

All In All

Christ Is Everything

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I Corinthians 15:24-28 Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he has put all things under his feet. But when he says, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he [meaning Christ] is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him [i.e., unto Christ], then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

I have given this sermon before, just thirty-five days short of seven years ago; and I feel that it is time to give it again. When I gave it before, it was immediately following Pentecost. But as I said, even during that message then, it seems that it has as much in common with Unleavened Bread as it does with Pentecost. This theme also fits right in the series that I have been giving with the calendar as the backdrop ["What Does God Really Want?"]. It does not fit in with the calendar per se, but rather with the real themes of God's sovereignty, God's providence, and God's faithfulness—but, most specifically, with God's providence. That phrase, *all in all*, has to do with God's supremacy over the whole creation—united, under Him, in *oneness*.

I am sure that you can recall in Jesus' prayer, in John 17 (especially in verses 20-23), that He prayed that we would all be *one with God*. Now in I Corinthians 15, it has to do with looking forward to the time when all men will not only be reconciled to God, but everyone and everything will be in total agreement and harmony with each other. **Everything** and **everybody** will be subject to God.

It is when the whole creation is delivered from its bondage to corruption and into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is the complete restitution

of all things. It is the conclusion of the work of Jesus Christ. It is the conclusion of the new creation. And juxtaposed, right in the center—as the focus, and the cause, of the *oneness*—is **God the Father**. Jesus is turning over all things to Him. And that is both the end point and the exclamation point that draws one's attention to the Father.

Our acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our repentance from dead works, and the receiving of God's Holy Spirit are the first major steps toward our becoming *one* with the Father. This ***all in all*** is the conclusion of what is revealed in the gospel—of which the return of Jesus Christ and our inheritance of the Kingdom of God is the next major step.

Although this ***all in all*** may appear to be something that is far in the future, it is in fact something that has already begun. It is important to our spiritual well-being that we understand that this is a reality.

You might recall that in a previous sermon (in fact, sermons) several times I mentioned this—that we are inextricably linked, within God's purpose, to what has happened in the past. That is, to what happened to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and to David.

But also we are linked in this same process to the future. I said that because I wanted to impress upon us that history is not confined to something that is past. It is an ongoing event, occurring in the present; and ***we are actively participating in it***—just as surely as those that we read of, [who lived] in the past. That is, those prominent figures in the Bible. In addition to this—because of prophecy—we have at least a narrow insight into the future history, because God has revealed small portions of this (i.e., the future) to us in His prophecies.

Now turn with me to Philippians 3. This chapter is going to be kind of central, along with another one, to this sermon.

Philippians 3:17-21 Brethren, be followers together of me [Paul writes], and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of

Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our conversation [conduct, citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

This series of verses places us solidly in the present, and it states our position as it is right at this very moment. I want you to notice, just briefly, right now that there is a "*them* and *us*" contrast there that Paul has within this series of five or six verses.

The word "conversation" in the King James is better-translated *citizenship*. It indicates politics. Feed that into that. "Our politics is in heaven." "Our citizenship is in heaven." It, therefore, also reaches out to include government. "Our government is in heaven." And, in fact, many translations have now decided that the best English word, that fits in there, is *homeland*. "Our homeland is in heaven." Or, "our state is in heaven."

What this word indicates is an assembly (or a fellowship, or society) of persons all generally living in the same place, and under the same rules and laws. Thus, it shows that there is a *unity*, or a *oneness*, within this fellowship.

A contrast (back to that) is being shown between one group of people and another. The characteristics of the one group are detailed in verses 17-19. This one group of people are "enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." The difference lies in the **primary focus** of the two groups. It, therefore (because of the focus), affects the way they live—that is, their conduct.

The word "for" in verse 18 begins Paul's reasons as to why they should imitate those who are living like him. Considering the immediate context—as well as the context of the entire epistle—I feel certain that Paul's great emotion (He says, "Even now, weeping.") is expressed here because these people that he is referring to have left the church. Or, even if they were

attending, they were giving every evidence through the way that they lived that they were drifting away. The focus of their life had changed, and they had gone back to carnality and immorality.

