical or moral matters? What was it that gave him guidance? What was it that motivated him to go in the direction that he went in? Well, his answer was, "My family." And he went on to explain that the way that he had analyzed it, that his family in turn had been influenced by others before them

to an extent that he actually called it a grand conspiracy. Now the intent of this grand conspiracy was to make sure that everybody in the family upheld the family reputation, upheld the glory of the name. That is exactly the principle that God wants in His Family. (We will get to that a little bit more later on.)

You see, that influence from the family that put into his mind and will never to let the family name down, never let it be tarnished, is what I am talking about. That, in principle, is the same thing that comes from God's Spirit. It is that which prompts us, motivates us to set our will to do the right thing. That is not all, but that is part of it.

Now let us go back to Malachi 2. I think you all, most of you anyway, understand that the section here (about five or six verses) is talking about marriage. It is talking why God said He hates divorce.

Malachi 2:15 But did He not make them one [that is, the man and the woman], having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? [Why did He institute marriage? Why did He make them husband and wife?] He seeks godly offspring.

God hates divorce because it destroys the influence that He intends that would come upon children from their parents. And all you need to do to understand what happens when that process is broken, is to look out in this world now where about 50% of the marriages fail. Society is cracking at the seams because no longer is there the strong influence from parents who believe in moral things, parents who understand a great deal about what right and wrong is. That influence is no longer coming on children, and as a result, society is falling apart.

You see, when we are begotten by God's Spirit, the influence of the God Family begins to come into our mind. In principle, you see, that is what is working at us. It is working at us to set our wills. We will get into more aspects of this a little bit later because Paul keeps bringing it up as we go on. God intended that children be brought up in an environment of love. And being brought up in an environment of love, they would then have that

tendency to love others. Because there is automatically a very powerful pull in us to love ourselves. But in a family, you begin to learn to share, to honor others, to respect others, to be kind and generous to others.

What we are saying here in effect is this: that in order to love, one has to first be loved. But God intended that that take place in a family. Now it is taking place in His Family.

Turn with me back to John 3, verse 16. Everybody knows what this scripture says. But this has very much to do with whether or not we are going to overcome and grow. This has very much to do with whether or not we are going to be motivated to set our will. It has very much to do with whether or not we are going to obey God.

John 3:14-16 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world. . .

Where are we going to get our example of love? Where are we going to see, understand, comprehend that we are loved? Now the chances are very great most of us did not see a very good example from our parents. And maybe in some cases we do not even know who our parents are. Maybe we were abandoned when we were quite young. Maybe we lost our father and mother in an accident. Maybe they died a natural death. And so we grow up without an image of love that has come from someone like that.

You see what God is doing, He is going to remove from us any excuse at all that we might have of blaming what we are on somebody else. Because, you see, He shows us what love is. He demonstrates it so that we understand. He loved you so much He began messing around in your mind so that you would understand Him, understand what He is doing, understand that you have eternal life living within you, understand that your sins are forgiven, understand that you have direct access to Him through prayer. You can read His Bible and understand what it says. You know what truth is. You have such an advantage on those people who are walking out on the street, there is no comparison.

Now what are you doing with it? Is it motivating you to set your will? Are you so impressed by the love of God and the love of Jesus Christ? Do you find Their example of love so admirable that you want to do everything you can possibly do to make Them respect you, honor you, love you more, give you gifts, be proud of you? Do you want to do everything in your power to make sure you are faithful to Them and that you do not do anything to tarnish the name of God which you now carry?

You see, it is God who is working in you both to will and to do. Because He has let you into His Family.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish."

Do you respect that? Are you willing to renounce that thing which you hold nearest and dearest to you? God did! He gave up the only Being in the universe that He could really share life with. What an awesome chance They took! That is a real sacrifice. If that did not work, He was going to be alone. Anybody here who has ever been alone ought to be able to relate to that.

Let us go back to I John chapter 4.

I John 4:17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.

That is now for you and me. Judgment is on the house of God, even if it refers to that period of time after Christ's return. We can be confident standing before the judgment seat of Christ because as Dr. Hoeh said in that sermon, we know that our sins have been covered and we do not have to shrink back in fear. We are confident of that.

I John 4:17-19 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. [This is the verse I am heading toward.] We love Him because He first loved us.

And what we have to do in order to know what love is, is to look at the example in His Word of Himself and His Son. Perfect examples of selflessness. That is what love is. And humility is selflessness put to a practical use. The one who is humble does not grasp at even what is his right.

Now, there is a little bit more here in verse 12. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Now in Hebrews 11 we have the faith chapter. And it says in verse 8,

Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Faith and the fear of God are very closely related. In fact, they are dependent on one another. They are not the same thing but they are very closely related. But I doubt that without one, the other would exist very strongly. So the two work hand-in-hand. Now it is possible to have faith in God, but not obey Him. Faith in the sense that we believe that He is. We may even believe that He is right in what He says to do. But if there is no fear of God, we may not move off dead center.

Now, what is this fear that makes us move? Even though there is faith sufficient if we would use it to motivate it, unless there is fear mixed with it, we may not do anything.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

In another place it says that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." What he is saying here is that fear is a foundation. It is a foundation for wisdom, it is a foundation for knowledge. Now having faith in God is wise, the wise thing to do. But having fear is not something that scares evil out of a man and good into him. You cannot make an evil man

good because you scare him. You may make him more cautious but you do not make him good because he fears.

