

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

Experiencing Christ as Our Constant Salvation (Message 3)

Scripture Reading: [Phil. 2:12-16](#)

- I. The salvation in [Philippians 2:12](#) is not eternal salvation from God's condemnation and from the lake of fire but the daily and constant salvation that is Christ as a living person:
 - A. This practical, daily, moment-by-moment salvation results from taking the very Christ whom we live, experience, and enjoy as our inward as well as outward pattern:
 1. The main elements of this salvation are Christ as the crucified life ([vv. 5-8](#)) and Christ in His exaltation ([vv. 9-11](#)).
 2. When this pattern becomes our inward life, the pattern becomes our salvation.
 3. To work out our salvation is to work out this pattern and to become in experience a reprint of this pattern—cf. [1 Pet. 2:21](#).
 - B. The constant salvation in [Philippians 1:19](#) is one in which a particular believer is saved from a specific encounter in a particular situation, whereas the constant salvation in [2:12](#) is one in which any believer is saved from ordinary things in common situations in his daily living.
- II. To work out our own salvation is to carry it out, to bring it to the ultimate conclusion—[v. 12](#):
 - A. We have received God's salvation, which has as its climax our being exalted by God in glory as the Lord Jesus was—[v. 9](#).
 - B. Now we need to carry out this salvation, to bring it to its ultimate conclusion, by our constant and absolute obedience with the inward motive of fear and the outward attitude of trembling—[v. 12](#), cf. [v. 8](#); [1 Sam. 15:22](#).
 - C. The inner operating God Himself is our salvation, and obedience to Him is the working out of our salvation—[Phil. 2:12-13](#).
- III. The reason we need to obey always is that God operates in us—[v. 13](#):
 - A. It is not that we by ourselves carry out our salvation but that God

- operates in us to do it; the only thing we need to do is to obey the inner operating, energizing God—cf. [Col. 1:29](#).
- B. The God who operates in us as our subjective salvation is the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—the very God who is Christ in us ([2 Cor. 13:3a, 5](#)) and the Spirit in us ([Rom. 8:11](#)).
- IV. God operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure—[Phil. 2:13](#):
- A. The willing is within; the working is without.
- B. The willing takes place in our will, indicating that God’s operation begins from our spirit and spreads into our mind, emotion, will, and eventually into our physical body—[Rom. 8:4, 6, 11](#).
- C. The good pleasure of God’s will ([Eph. 1:5](#)) is to operate in us so that we may reach the climax of His supreme salvation—cf. [Rom. 5:10, 17](#).
- V. Murmurings and reasonings frustrate us from carrying out our salvation to the fullest extent and from experiencing and enjoying Christ to the uttermost—[Phil. 2:14](#):
- A. Murmurings are of our emotion and come mainly from the sisters; reasonings are of our mind and come mainly from the brothers.
- B. Murmurings and reasonings are due to disobedience to God; obedience to God slays all murmurings and reasonings.
- C. We should do all things without murmurings and reasonings in order that we may become blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish—[v. 15](#):
1. *Blameless* describes our outward behavior, and *guileless* our inward character; to be guileless is to be simple, artless (not political), or innocent—[Matt. 10:16](#).
 2. As children of God, we have God’s life and nature—[John 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:4](#).
- VI. In the midst of the dark and corrupt world, which is usurped by Satan ([1 John 5:19; 2:15-17](#)), our function is to shine as luminaries, holding forth the word of life—[Phil. 2:15-16](#):
- A. Christ is the sun, with the church as the moon and the believers as the planets to reflect Him by holding forth the word of life. [55]
- B. To hold forth the word of life is to apply it, to present it, and to offer it to the world by living out Christ—[Acts 5:20](#).
- VII. [Philippians 2:12-16](#) is a definition of living Christ in [1:19-21](#):
- A. The God who operates in us ([2:13](#)) is the supplying Spirit ([1:19](#)).

- B. To shine as luminaries (2:15) is to magnify Christ (1:20), and to hold forth the word of life (2:16) is to live Christ (1:21a).
 - C. The only way to live Christ is to be saturated with the word of life:
 1. The word of life is the living breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16), the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63).
 2. We need to pray-read the Word, receiving the word of God by means of all prayer and petition—Eph. 6:17-18.
 3. We need to sing-read the Word, letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom by singing—Col. 3:16.
 4. If we are filled with the riches of the living Word day by day, spontaneously we will hold forth the word of life; this is to live Christ that He may be magnified in us.
- VIII. **Philippians 2:5-16** reveals the divine and rich provision for our constant salvation:
- A. We have the Lord Jesus as our pattern—vv. 6-11.
 - B. We have God operating in us—v. 13.
 - C. We are God’s children, having God’s life and the divine nature—v. 15.
 - D. We are luminaries qualified to reflect the divine light of Christ—v. 15.
 - E. We have the word of life to hold forth, to present, to others—v. 16.

MESSAGE THREE

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS OUR CONSTANT SALVATION

In this message we come to the great matter of experiencing Christ as our constant salvation. Salvation is surely a crucial subject, and it is a subject commonly taught among Christians. We love the matter of salvation. We are here because we have received God’s salvation. However, the understanding of salvation varies greatly. We may understand salvation on a superficial level. Some understand salvation merely as being saved from perdition, from God’s judgment. To many, salvation means having an everlasting life in heaven. Paul’s understanding of salvation is much deeper, higher, and richer. He talks about a salvation that is related to living out and magnifying Christ.