Connect this to the previous sermon ["What Does God Really Want? (Part Two)"]. Laodiceanism is immorality. It is, at its very base, the breaking of the Ten Commandments. These people had gone back to carnality and immorality; and Paul lists four things. [First,] their end ("the wages" for what they were earning, for their lifestyle choices) is destruction—that is, eternal punishment.

The second one: their god is their belly. That is an idiom meaning that they were driven to pamper their **feelings**, rather than being responsible and doing their **duty**. In other words, they were caving in to their sensual desires and becoming gluttonous, drunkards, adulterers, and fornicators. In other words, they were simply following their lusts.

The third thing: that what they gloried in was, in reality, a shameful thing and their reputations were becoming known for that.

And fourth: that their minds were on earthly things, rather than heavenly things. These were people who were no longer walking by faith. They were walking by sight.

Now, the contrast is with those who are citizens of a heavenly city; who are *one* in a fellowship; whose characteristics and manner of life are the opposite of those so named. These people have their flesh under control. Their lives are focused on the Kingdom of God. And, I am sure that God inspired Paul to use the word "heaven" in order to emphasize how **wide** the difference had become between these two groups of people—because "heaven" represents *the unreachable* to those whose minds are fixed upon goals limited to the gratification of the senses. These are people who are living by feelings, rather than by faith and truth. Now, doing that is much easier in the immediate present, but God says that is going to end in destruction.

For just a minute, if you can, kind of project yourself back to Philippi. Do you know anything at all about Philippi? Philippi was part of the Roman

Empire; but it was a city conquered by the Romans. Now, what about the citizens of Philippi? Did they think of themselves as Romans? No, they did not. They were a conquered city, and they thought of themselves as Macedonians.

If somebody conquered the United States, you would not think of yourself as being of those who conquered you. You would still consider yourself an American. That is the way the Philippians thought of themselves, and that is why Paul was drawing on this. Macedonia was the land of their birth, and that is where they were enrolled as citizens.

Now, where are **you** enrolled as a citizen? Heaven! That is where our citizenship is. And so it was their Macedonian way of dressing. They dressed that way. It was Macedonian customs that they followed; and the Macedonian language was the language that they spoke.

In like manner, Paul says that *our homeland* is in heaven. Do you get the implication there? What should we be living by? We should be living by the standards, the customs, the laws, the dictates, the attitudes of **heaven**—because that is now our homeland.

These people in Philippi (I mean the church members, the Christians) were essentially doing that. But, already a division had come within the church, and those who had left were no longer doing that. And Paul was encouraging those who still remained within the church to continue to follow the dictates of their homeland.

It is from heaven that the church is governed. It is from there that our rights are secured. It is there that our inheritance is held in guarantee. And though we are strangers and sojourners now—we are citizens, or members, of the household of God. We are fellow citizens with the saints. Jerusalem above is our mother. We look for a city whose builder and maker is God. That is where our Head lives. And our relationship with Him is so close, so intimate, that we are seen in the Bible as *His Body*.

It is from heaven that our Head is going to return and deliver us from all of our enemies. And it is, again, absolutely essential that we recognize our

position as history moves on—until **God is *all in all*** . Because whether we have the vision of what we are in reality (And "the reality" is what I just gave you; what Paul just said here in Philippians 3.) and we are following the dictates of our homeland, we are not going to get the picture. And it is going to seriously weaken our opportunity to be ***all in all*** with our God. In order to do this, we have to live by faith.

Living by faith might be seen—by those who are of a carnal nature—as betting one's life on the unreachable, as being a daydream, as a fantasy; because one is reaching for something that cannot be seen. It cannot be touched. It cannot be smelled. It cannot be tasted. It cannot be heard. **But** God hastens to assure us that He has the energy, and the power, and the will, and the wisdom, and the love to bring us into *oneness with Him*.