Now, I have often wondered about this because we are told that this fear is a healthy and abiding respect for God. Now that is correct. It is. Every time I study the word I cannot help but find that there are elements within it that it also means "to be scared." In other words, there is more there than just a respect. Now you will notice that Paul said fear and trembling. Trembling is something that you do when you are afraid. And I think that the apostle Paul is showing us that there is an element of fright that is involved with this word fear. Does it seem logical to you that a loving, compassionate, and merciful God would want us to be afraid of Him?

On the one hand, I would have to say yes, because when men encountered God in the Old Testament, they shook in their boots. Isaiah said, "Woe is me, I am undone!" When he saw God he about went to pieces. So there is an element of that in there. But on the other hand, if we were afraid of Him, we would be very careful about coming into His presence, and we would be looking over our shoulders all the time wondering when the next lightning bolt was going to have our name on it and we would turn into a blackened smoldering pile of flesh.

So I arrived at a conclusion, at least for right now anyway. It is always subject to correction. And that is, I just tied it in to what that illustration that I gave you about the family and that young man, where his fear of soiling the reputation of the family name held him in line. And I think that what God is talking about here is not so much being afraid of Him as it is being afraid that we will be unfaithful in carrying out our responsibility.

To me, that is different. We love Him so much, we do not want to do anything that will cast aspersions on His reputation. And so what we are afraid of is that we will not live up to what might be expected of us. That is where the fear is. We love *Him*. We are not afraid of Him. But we admire Him so much, He is so attractive to us, His holiness is so great, we want to make sure it is not tarnished in any way. That is what I think it is. The fear of being unfaithful to Him and somehow making Him feel badly about us.

Now, this fear, I think that I can illustrate it to you very simply. It comes on us—it comes on every one of us—whenever we feel that we have a responsibility facing us that is going to stretch us to the limit of our abilities. You men who are in the Spokesman's Club or have been in the Spokesman's Club, almost every time you get up to speak, you face this fear because you are afraid that in the responsibility of giving a speech you are exposing yourself to ridicule. You are going to show people what your mind is like. And in this case, you do not want to tarnish the reputation of your name, of your personality, of your character, of your brains, or whatever, and you know you are going to be stretched to the limit of your ability. And you are afraid to get up there and speak.

What I am talking about is a godly application of that same principle. Where in this case, the fear is not projected so much toward ourselves as it is that somehow or another we are not going to live up to what God expects of us and that we are going to be unfaithful in the carrying out of that responsibility. I will tell you, that is a powerful motivator to make us do well. When you men know that you have a speech, when you fellows who are giving sermonettes know that you have a sermonette, I will tell you, you study like you have never studied before because you want to be faithful to the responsibility that you have been given and you want to uphold the reputation of your name. That is what we are talking about here. In some cases I have known men who actually did tremble when they got up there. I know one man, who eventually became an evangelist, when he gave his first sermonette, he got up on the stage and he promptly fainted. He overcame that.

What do we need to fight this fear of not upholding the reputation of God's name, this fear of being unfaithful to Him? Well, the answer is very easy to say. It is very difficult to do. It is the most difficult thing that any human being will ever be called on to do. *We have to renounce ourselves*. Now that is what we are called upon to do whenever we repent. The thing that keeps the Spirit of God from flowing through us and empowering us to glorify Him and empowering us to overcome and grow is that our *self* keeps getting in the way. We keep wanting to hang on to, to grasp this humanity, and we will not humbly submit to the will of God. Our self keeps rearing its ugly head and intervening itself, and quenching the Spirit of God, and keeping the gifts

of that Spirit, the grace of God, from carrying out the will of God in our life. And we provide ourselves with all kinds of justifications. But really what it is, it is self-will, self-centeredness exalting itself against the Spirit of God.

There is a beautiful example in the life of Abraham. That is why I read this about Abraham. God asked him to renounce the thing that he held most dear in his life, to give it up. What was it? Isaac. Now what could possibly motivate, what kind of an argument could Abraham come up with to try to convince Sarah that he ought to do this? There is no argument, no words that anybody could put together that would make a reasonable case for anyone to follow through on what he did. What drove him to do it though? Well, it was that combination of faith and fear. By that time, he knew God so well, he was so intimate with Him, they had such a close relationship, Abraham was absolutely terrified not to obey Him.

Now when I say absolutely terrified, I mean that in a good sense. He was afraid to be unfaithful. Certainly the faith motivated him because he believed God. But his fear of somehow disappointing God and being unfaithful is what made him carry through. And he did it. And of course God intervened and provided a substitute.

Let us conclude on a kind of a sad example back in Matthew 19, of a young person, apparently of very great ability, who was confronted with this same issue of renouncing the thing that he held most dear in his life.

Matthew 19:16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

Well, you know the story there.

Matthew 19:20-22 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" And Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

He was unwilling to renounce what he held dear. He was still grasping at it. His lack of humility would not allow him to obey the Creator. His God, his Creator, was standing right before him telling him what he needed to do to have life—and he would not let go of it.

Now that is what stands between you and me and the complete working out of our salvation with fear and trembling. Human nature within us keeps rearing its ugly head and it wars against the Spirit of God. And they are not compatible with one another, as Paul says, and they war with each other. And the only time we win is when we are willing to sacrifice what it is the battle is over. And then the grace of God flows and overcomes the problem.

Now there is a struggle involved. There is a real war that goes on within us and sometimes there is a great deal of pain connected with the sacrifice. Sometimes we will not give up our temper. We will not give up, whatever it might be. And so the grace of God cannot flow through us because we block it off.

But, brethren, you can begin to see the answer. A major portion of the answer lies in coming to the place where we really, truly admire and find attractive and respect the love of God that has already been exhibited before us so that we might emulate it. God renounced all, Christ renounced all. He is calling on you and me to renounce all in order that that grace can work within us, and our salvation can be worked out then with fear and trembling.