Paul uses the word *salvation* three times in the book of Philippians. The first time is in [1:19](#), which says, “I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” He wrote this Epistle in prison, believing that all his sufferings would turn out to his salvation through the prayer, the petition, of the saints and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The salvation that he refers to, the salvation that he believes he will experience, is not related to being released from prison. The salvation that he is burdened for is that he would not be put to shame while being in prison. The following verse says, “According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death” ([v. 20](#)). Paul did not want to be put to shame; he wanted Christ to be magnified even in his body while he was in prison. He was not expecting an outward salvation; he was not expecting to be released from imprisonment. Rather, he was expecting a salvation that would cause Christ to be magnified even in that confined, restricted environment.

The second use of *salvation* is in [verse 28](#). In [verses 27 and 28](#) Paul says, “Only, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, that whether coming and seeing you or being absent, I may hear of the things concerning you, that you stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together along with the faith of the gospel, and in nothing being [\[57\]](#) frightened by the opposers, which is to them a proof of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.” The proof of Paul’s salvation was in his conducting himself in a manner worthy of the gospel. The apostle Paul conducted himself, lived, in a way that was worthy of the gospel of Christ by striving together with the believers in one spirit with one soul. If we are conducting ourselves in this way, we should not be frightened by the opposers. On the contrary, our standing firm in one spirit and with one soul striving together with the faith of the gospel is a strong proof of the destruction of the opposers and of our salvation.

The third time that Paul uses *salvation* is in [2:12](#). After presenting the wonderful, living, and subjective pattern of Christ at the beginning of [Philippians 2](#), Paul says in [verses 12 through 16](#),

My beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and reasonings that

you may be blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as luminaries in the world, holding forth the word of life.

In these three instances of *salvation* in Philippians, Paul was not speaking to unbelievers but to believing ones, to the church in Philippi. He was fully burdened. He was not in the realm of being saved from sin, perdition, or judgment but of being saved into the richer experience and magnification of Christ.

When I first glanced at the title of this message, I thought that the outline, being on the matter of constant salvation, a matter relatively common to us, would unveil that we need to be saved much more. However, as I was spending time with the Lord to prepare and consider, deep within me, He gave me a word—*peril*. There was a registration within me of our need to be saved and of the reason why we must work out our salvation. What is so important about salvation? As believers, we are already saved, and we all appreciate our salvation. At a time in the past, we were unbelievers and realized that we needed God. We were in a desperate situation—on the way to the lake of fire. We needed the gospel to rescue us. However, having been saved and having entered the church life, what kind of salvation do we now need? I believe that we now have less of a sense that we need to be saved. We may think that we are doing well in our Christian life and in the church life. [58]

Then the Lord touched me with this word—*peril*. This reminded me of Brother Lee's speaking in 1983 to the leading ones in Texas and in Anaheim about the central and crucial matters that the Lord has revealed to us concerning the Divine Trinity, the all-inclusive Christ, the New Testament ministry, and the Body of Christ. All of these are the unique things that the Lord has revealed to us. We should spend all our energy to focus on these central matters, which Brother Lee called the "focal things." He went on to say, warning us, that if we do not practice and experience these focal matters, there will be two perils (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1983*, vol. 1, "Practical Talks to the Elders," pp. 52-53). The first peril is division, and the second peril is emptiness. He said that saints may be burdened for the work of spreading and gaining increase, but focusing only on that will lead to different works, result in different ministries, and ultimately issue in division. Moreover, he pointed out that if we do not practice the central, focal matters that the Lord has revealed to us, these matters will become mere knowledge and doctrine to us, devoid of reality. As a result, we will experience emptiness despite having much

knowledge. I was struck very much by this word.

We are in need of a particular salvation. We know that we have been saved from eternal perdition. We are being saved gradually from all negative things, such as our flesh, our lusts, our self, and our opinions. But we must be saved from not living Christ. If we do not come back to this matter of experiencing and enjoying Christ as our focal point, sooner or later, we will fall into the division and emptiness that our brother warned us about. We may carry out much work, but eventually, there will be many different works, producing many ministries—ultimately resulting in the first peril of division and, eventually, in the second peril of emptiness. We must take heed to this crucial word.

My burden in this message is not to present a good message or to impress us by expounding the different aspects of salvation in [Philippians 2](#). My burden is to warn us of the perils of which Brother Lee spoke. I worship the Lord that we are considering the experience of Christ as a general subject. This general subject is surely of God. Only He knows our spiritual condition, both individually and corporately. We are desperately in need of the experience of Christ. We do not know how far we have deviated. Outwardly, we may be carrying on the church life and following the ministry, but how much do we experience and enjoy Christ? What is the level of the joy of our salvation? All the saints in the Lord's recovery are open to and receive this ministry, but they may regard it merely as something good and [59] spiritual. Do we really see the experience and enjoyment of Christ as our lifeline? Recently, I have been praying, "Lord, recover in us the joy of our salvation." In the early days of my church life, there was just joy. We could say that the joy was there because those days coincided with the early years of the church life in the United States; nevertheless, there was something we could not deny. There was the joy of salvation. The saints were joyful when they came together. When the church in Los Angeles met in Elden hall, the saints came to the meeting an hour early. If anyone came on time in those days, he would not find a seat. Today if a saint comes to the meetings on time, he would have a seat on the front row. We may instruct the saints, "Do you not know that you should be on time?" Regardless of how we instruct the saints, the situation does not change, because the churches in the Lord's recovery may be experiencing a low-grade depression.