Ephesians 3:14-15 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

That word "named"—my Bible has a marginal reference there. It says, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is *derived* ." That is very significant, because that is what the word in Greek really means. Our homeland is in heaven, and what Paul is saying here is that our life is given to us from that very same location. ***The life of the church is derived from heaven!*** And from there is it governed, from there is it fed, from there it receives its energy (and its power, and its wisdom, and its will).

And, as we are going to see as we go on, everything that enables us to have salvation comes from Jesus Christ. He said, "Without Me, you can do nothing!" And we have to understand how close this relationship is that He desires to have with us. *We* are the only ones that can hinder this relationship from developing and flowering into a beautiful marriage—and complete and total submersion (immersion) within this Family. So that is why Paul was saying:

Ephesians 3:14-21 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named [derived], that he would grant you, according to the

riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

God is able to do immeasurably more. His capacity to meet our spiritual needs far exceeds anything we can even request in prayer (or even conceive to dream up). These last few verses here are the climax of Paul's insistence (begun at the very beginning of this epistle) that the conclusion of the process that we are involved in—this process of redemption and sanctification—is **the very glory of God Himself**.

The real thought of these verses is one that looks beyond the grave, when we will be in a world of unending and limitless success, and fulfillment, and challenge, adventure, and progress—all within the relationship of a wonderful loving Family.

Now, let us just back to Ephesians 1 and just jump through here and see what Paul is talking about—of what God has **already supplied** to enable us to even be in the position that we are in right now.

Ephesians 1:5-8 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

Notice how these things are coming out—what God has already given. He has called us because He predestinated us. He has given us grace. He has

accepted us into "the beloved." (That can either mean the church, or it can mean into Jesus Christ.) We have been given redemption—the forgiveness of sin.

Ephesians 1:9-13 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will [He is reproducing Himself in us], according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one [In one Family, in Himself.] all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance [There is another thing that He has given.], being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.

Ephesians 1:15-20 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; [Here is what his prayer was.] That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 2:5-7 Even when we were dead in sins, he has quickened us together [That is, made us alive.] with Christ, (by grace you are saved;) and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:7-11 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul has repeatedly touched upon the *abundance of God's gifts* and the powers that are given to us. This knowledge is **power** to motivate, but it must be *used by faith* if it is going to be of any value.

Ephesians 1:21-23 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named [He is talking about Jesus Christ.], not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness [That is, the completion.] of him that fills all in all.

There is that phrase again—"that fills **all in all.**"

This last series of three verses is important to this sermon, because this is the vital and dynamic *link* between Christ and His church. **He is the Head. We are the completion of His Body.** God is using this analogy to help us understand how close the relationship is between Christ and His church. ***There is no separation!*** Even though He is in heaven, and we are on earth—in the eyes and the mind of the Father and the Son, we are sitting in heavenly places (because that is where They are).

Christ and His church are complementary parts of *one organism*; but it is a spiritual organism, and so its unity is not clearly visible to the eye. Those who walk by sight will not see this; and, to them, a separation exists. (That is, Christ is in heaven and we are on earth.) But that is **not** the way the Bible

presents it. We are His Body, and in the mind of God, we are the same place They are.

You understand, this is not a physical reality. It is a spiritual reality. But it is essential that we understand this and conduct our lives accordingly. So, can you see that the *oneness* (the ***all in all*** with the Father) has already begun? That is why I am telling you that, even as we are inextricably linked to the past (we are part of the same process), we are also inextricably linked to the future. *We* are playing vital parts in the purpose that is being worked out below, here.

It started way back then, but God is going right on, and now *we* are having the opportunity (as it were) to be "on the stage" and be the focus of His attention—just like Abraham was, and just like Moses was, and just like David was. We do not tend to think of ourselves in those terms. We tend to think of them as being great, and we are insignificant. No! Now *we* are the ones that are **significant**. Just as surely as He paid attention to them, [now] His focus of attention is on *us*.

The Head and the Body together form the sphere in which God's glory is manifested. You will recall, perhaps, Jesus' prayer in John 17. In verse 4, He stated: "I have glorified You on earth." Now that *we* are part of His Body, this responsibility of ***glorifying our Father*** has come to *us*. Christ finished the work that was given to Him, and He did glorify the Father. Now it is our turn.