The Lord needs to recover us and recover in us the joy of our salvation. We need to experience Christ to the point that we truly enjoy Him, that we do not want to miss Him, and that every gathering is a time for us to enjoy more of Him. We should sense a kind of excitement. It is exciting to come

together with the saints and to see and enjoy more of Christ. We need a constant, daily, regular, and moment-by-moment salvation to save us from our oldness and even dullness. We need to be saved not merely from all the obvious negative things but also from not focusing on Christ, not living Christ, not expressing Christ, and not magnifying Christ. This is what the Lord burdened me with for this message.

**THE SALVATION IN PHILIPPIANS 2:12 BEING NOT ETERNAL
SALVATION
FROM GOD'S CONDEMNATION AND FROM THE LAKE OF FIRE
BUT THE DAILY AND CONSTANT SALVATION
THAT IS CHRIST AS A LIVING PERSON**

The salvation in [Philippians 2:12](#) is not eternal salvation from God's condemnation and from the lake of fire but the daily and constant salvation that is Christ as a living person. Salvation is not something that Christ accomplished for us so that we will not go to the lake of fire. Actually, this salvation is a person; Christ is our salvation. We need Christ as our constant, daily, and moment-by-moment salvation. We need this living person to constantly live in us, grow in us, and be formed in us.

**This Practical, Daily, Moment-by-moment Salvation Resulting
from Taking the Very Christ Whom We Live, Experience,
and Enjoy as Our Inward as Well as Outward Pattern**

This practical, daily, moment-by-moment salvation results from taking [60] the very Christ whom we live, experience, and enjoy as our inward as well as outward pattern. Can we testify that this Christ is the One whom we live, experience, and enjoy? What is the focus of our church life and our Christian life? Through my observation and hearing reports in my travels, I think the enemy has definitely gained some ground among us. He has caused us to be distracted from the focus, which is Christ as the centrality and the universality of God's economy. Christ is the One whom we should live, experience, and enjoy.

As revealed in *Philippians*, Christ is our inward and outward pattern. In Message 2 we saw that Christ emptied and humbled Himself, even to the point of the death of a cross. This is Christ as our inward pattern. In Christ's resurrection and ascension, God highly exalted this One and gave Him the name which is above every name. This Christ has been unveiled as

our inward and outward pattern.

***The Main Elements of This Salvation Being
Christ as the Crucified Life and Christ in His Exaltation***

The main elements of this salvation are Christ as the crucified life (vv. 5-8) and Christ in His exaltation (vv. 9-11). Our salvation is nothing less than this wonderful, all-inclusive Christ with His crucified life and His exaltation.

***When This Pattern Becomes Our Inward Life,
the Pattern Becoming Our Salvation***

When this pattern becomes our inward life, the pattern becomes our salvation. Actually, our salvation is just this very pattern being replicated in us.

***To Work Out Our Salvation Being to Work Out This Pattern
and to Become in Experience a Reprint of This Pattern***

To work out our salvation is to work out this pattern and to become in experience a reprint of this pattern (cf. [1 Pet. 2:21](#)). Our considering of the subject of the experience of Christ is not a change from the subject that was covered in recent annual gatherings—the reality of the Body of Christ. We should not think that we are turning our focus to another matter. Actually, the experience of Christ is related to the reality of Christ. The pattern that we see in [Philippians 2](#) is the reality in Jesus, spoken of in [Ephesians 4](#)—the reality of the Body of Christ. This reality in Jesus is the condition of the life of Jesus when He was living on the earth for ^[61]thirty-three and a half years (v. 21, footnote 1). In the living of Jesus, there is reality. By our learning Christ as the reality is in Jesus, His pattern is reproduced, reprinted, in us. This is the reality of the Body of Christ, which is Jesus living again on the earth in a corporate way. The reality of the Body of Christ is the corporate living of the God-man life of Christ by all the members of His Body.

We need to work out this pattern by working out our salvation. This is the only time in the New Testament that Paul speaks of our need to work out our salvation. Some have interpreted this to mean that we need to work for our salvation. As far as our eternal salvation is concerned, no work is required or qualified. Only Jesus is worthy to accomplish redemption for

us, and our receiving of salvation is by faith. We are saved by believing what Christ has accomplished. However, in [Philippians 2](#) Paul talks about another kind of salvation. We received eternal salvation by faith, and now Paul says that we need to work out our salvation, which means to carry it out. Our eternal salvation was freely given to us and received by us through the exercise of our faith. When we believed, we received our eternal salvation once and for all. Now, on our part, we need to work out, to carry out, the salvation that Paul speaks of in [Philippians](#). This salvation requires our cooperation, our working out, our carrying out, not once for all but little by little. This salvation is day by day.

**The Constant Salvation in [Philippians 1:19](#)
Being One in Which a Particular Believer Is Saved
from a Specific Encounter in a Particular Situation,
Whereas the Constant Salvation in [2:12](#) Is One
in Which Any Believer Is Saved from Ordinary Things
in Common Situations in His Daily Living**

The constant salvation in [Philippians 1:19](#) is one in which a particular believer is saved from a specific encounter in a particular situation, whereas the constant salvation in [2:12](#) is one in which any believer is saved from ordinary things in common situations in his daily living. In [1:19](#) Paul speaks of a particular situation. Paul was in prison, and he needed a particular salvation, a particular experience of Christ. In that terrible situation of being in prison, he did not want to be put to shame, to be found in his murmuring or complaining. Paul wanted to be found in Christ, and he wanted Christ to be magnified in him.