Because we are joined to the Son as *one organism*, and it falls to us to glorify the Father—***it can be done***. Even as Christ did it, He can do it through us. How is it done? By us becoming *one* with the Son, even as the Son was *one* with the Father—by the power of the Holy Spirit that was in Him. Did He not say, "Of Mine own self, I can do nothing"? And did He not tell us, now, "Without Me, you can do nothing"?

Even as Christ overcame and finished the work God had given to Him, now—because we are connected to the Son, and the same Spirit can drive, motivate, empower, and enable us—*we can* glorify the Father in heaven.

In order to qualify to be our Savior, and Redeemer, and High Priest, all along, while He was doing these things, He was also preaching the gospel (the good news) to others. Our responsibility is to **yield** to Him, to **grow**, to **overcome**—and *by this*, He will be glorified. Did Jesus not say, in John 15, that *My Father is glorified when we bear much fruit* . How do we bear fruit? By yielding in obedience—even as Jesus did.

Let us review, very quickly.

I Corinthians 15:28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Now, in Philippians 3:21. We read this verse once before, but I am heading for something here.

Philippians 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Do you see that phrase "subdue all things unto himself"? I want you to think about that word **subdue** because this helps to carry the picture of *oneness with God* just one step farther. The reason I had us read I Corinthians 15:28 is because the word "subdue" appeared in that verse. The word "subject" appeared in that verse. The word "under" appeared in that verse. In Philippians 3:21, the word "subdue" appeared in that verse. Do you know what—they are all the same word.

In *Strong's*, it is #5293. The only difference between those four different translations is that the word appears in different tenses. It is the Greek word *hupotasso*. It literally means, "to place in order." Now more directly, more specifically, and more accurately—it means, "to place under." *Hupo-* means "under." **To place under in an orderly fashion.** Now, what the word does is give the picture of objects—which are scattered about in confusion—being rearranged neatly according to a pattern.

In terms of what we are speaking of in this sermon, the objects are not "things." They are "people." But they are in disorder. They are scattered and in confusion as a result of their own actions—as a result, we might say, of the exercise of their own free will, because of the deception of Satan, and because of the enmity that they have against God.

These verses are describing the work of Christ as High Priest. And what is His work? His #1 job is to bring us *into one arranged in order*—first under Him; and then, ultimately, under the Father. The first step is where He becomes all in all to us. Then, the last major step is that the whole world—the whole creation, which has been under Christ up until this point—is turned over to the Father, when *everything* is put under the Father and He becomes *all in all*. But that will not occur until everything is in order, first under Christ. All of this is done to bring everything into *oneness*. And it goes so far as to include a change of body—conformed to the One doing the subduing.

Now, let us look at Philippians 4:1, which immediately follows this "subdue all things unto Himself."

Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

A very interesting picture is given when you put this verse together with the theme of chapter 3. And what we see is that Paul is telling these people in Philippians that they—and, of course, *us* because of *our* homeland being in heaven, because *we* are the Body of Jesus Christ, because all these things that Paul has described in Ephesians 1, 2 and 3 have been given to *us*. We are standing at a crossroads. This happens every day! We are standing at a crossroads. We have the opportunity to look in both directions. We can look **forward** to the Kingdom of God and the completion of what God is working out. Or, we can turn around and we can look **backwards** to what we have come from.

The people described here (in Philippians 3:18-19) have not accepted the challenge of looking **forward** to the Kingdom of God and choosing to go in

that direction. Their focus has returned to what it was before. And so Paul is throwing this challenge out to them and, at the same time, urging them to "Stand fast. Keep your mind focused on our heavenly homeland, where Jesus Christ dwells."

Now there are things that could prove to be impediments, and so chapter three of Philippians begins with Paul talking about the circumstances that lead up to what he said there in chapter 4. In verse 3, he encourages the people by reminding them:

Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

He is stating our position. We are the true circumcision. We are circumcised in the heart, not in the flesh, and because of that, we are in a unique position. Then, after stating his own pedigree and hoping that they will get the point in regard to their own, he says in verse 7:

Philippians 3:7-8 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

Whatever it is that we have had to give up as the result of what God has given us, Paul is saying, "Well, I have given up more than any of you, as it were." And we ought to be willing to give those things up, and not allow them to be a deterrent toward deflecting our focus away from the Kingdom of God.