But the salvation in [chapter 2](#) refers to the salvation that all believers need in ordinary situations. We do not have to be in prison to experience [62] this salvation. We do not need to be in a car accident or some dire situation in order to cry out for this salvation. The salvation that we need to work out refers to a salvation in the ordinary and common situations in our daily life, such as murmurings and reasonings. Do we murmur, did we murmur, or are we still murmuring? We may even murmur against what is presented in this message. This is why we need salvation from even the ordinary things and common situations in our daily living, not only in major events or tragedy. For example, we need to be saved from our attitude, our tone in speaking to our family members, our gestures, and many other matters that may not seem important to us. We are not

conscious of our need of salvation in the common things in our daily life. We are more conscious of our need of salvation in major events and serious situations but not so much in ordinary, daily life. It is in this context that Paul charges us, having presented the pattern in [2:5-11](#), to work out this pattern, to obey by working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, just as Christ was obedient unto death.

**TO WORK OUT OUR OWN SALVATION BEING TO CARRY IT OUT,
TO BRING IT TO THE ULTIMATE CONCLUSION**

To work out our own salvation is to carry it out, to bring it to the ultimate conclusion ([v. 12](#)). God had a goal for us when He saved us. He did not merely save us from sins and judgment; He saved us for a glorious goal. According to [1 Thessalonians 2:12](#), we have been called into His kingdom and glory. The goal of God's salvation is to bring us into His glory, for us to become as glorious as He is. This is the ultimate conclusion of this salvation. We need to work out our own salvation until we reach the goal of His salvation.

**Our Having Received God's Salvation, Which Has as Its Climax
Our Being Exalted by God in Glory as the Lord Jesus Was**

We have received God's salvation, which has as its climax our being exalted by God in glory as the Lord Jesus was ([Phil. 2:9](#)).

**Now Our Needing to Carry Out This Salvation,
to Bring It to Its Ultimate Conclusion,
by Our Constant and Absolute Obedience
with the Inward Motive of Fear
and the Outward Attitude of Trembling**

Now we need to carry out this salvation, to bring it to its ultimate [\[63\]](#) conclusion, by our constant and absolute obedience with the inward motive of fear and the outward attitude of trembling ([v. 12](#), cf. [v. 8](#); [1 Sam. 15:22](#)). Paul mentions some requirements in working out this salvation. The first is obedience. In [Philippians 2:8](#) Paul points out Christ's pattern of becoming obedient even unto death. He also perfected and built up that obedience. In [Hebrews 5:8](#) we see that Christ learned obedience. Without obedience Christ could not express the Father or carry out the Father's will. He prayed in Gethsemane to the Father that, if possible, the cup be removed

from Him, referring to the cross. But He went on to say, “Yet not as I will, but as You will” ([Matt. 26:39](#)). This is obedience. Obedience implies that there is no argument or bargaining. The Son simply accepted whatever the Father had ordained and destined for Him. This obedience led Him to the cross. In being obedient even unto death, He became the pattern for us.

In [Philippians 2](#) Paul says that in working out our salvation, we need to have obedience. We are by nature disobedient and stubborn, like the children of Israel. In Exodus the children of Israel were disobedient to the uttermost. They were not happy, despite being rescued from Egypt. They were murmuring and complaining throughout their journey through the wilderness. According to Hebrews, they were not allowed to enter into rest, into the good land, because of their disobedience ([3:18](#); [4:6, 11](#)).

The matter of obedience is crucial for the working out of our salvation. By the Lord’s mercy, we have, through this ministry, been shown God’s eternal economy. God’s good pleasure is to work Christ into us so that He can be expressed through us. The question is whether we obey what God has shown us or whether we try to work it out by another way. God’s desire is for us to open to Him and to allow Him to work Christ into our being. This requires obedience. It is not a small thing to have obedience, allowing God to work out this salvation.

When the angel Gabriel came to Mary, who was a virgin, in order to announce the good news that she would bear the holy thing in her womb, she did not argue or reason. She knew God, feared God, and worshipped God, and she said, “May it happen to me according to your word” ([Luke 1:38](#)). That was obedience. Thus, she was the channel through whom the Savior could come.

In working out this salvation, we need obedience. We need to obey what God has revealed to us. We should not offer our ideas or opinions for better or more appropriate ways. Obedience is a serious matter. The working out of our salvation needs our constant and absolute obedience, along with fear and trembling. Fear refers to the inward motive. Fear does [\[64\]](#) not mean that we are afraid of someone or of something bad happening to us. We should have fear in the sense of being concerned that we would offend Him, making Him unhappy. Do we have such a fear? In observing some situations, I am concerned that some saints have no fear. The things that they do and say show that they have no fear of offending the Lord. Trembling is the outward attitude. We are fearful of missing the mark, of misaiming. We need the Lord to work a holy fear and holy trembling into us along with obedience in order to work out our salvation.

**The Inner Operating God Himself
Being Our Salvation,
and Obedience to Him Being the Working Out
of Our Salvation**

The inner operating God Himself is our salvation, and obedience to Him is the working out of our salvation (Phil. 2:12-13). The pattern that we see in [verses 5 through 11](#) is our salvation. The working out of this salvation requires our obedience. In [1 Samuel 15](#) God asked King Saul to defeat and utterly destroy the Amalekites. When Saul went to fight with the Amalekites, he won the battle, but he kept the king alive and preserved the best sheep, the best cattle, and lambs for offering sacrifices to God ([vv. 9, 15](#)). When Samuel came to Saul after the battle, Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears and the lowing of oxen that I hear?" ([v. 14](#)). Saul said, "They have been brought from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to Jehovah your God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed" ([v. 15](#)). Samuel said to him, "Jehovah sent you on a journey and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed. Why then did you not obey the voice of Jehovah, but flew upon the spoil and did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah?" ([vv. 18-19](#)). In [verses 20 and 21](#) Saul said, "I surely did obey the voice of Jehovah, and I went on the journey that Jehovah sent me on. And I have brought Agag the king of the Amalekites and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But of the spoil the people took sheep and oxen, the chief of those things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to Jehovah your God in Gilgal." In [verses 22 and 23](#) Samuel said, "Does Jehovah delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices / As much as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? / Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, / And to heed, than the fat of rams. / For rebellion is like the sin of divination, / And insubordination is like idolatry and teraphim. / Because you have rejected the word of [65] Jehovah, / He has also rejected you from being king." In other words, God does not care for what we want to do for Him or to offer to Him as sacrifices, as burnt offerings. God desires our obedience. Our disobedience is likened to divination, to contacting demons, and our insubordination is like idolatry and teraphim. God honors our obedience to Him much more than what we can do for Him or offer to Him.

THE REASON WE NEED TO OBEY ALWAYS

BEING THAT GOD OPERATES IN US

The reason we need to obey always is that God operates in us ([Phil. 2:13](#)). Praise the Lord that God operates in us! We need to obey, but Paul realized that we cannot obey or submit in ourselves. Hence, in [verse 13](#) he says, “It is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.” God is operating within us. He is the very Jesus Christ, who lived the life as presented in the pattern. This One, who lived as the incarnated God, has been processed and consummated and now dwells and is even operating within us. We should never try to obey by our natural energy, determination, or will. We need to be reminded that God operates not outside of us but within us.

**It Being Not That We by Ourselves
Carry Out Our Salvation
but That God Operates in Us to Do It;
the Only Thing We Need to Do
Being to Obey the Inner Operating, Energizing God**

It is not that we by ourselves carry out our salvation but that God operates in us to do it; the only thing we need to do is to obey the inner operating, energizing God (cf. [Col. 1:29](#)). Although it is God who is operating, He needs our permission and our obedience. Our obeying Him allows Him to freely operate in us. God knows that we cannot do it. We do not have the ability or the capacity. Nevertheless, He needs our willingness, our cooperation, and our obedience in agreeing with Him and in letting Him do what He pleases in us; He needs our obedience in the same way that He needed Mary’s obedience so that the Savior would be conceived and born through her. He needed human obedience for that to happen. Mary obeyed, and God was able to conceive the holy thing in her womb in order to bring forth the Savior. Today we need obedience, not the obedience that is out from us but the obedience that is based on the God who operates in us. He is the inner operating and energizing God. [66]

**The God Who Operates in Us as Our Subjective Salvation
Being the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—
the Very God Who Is Christ in Us and the Spirit in Us**

The God who operates in us as our subjective salvation is the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—the very God who is Christ in us

(2 Cor. 13:3a, 5) and the Spirit in us (Rom. 8:11). The Bible usually speaks of Christ being in us or the Spirit being in us, but [Philippians 2](#) is one place in the New Testament that tells us that God is in us, that the entire Triune God (the Father, Son, and Spirit)—who has been embodied and passed through a process of incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection and is now realized as the Spirit—is in us. Moreover, this God operates in us. He is not merely the God in [Genesis 1:1](#) who created the heavens and the earth, although He is, in His essence and person, the same as the God in [Genesis 1:1](#). Today the very God who can be in us is the Triune God who has passed through the process of incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection. He is embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit. The very Triune God, the supreme, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent One, is revealed by Paul as the God who operates in us. Who can resist or defeat Him? It is God who operates in us. However, He cannot carry out our salvation for us without our cooperation and our obedience; we need to allow Him to accomplish salvation in us. Therefore, obedience is crucial.

GOD OPERATING IN US BOTH THE WILLING AND THE WORKING FOR HIS GOOD PLEASURE

God operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure ([Phil. 2:13](#)). We may ask, “Is it first that I must be willing before God operates or that God operates to make me willing?” It is both. When we say, “Lord, I am willing. Do in me as You said,” we may think that the willingness is ours, but it is actually from the God who is operating in us. However, without our consent, the Lord cannot operate. In [Mark 9](#) a father, whose son had a dumb spirit, pleaded with the Lord, saying, “If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us” (v. 22). The Lord Jesus said to him, “You say, If You can. All things are possible to him who believes” (v. 23). [Verse 24](#) says, “Immediately, crying out, the father of the child said, I believe; help my unbelief!” Likewise, we may realize our unwillingness, our shortcomings; however, in the weakness of our unwillingness, the Lord still wants to hear us tell Him that we are willing. He still wants to hear us say, “Lord, I am willing.” Our telling the Lord that we are willing opens the door for God to work willingness into us. [67]

The Willing Being within; the Working Being Without

The willing is within; the working is without. It is God who operates the willing within and the working without for His good pleasure.