In verse 11, the exhortation is beginning to take a turn. He says:

Philippians 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

This is the direction our focus ought to go.

Philippians 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

And then (jumping to chapter 4 and verse 1), the admonition: We can look both ways. Stand fast. Do not let these things slip from your grasp. Because the temptation to look back and mind fleshly things, to give in (to the persuasions of Satan and the flesh), they are always present.

Now, *if* God is going to be ***all in all*** . . .

I John 3:1-2 Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be [That is, specifically.]: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

If God is going to be ***all in all*** —(that is, *everything to everyone*, and as we already saw, we are already considered by Him to be part of the same organism as Jesus Christ, who is God. And we are to have bodies conformed to His glorious Body; and we are going to be like Him)—there is only one thing that we can become, and that is **God** .

Now, do you seriously want to give that up? There remains, therefore, **much overcoming** yet to be done. And, of course, we wonder **how** will this be done? Well, I will give you the answer. God has that already figured out.

Now, consider this. Who raised up Moses and Aaron? Who brought the plagues on Egypt? Who got Israel out of Egypt? Who divided the Red Sea? Who supplied the manna and the water? Who divided the Jordan? Who brought down the walls of Jericho? You see my drift? But we will go further, because it gets right down to the nitty-gritty. In the book of Philippians again, this time in chapter 2, because there is something that we have to understand.

Philippians 2:12-13 Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

It is God who saves. God saved Israel from slavery in Egypt. Jesus Christ is our Savior, because we cannot save ourselves from the penalty of death. Nor can we overcome, nor can we produce fruit, without Him. He said, "Without Me, you can do nothing." Nonetheless, when we accept Jesus Christ as Savior, it **obligates us** to obey Him. *It obligates us to obey Him* . How we feel does not matter!

When God broke the power of Egypt to enable Israel to be free, *if* Israel wanted to be free, it **obligated** them to do what? Did they not have to walk out of Egypt? When God saved them by opening the Red Sea, *if* Israel wanted to save their skin and be free of Egypt, it **obligated** them to do what? To walk between the waters. When God said, "I am going to bring you into the land, and provide for you along the way."—*if* Israel wanted those things, it **obligated** them to do what? Submit to Him and walk—all the way to the Promised Land.

Did it matter if their stomach was upset anytime that they had to get up to walk? Did it matter if they had a headache? When God acted to save them, they had to overcome their feelings. "I don't feel like doing it now." They had to overcome their feelings. They were **obligated!**

Sometimes we think that because God is not literally opening up a Red Sea before us, **our obligation** can just be shoved aside—because we do not feel like doing it. That is walking by sight. Those things have to be overcome.

Now, let us feed this into these two verses—here in Philippians 2:12-13. When Paul says to "work out your own salvation," it cannot possibly mean that we are going to save ourselves. But, rather (like what confronted the Israelites), when God opened up the way to saving *us*, **we** too had better be ready to make that salvation practical and operational—by getting *moving* on what needs to be done to follow His lead. In short, it means when He

starts walking between the parted waters, we had better imitate Him and start walking too. **Move!**

There are many times we do not feel like praying. **I** do not feel like praying, many times. I start saying, "Well, I don't feel like it—because I'm too sleepy. I'm too tired." But if I want to keep my relationship with God, I have to put those feelings aside (Don't I?) and pray anyway—even asking for the strength and power to stay awake, and to get up and study. That is something that has to be done. We have to get ourselves **moving!** We are **obligated**. We are His slaves (in another analogy), and we are commanded to do these things—to show ourselves approved to Him.

When it says to *work out our own salvation*, it does not mean that we are going to work *for* our salvation (in the sense that we are going to save ourselves). We can no more split the Red Sea than we can save ourselves. But rather, like what confronted the Israelites, **we** have to get **moving**. So, He is **not** saying, "work out for salvation." But, rather, what He is saying, "Carry out what has been given you to do to its conclusion."