**The Willing Taking Place in Our Will,
Indicating That God’s Operation Begins from Our Spirit
and Spreads into Our Mind, Emotion, Will,
and Eventually into Our Physical Body**

The willing takes place in our will, indicating that God’s operation begins from our spirit and spreads into our mind, emotion, will, and eventually into our physical body ([Rom. 8:4, 6, 11](#)).

**The Good Pleasure of God’s Will
Being to Operate in Us
So That We May Reach the Climax
of His Supreme Salvation**

The good pleasure of God’s will ([Eph. 1:5](#)) is to operate in us so that we may reach the climax of His supreme salvation (cf. [Rom. 5:10, 17](#)). God is in our spirit, but as we open the door of our heart to Him, He begins to spread from our spirit into the different parts of our soul in order to operate in us to make us willing. When we are willing, He is free to do what He desires to do, what is pleasing to Him for His good pleasure. His good pleasure is to make His chosen people the same as He is, to make us God in life and nature, to make us glorious. The destination of God’s salvation is for us to enter into His glory. Glory is a characteristic of divinity, of His deity. Only God is glorious; no human being is glorious. Wherever and whenever God is expressed, that is glory. The destination of our salvation is glory. Hence, God’s intention and God’s good pleasure are to make us, vile, unworthy sinners, as glorious as He is. Now He is operating within us both the willing and the working. What we need to do is to simply allow Him by telling Him, “Lord, do in me according to Your word.”

**MURMURINGS AND REASONINGS FRUSTRATING US
FROM CARRYING OUT OUR SALVATION
TO THE FULLEST EXTENT
AND FROM EXPERIENCING AND ENJOYING CHRIST
TO THE UTTERMOST**

Murmurings and reasonings frustrate us from carrying out our salvation to the fullest extent and from experiencing and enjoying Christ to [68] the

uttermost (Phil. 2:14). After Paul tells us that it is God who operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure, he says, “Do all things without murmurings and reasonings” (v. 14). Murmuring is expressing discontent. In the wilderness the children of Israel often murmured to Moses concerning many things. They might have said, “Why did you bring us out here? We were doing fine in Egypt. We had meat, onions, garlic, and leeks to eat. We worked hard, yet we still had time to enjoy ourselves. But now in this vast wilderness, we have nothing to drink and nothing to eat.” They were murmuring all the time. Murmuring is a low, continuous sound, in contrast to loud shouts of protests. We may murmur within our being, expressing our dissatisfaction concerning many matters. Reasoning is a mental exercise to arrive at some judgment or conclusion. Brothers, in particular, are more likely to exercise their mind to reason. Some may say, “Why are the seven annual gatherings held during the holidays? These could be times for our family to have a vacation.” We all like to reason. This is why after Paul speaks of God operating in us His willing and working for His good pleasure, he charges us to do all things without murmurings and without reasonings. He realized that murmurings and reasonings are expressions of our disobedience and frustrate God’s working in us.

**Murmurings Being of Our Emotion
and Coming Mainly from the Sisters;
Reasonings Being of Our Mind
and Coming Mainly from the Brothers**

Murmurings are of our emotion and come mainly from the sisters; reasonings are of our mind and come mainly from the brothers. This does not mean that brothers do not murmur. Sisters murmur much, but brothers are not exempt. Reasonings are of our mind and come mainly from the brothers, but sisters are not exempt. Although the brothers tend to reason and the sisters tend to murmur, we all murmur and reason.

Murmurings and reasonings are part of our human life and are in our practical church life. Because we still like to live in this realm, it is difficult for the church to be built up and for us to be perfected. When we are not happy with certain situations or arrangements, we murmur, complain, and we reason in our mind. Although murmurings and reasonings are not like outbursts of anger, they nevertheless frustrate God’s working Himself into us. [69]

**Murmurings and Reasonings Being Due to Disobedience to God;
Obedience to God Slaying All Murmurings and Reasonings**

Murmurings and reasonings are due to disobedience to God; obedience to God slays all murmurings and reasonings. Praise the Lord! Although there are murmurings and reasonings in our being, there is a weapon that slays our murmurings and reasonings—obedience.

While in prison, Brother Nee brought a cellmate to the Lord, and this brother has testified of his experience with Brother Nee. He observed that Brother Nee had no reaction to anything. Sometimes the jailers purposely did not feed Brother Nee. The brother who was his cellmate felt that their treatment of Brother Nee was unrighteous, but when he tried to say something on Brother Nee's behalf, Brother Nee said, "No, let them do whatever they want." Brother Nee was not upset, and he did not complain. He accepted God's sovereignty in His arrangement. That is why after twenty years in prison, toward the end of his life, he could write, "I maintain my joy" (*Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, p. 182). Although he was not in a pleasant environment, he did not complain or murmur, because he absolutely submitted himself to God's arrangement. He was not worrying about his ministry, his work. He was content to be where God put him. Because he was such a vessel, the Lord's life was able to flow out through him.

When we exercise our self-will according to our own preference, we may be actively doing many things for God. We are zealous according to our plan, goal, and preference, but our doing actually frustrates and hinders God from accomplishing what He desires. Murmurings and reasonings are due to disobedience. The children of Israel were forbidden to enter into the rest of the good land because of their disobedience. Our obedience to God is the main weapon to slay our murmurings and our reasonings.

**Our Needing to Do All Things
without Murmurings and Reasonings
in Order That We May Become Blameless and Guileless,
Children of God without Blemish**

*Blameless Describing Our Outward Behavior,
and Guileless Our Inward Character;*

*to Be Guileless Being to Be Simple,
Artless (Not Political), or Innocent*

We should do all things without murmurings and reasonings in order [70] that we may become blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish (v. 15). *Blameless* describes our outward behavior and *guileless* our inward character; to be guileless is to be simple, artless (not political), or innocent (Matt. 10:16). [Philippians 2:15](#) says, “That you may be blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as luminaries in the world.” God desires His children to work out their own salvation so that they would become blameless. Are we blameless or do we have areas in our life that are cause for blame? We tend to blame others, but it may be that we are blameless only when we do not blame others. Suppose Silas blamed Paul for being in prison in Philippi. He could have said, “Paul, we would not be in prison if you had talked a little less.” Similarly, we may blame the brothers whom we serve with for this or that situation. At the same time, we ourselves are not blameless. When we blame others, we give the enemy the ground for others to blame us.

Working out our salvation also results in our becoming guileless. Guileless means to be simple, artless, and not political. The Lord’s recovery has been in the United States for over fifty years. As we get older and are in the church life longer, we all become smarter, more political, experienced, and learned. Actually, we also become old and stale. We are not as simple as we once were, as when we first touched the Lord’s recovery. Working out our own salvation makes us not only blameless but also guileless. Sometimes little kids get into a disagreement. Recently, one of my grandchildren said to his brother, “Oh, I do not want to be with you. Stay away from me.” Then his brother said, “I do not want to be with you either.” However, five minutes later, they are again playing together. Young children have no guile, despite their occasional disagreements. This is because they are simple.

However, in the church life today, we have gained more experience, become smarter, and have motives and intentions, which cause offenses to others and make us offended by others. Such things take away the joy of our church life, which is the enjoyment of Christ. The result of our working out our salvation by obedience with fear and trembling is that we become simple, guileless, and blameless.

As Children of God, Our Having God's Life and Nature

As children of God, we have God's life and nature ([John 3:16](#); [2 Pet. 1:4](#)). We are not merely Christians and believers but also children of God. As children of God, we possess the Father's life and nature. We may not [71] be fully mature, but we nevertheless have the Father's life and the Father's nature. The goal of God's salvation is that we would become blameless and guileless as children of God, possessing and living out the life and nature of God. As part of our salvation, we must be delivered from all the murmurings and reasonings, which are gophers working to undermine and frustrate the carrying out of our salvation.

IN THE MIDST OF THE DARK AND CORRUPT WORLD, WHICH IS USURPED BY SATAN, OUR FUNCTION BEING TO SHINE AS LUMINARIES, HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

In the midst of the dark and corrupt world, which is usurped by Satan ([1 John 5:19](#); [2:15-17](#)), our function is to shine as luminaries, holding forth the word of life ([Phil. 2:15-16](#)). In [verse 14](#) we see two inner gophers—murmurings and reasonings—that damage and frustrate God's working in us and on us. In [verse 15](#) we see an outward frustration—the crooked and perverted generation, which is the dark and corrupt world around us. Do we feel that this age, especially the twenty-first century, is getting brighter and brighter? Would we say that the future is glorious, or do we sense that this age is becoming more perverted and more corrupted? On the one hand, we have the advancement of technology and commerce; on the other hand, we can observe that the level of morality is at its lowest point in human history. Corruption and perverseness are prevalent in today's age, not only in the political, commercial, and academic worlds but also in the religious world. The world in all its aspects is under corruption and perverseness.

As the children of God, we have been presented with a pattern of the God-man Jesus, and we are charged to work out our own salvation in the midst of this perverted and corrupted generation. We need to know the generation that we are living in. I have much feeling for those, especially the younger ones, living and growing up in the Seattle area. In this region of the United States there are many large, high-tech companies, drawing many young people to work here. Those of the so-called Generation Z

grew up with the Internet. Many do not even know what a telephone is. It is as if they are living in another sphere, and they have been very much absorbed by and become a part of that sphere.

In my observation a monstrous system is growing. This system reaches far beyond any one country. [First John 5:19](#) says, “The whole world lies in the evil one.” Many young brothers and sisters are growing up in the midst [72] of a dark and corrupt world, where the pernicious one has an evil intent to poison and damage them. The pernicious one operates mostly outside of our consciousness, as we work and carry out our daily activities and responsibilities. Inwardly, murmurings and reasonings are going on, and outwardly there is a dark, evil, and corrupt world. In the midst of the dark and corrupt world, our function is to shine as luminaries, holding forth the word of life.

**Christ Being the Sun,
with the Church as the Moon
and the Believers as the Planets to Reflect Him
by Holding Forth the Word of Life**

Christ is the sun, with the church as the moon and the believers as the planets to reflect Him by holding forth the word of life.

**To Hold Forth the Word of Life Being to Apply It,
to Present It, and to Offer It to the World
by Living Out Christ**

To hold forth the word of life is to apply it, to present it, and to offer it to the world by living out Christ ([Acts 5:20](#)). As we live in this monstrous system, we need to be reminded that we, through His salvation, are the children of God and that we are luminaries. Luminaries are reflectors. We are not light itself; God is the light. But His shining forth of Himself as the light needs us, as luminaries, to reflect Him. In this dark world God needs many luminaries to shine Him forth. We shine Him forth by holding forth the word of life. This is to live and to magnify Christ. This is the salvation that we need to work out, especially in these days. This is more than just evangelism through the preaching the gospel. We need to illuminate this dark world by the word of this life. We need to be such luminaries.