"*Work out*" is being used here in the same way as when a teacher tells a student in school to "work out the arithmetic problem to its conclusion." In other words, bring it to an answer. Now, the conclusion for us is to **work out to Christ's likeness. (Imitation.)**

Now, the salvation that is spoken of here in Philippians 2 is in reality *sanctification*. It is *victory over sin unto holiness*. I will make it real plain. If we want to be **one** with Him, we had better **get moving** in the direction that He is pointing. And the direction that He is pointing is in the direction of **His standards of behavior**. Each person's walk is not going to be exactly the same, because each person's experiences and makeup is somewhat different. But there is enough similarity between us, so that the Bible is always relevant to everyone.

One of the beautiful things is that, because God's relationship with us is so close, every person's walk is going to be exactly right for them. And behold, God says that He will give us both the **will** and the **power** (the energy) to do what has to be done. He illustrates this in simple ways. Would you not think

that in 2 ½ or 3 million Israelites who left Egypt, that there were some pretty old folks in that group? Not only old—but also some of them were surely halt, lame, had the gout, had diabetes, had tuberculosis. You start naming off the diseases of Egypt that they might have had; and, you know what? They *all* got out of Egypt!

Do you understand what I am getting at here? Everybody's condition can be met by God, and everybody can be empowered to do whatever God is requiring of them—and He will do it. Their shoes did not wear out. He gave them plenty of food. He gave them plenty of water. He gave them everything that they needed. And they could have made it (just like Joshua and Caleb made it). They could have made it, *if* they had trusted Him by faith; but they did not. (Those two did; and they and their families, of course, made it—because they trusted God by faith.)

Not only that, but God *produces* within us. That is what these verses are telling us. He produces within us both the **desire** and the **will** to live up to His standards that He is requiring of *us*. He gives us the energy to effectively do it. He does not demand of us what we cannot do. Could Israel walk? They did. And, in the same manner, *we* can do whatever is required of *us* on our walk. And I am sure that even as their walk was at times very difficult and wearying—so is ours. But, brethren, it can be done!

The world, the flesh, and the Devil are not pushovers; but this is now **our life's work**. It is a serious responsibility; and that is why Paul said that it is to be approached with fear and trembling. It can be done because God is working in us (Philippians 1:6); and He says He will finish it. He is so confident that He can get us to the finish line—and across it! He says, "It will be done."

Now, in verse 12 here, we see *our responsibility*; and in verse 13 we see *our enablement*. I was going to turn to John 14:4-6, but you can turn to those later. This was when Phillip said to John, "How are we going to do this?" And Jesus didn't give them a direct answer. He just simply said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." What He said was: "I'll get you there." He said,

"You look at Me and I will get you there. I am the way (the guidance). I am the truth (by which we are sanctified). I am the life (eternal life)." He said, without saying it directly, "I'll get you there. Just follow Me."

We can show this, in a way, by simple illustrations. You may have a sailboat, and you launch it on the water, but it takes what God supplies (the wind) to move it. You may grow vegetables, but it is the growing power of nature, which God supplies, which brings forth food. You cannot do that on your own. You put the seeds in the ground *by faith*, and God brings forth the fruit. Do you get the connection? You **do** whatever is required by faith, and God will enable us to do it.

You put gasoline in the tank in your car; and you turn the key on, and you start it up. It would not run except for electrical power (which God created and can supply) and the power and the energy that is in gasoline (which God created). In each case, though, *we* add something to that which God has already supplied. And so our salvation is something already given; but we must do something to make it practical—by applying ourselves to salvation's demand. But, even in doing this, God enables us to do it. Gradually, slowly but surely, He becomes *all in all* .

Now, we never are going to know where the dividing line is between *what God* supplies and what we are responsible for supplying, because it is different for everybody—according to God's purpose. It **must** be different because each person is different, and because God is preparing us for different responsibilities within His Family. But it will always be difficult enough so that it is challenging (and you know that *you* have a part in it) and it builds you.

Lifting a weight that is no challenge for your muscles would not build a thing. And so God works it so that it is just hard enough that we have to go to Him and, in prayer, we ask Him for the strength to do it. And then, when it is finally accomplished, we absolutely **know** that we did not do it on our own. And then the glory goes to Him—and, a little bit more, He becomes *all and in all* .

Even here, the analogy of Israel in the wilderness comes to our aid—because from whence did Israel get the energy to walk across the wilderness to the Promised Land? It came from the manna and from the water—which **God supplied**—and you know what they symbolize. They symbolize the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. And so their energy, and their drive, and their vigor (to make it) came from what God supplied. In addition to that, He gave them the vision. He gave them the hope of inheritance of the Promised Land. But Israel still had to *walk*.

It is interesting that, where Paul said to "work out your own salvation," the verb is in the tense which indicates (you probably will not like this, but) *continuous operation*. That is, continuous working. Even as Israel did not remove from Egypt and all the way to the Promised Land in one stroke, neither is our oneness with God accomplished in one stroke. ***It is a process of growth, and it is our life's work.***

Thinking about Israel being forty years in the wilderness, and this being *our life's work*, that might be intimidating. Forty years! I will tell you, brethren, I have already been in the church forty-two years (very shortly). That time went by in the blink of an eye. It seems, at first, like it is a long time; but, in looking back on it, it went so fast that I sometimes wish I could recapture some of that time.

But for forty years, God fed them and He gave them water—and so the energy for every step came from Him. But let us ask another question: Did God ever take the pillar of fire away? No. Did He ever take the cloud away? No, He did not. Therefore, He was always there. In Philippians 4:19, Paul says:

Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 13:5 Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

God is not like a man, who grows weary and bored and then abandons a project by seeking out something new. Because what God is doing is exciting and fulfilling to Him. And so He provides all along the way. And it is this last thought that I want to develop a bit as we reach the conclusion of this sermon—so that we might be encouraged.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

The notion that is contained in this verse is two-fold. The first is *our responsibility*. We have to love Him. That is, we must give Him evidence—by keeping His Word. This is a parallel verse to verse 15, where it says, "If you love me, keep My commandments." Here it says, "keep my words."

The second notion that is here is that of *reward*. And the reward of keeping His Word is **the unity** produced because the Father and Son take us as "Their house" (Their dwelling place)—of course, indicating a very close relationship. Here this "dwelling in you" is being used in a sense that is very similar to "citizenship" in Philippians 3:20, where we are all living in the same area, governed by and living under the same rules.

Jesus' statement here is a response to Judas' question as to *how* He would manifest Himself to the disciples. It took a long time for Jesus to answer the question. (This was not Judas Iscariot, incidentally. It was the other Judas.) And so the answer is actually found scattered throughout this entire discourse that begins at the beginning of chapter 14.

I will just give you a couple of high spots. By His Spirit, He will convict us of sin. He will lead us to repentance. And these things impart assurance of salvation. He will bestow peace—admonishing us and comforting us. All of this is intended to intensify the unity that He and the Father want to have with us.

With that in mind—that the Son and the Father have made *us* Their dwelling place—let us go to Colossians 3:5, where the context of this entire chapter has to do with our union in Christ. And Paul is showing that, because of this

union with Christ, we are actually living two lives—a double life. One is from our parents, Satan and this world—which is earthy. The other, derived from Christ, is heavenly—or spiritual. The result of the heavenly one is moral responsibility—a spiritual responsibility. That is, **an obligation** to do certain things.

And in an overview, as a statement of what he is leading to, is this: That Jesus Christ is not only our sacrifice for sin, enabling us to be justified. Because our life—our spiritual life—is also rooted in Him (He is the Head. We are the Body.), ***He is our spiritual life as well***. He is the Head. We are His Body. What follows then is *a listing of our obligations*. Now let us look at them.

Colossians 3:4-5 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore [kill] your members which are upon the earth: . . .