I hope that the young brothers and sisters who are working in the world and taking advantage of many great opportunities would not forget that

they are children of God and luminaries, having the capacity to reflect the Son as the light. They should not put themselves under a bushel but allow the light to shine out through them. First, they must come to Him to behold Him. Luminaries cannot shine by themselves. We need to come to Him to be enlightened by Him, to be shined on by Him, so that He can be reflected by and shine through us.

In these days our focus should not be on doing that much. There are many localities who want to do this and to do that. They are initiating [73] many activities. We do not need decoration; we need illumination. We need illumination by holding forth the word of life. Otherwise, we will become empty.

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-16 BEING A DEFINITION OF LIVING CHRIST IN 1:19-21

The God Who Operates in Us Being the Supplying Spirit

[Philippians 2:12-16](#) is a definition of living Christ in [1:19-21](#). The God who operates in us ([2:13](#)) is the supplying Spirit ([1:19](#)).

To Shine as Luminaries Being to Magnify Christ, and to Hold Forth the Word of Life Being to Live Christ

To shine as luminaries ([2:15](#)) is to magnify Christ ([1:20](#)), and to hold forth the word of life ([2:16](#)) is to live Christ ([1:21a](#)). [Philippians 1:20-21](#) parallels [2:15-16](#). Hence, [2:12-16](#) is a real definition of what it is to live Christ as presented in [1:20-21](#).

The Only Way to Live Christ Being to Be Saturated with the Word of Life

The only way to live Christ is to be saturated with the word of life. What a blessing it is that we are under the ministry in the Lord's recovery. We have been given the ministry of the age. Through the ministry of the age, we have the word of life. We need to be saturated with the word of life so that we can live Christ.

The Word of Life Being the Living Breath of God,

the Spirit Who Gives Life

The word of life is the living breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16), the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63). We need the word that is the very breath of God, the very breathing of God, the living word of God.

Needing to Pray-read the Word, Receiving the Word of God by Means of All Prayer and Petition

We need to pray-read the Word, receiving the word of God by means of all prayer and petition (Eph. 6:17-18). We should pray-read the Word every day. We should not come to the Word merely with our eyes and our mind. We should come to the Word with our spirit to pray-read the Word. I feel that the Lord still needs to recover pray-reading among us. [74] I encourage the young ones growing up among us to learn to pray-read the Word every day. The Word must be Spirit to us, not just dead letters. Through our pray-reading, the Word becomes spirit and life to us.

Needing to Sing-read the Word, Letting the Word of Christ Dwell in Us Richly in All Wisdom by Singing

We need to sing-read the Word, letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom by singing (Col. 3:16). Verse 16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.” I have tasted sing-reading, but I am still short in the experience of sing-reading. I have not yet seen any place that regularly practices sing-reading the Word. This verse not only indicates that we need to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, but it also points out that the means for letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly is by teaching, admonishing, and singing. We need to learn to sing the Word.

There is something about singing the Word. A few years ago I was at a Lord’s table meeting in Ethiopia. At a certain point, some saints broke out in song over a portion of the Word that speaks of God being immortal, invisible, the only wise God. They sang the same verses for the next thirty minutes. The saints were just carried to the heavens in singing and praising. That Lord’s table meeting was so uplifting. Brother Lee says that we can sing verses “either using a familiar tune or making up our own melody”

(Life-study of Philippians, p. 407). He points out that, just by singing the Word, we will be “infused, inspired, and inwardly strengthened” (p. 407). There have been scientific studies done showing that singing is related to positive effects in our brain. Our singing together brings in harmony. In short, there are many benefits to singing the Word, but the point here is that singing allows the word of Christ to dwell in us richly.

*If We Are Filled
with the Riches of the Living Word Day by Day,
Spontaneously Our Holding Forth the Word of Life;
This Being to Live Christ
That He May Be Magnified in Us*

If we are filled with the riches of the living Word day by day, spontaneously we will hold forth the word of life; this is to live Christ that He may be magnified in us. [75]

**PHILIPPIANS 2:5-16 REVEALING
THE DIVINE AND RICH PROVISION
FOR OUR CONSTANT SALVATION**

Our Having the Lord Jesus as Our Pattern

[Philippians 2:5-16](#) reveals the divine and rich provision for our constant salvation. We have the Lord Jesus as our pattern ([vv. 6-11](#)). We need to obey, to say Amen, to this pattern. Praise the Lord for this wonderful, living pattern!

Our Having God Operating in Us

We have God operating in us ([v. 13](#)). What a provision! We need to cooperate by saying Amen to the inner operating Triune God.

**Our Being God’s Children,
Having God’s Life and the Divine Nature**

We are God’s children, having God’s life and the divine nature ([v. 15](#)). We need to enjoy the life and nature of God to live Him.

Our Being Luminaries
Qualified to Reflect the Divine Light of Christ

We are luminaries qualified to reflect the divine light of Christ (v. 15). As regenerated beings, we have a human spirit that is now indwelt by the Spirit of God. We have the capacity to reflect God. We are luminaries, but we need to come to Him to behold Him. The more we behold Him, the more we will reflect Him.

Our Having the Word of Life
to Hold Forth, to Present, to Others

We have the word of life to hold forth, to present, to others (v. 16). God has given us the word of life. This word should not be a word of letters to us. We must learn to speak the word of life to others. Thank the Lord for the rich provision that He has given to us so that we can work out our own salvation and be saved not only from negative things but also from our lack of not living Christ.—J. L.