Here are our obligations, clearly spelled out—IF we are going to be *one*, if Christ is going to be all in all to us:

Colossians 3:5-11 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: [And then he gets real specific.] fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. For which things' sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience: In the which you also walked some time, when you lived in them. But now you also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all. [There it is again.]

The "new man" of verse 10 is the after conversion man, or person. The "knowledge" that he mentions in that verse ("renewed in knowledge") is *experiential knowledge*. That is, knowledge that comes from actually

applying the Way of God. Knowledge that comes from actually doing God's Word.

In verse 11 are groupings, or pairs, of concepts that separate people. There is racial difference—Jew and Greek. Differences of religious tradition—circumcised and uncircumcised. Cultural differences—Barbarian and Scythian. Social differences—slave and freeman. And finally, sexual differences (which is not listed here, but it is in Galatians 3:28)—male and female.

Now, these are in no way intended to represent all differences that divide humanity from each other and from God, but it is enough to make the point. God makes it very clear that we cannot be united to Him and separated from our brother at one and the same time. And the process of "putting off" and "putting on" is to continue until our life is totally consumed in Christ, and He is *all in all*.

You can refer to Matthew 25:37-40, and 45 later. That was given by Christ in order to show us how close the relationship is in His Family. For someone to do something against a brother is to do it **for**, or **to**, Christ. I John 4: 20-21 tells us that, if a man does not love his brother, then he does not love God.

How does Jesus Christ, then, maintain the unity in the church? Again, the answer is relatively simple. Remember that Ephesians 4 talked about guarding the unity of the faith. We cannot create it, because Christ is not divided. But we can destroy unity very easily.

Ephesians 2:13-17 But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of two one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near.

Here is what He said: The person who is truly converted—and is motivated, guided, inspired, and led—yields to and is empowered by the radiant energy of Christ, who lives and works in him. It is almost as if we are **driven together** because *we all share the same nature*. That is important. But we are not really "driven," because we still must choose. That is part of our walking.

By and through Christ's crucifixion, Christ creates a condition needed for peace, through the forgiveness of sin. He then empowers *us* to make peace and to be unified into **one** by enabling us—through His Spirit—to live God's way, thus actively creating peace.

One of the reasons that we do have division in the church is because everybody is not of the same spirit. I am not talking here of demonic spirits. I am simply meaning *unconverted*. (Matthew 13—"tares"). Again, there are those who are *weakly converted*. And Paul (in I Corinthians 3:3) told the Corinthians, "You are yet carnal." They had God's Spirit, but they were dominated by their carnality. Also, Paul shows (in I Corinthians 11:19) that there *must* be division in the church.

What He does—the way unity is maintained—is that each person, because of His love for Christ, what Christ has done for him, his love for Christ's character, his love for Christ's love, his response to Christ's love, **submits himself to Christ**; and, as he submits himself to Christ, he becomes closer and closer to Christ. He is not trying to change the other person. **Unity** is maintained and strengthened because each person is taking care of his *own* relationship with Christ. Is that not simple? But, boy, is it a responsibility! Because human nature always wants to justify the self and blame the disunity on somebody else. *Each individual has to answer to Christ individually*.

If we will submit to Him, out of love to Him, then the disunity (the division) will disappear. That is our responsibility. And we have no excuse, because (as I showed you over and over again in this sermon) **God gives us everything we need to do this**. He supplies the knowledge. He supplies the motivation. He supplies the power—even as He did with the Israelites in the wilderness. He gave them everything that they needed, but they made the wrong choices and they died in the wilderness.

The rest of Colossians 3 tells us more of what we are to **put on**. I am going to just read this to you. It's from another translation than the *King James*; but I thought that it was so simple, and so clear, that it might be good to end the sermon with this.

Colossians 3:12-17 Put on therefore as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; Enduring one another [Does this not sound like Ephesians 4?], forgiving each other, if anyone have a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord has forgiven you, so do you do also. And above all things, put on love, which is the bond [the glue] of perfection [of completion, of maturity]. And let the peace of Christ, for which you were called in one body, rule in your hearts, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell among you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another and by means of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God in a thankful spirit with all of your heart. And whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.