



JOY IN TEMPTATION

Part 6 of The Rebel's Guide to Joy

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Phil. 2:12-30 | November 11, 2007

You are listening to Philippians, “A Rebel’s Guide to Joy” – a teaching series by Pastor Mark Driscoll. The following is a presentation of Mars Hill Church in Seattle. For more audio and video content, visit marshillchurch.org.

Pastor Mark Driscoll: Alrighty, good evening, Mars Hill. I know we’re getting pretty packed here. There’s room at the 8:30. You’re gonna love that crowd. They show up late with bed head, so you may want to transition to that service.

We are in Philippians Chapter 2, verses 12 through the end of the chapter, verse 30. If you’ve got a Bible, you can go there. While you’re turning there, I’ll give you one quick announcement. In January, I’m doing a preaching series where people get to vote online for whatever question they think would be most intriguing. You can vote every day, upwards of ten times until December 14th at marshillchurch.org. So if you want to go ahead and participate, we’d love to have you do so.

Tonight the title of the sermon is “The Rebel’s Guide to Joy in Temptation.” And Paul here is gonna speak in a real heartfelt and pastoral way to his church. And so in keeping with that, we’re gonna do this one old school – no video, no notes – just me and a Bible and what I hope is helpful information.

So we’ll go ahead and pray and get right to work in God’s Word.

Father, we begin by thanking you for being a living God, a good God, a loving God, a God who likes to change people, who likes to serve people, who likes to help people, because that’s exactly what we need. We thank you Lord Jesus for enabling our sins to be forgiven through your death on the cross. We thank you for the possibility of a new heart through your resurrection and new life that you provide. And Holy Spirit, we thank you that you are actively continually at work in the hearts and minds and lives of your children. And so we invite you, Holy Spirit, to conform us to the image of Jesus as we seek to glorify God, our Heavenly Father. And so Jesus, we ask this in your good name. Amen.

I’ll start by saying this. Paul is a man who’s facing a lot of temptation in his life. He’s in prison. I mean the guy’s even beaten up and hated and despised and opposed and blogged about, and he had a really rough, difficult life, and I’m sure there were temptations for him to give up, to give in, to sort of settle in to apathy and lethargy – thinking that he had done enough for the Kingdom. But he’s a guy who is going to serve faithfully right through to the end. He’s writing to a church in Philippi that’s tempted to lose sight of Jesus – lose sight of their mission. They’re falling into grumbling and complaining and division, and there’s the beginnings of real controversy in that church. And so what we’re going to see tonight is that scripture is timeless. And because of that, it’s always very timely.

There’s a very important doctrine called The Doctrine of Providence, that God is in charge of human history and God is good, and that God works things out just in the nick of time to help us learn what he has to teach us. And about a year ago, I picked this section of scripture about temptation that was on Paul and temptation that was on their church, and curiously enough, not knowing in God’s providential timing where we would be at as a church, we find ourselves at exactly the same point that they were in Philippians 2, 12 through 30.

The situation there was their church was like ours – about 11 years of age. Like ours, was an urban church in the city. Lots of new Christians. Overall, it was a church that had a lot of influence and was involved in church planning as we are. It was a church that had sound doctrine. There weren’t a lot of doctrinal controversies in that church. The one issue though that they were struggling with surrounded conflict and sin with two leaders. They’re mentioned in Chapter 4, verse 2. And these two leaders had somehow gotten into sin or pride or folly – or we’re not exactly sure what – but there was contention and controversy around these two leaders. We find ourselves in the exactly same season, as the church recently had to discipline two senior leaders in the church. The people in the days of the Philippian church, they responded with grumbling and questioning. Many of the members of our church are guilty of those same sins – lots of grumbling and questioning. So Paul in an effort to answer their questions and quell their grumbling wrote a letter, which is what I did this week as well. As elders, we published a 145 page document for our members, seeking to answer their questions so that we can be united back around Jesus and get on with the things that he has for us.

So when we pick up this section of scripture, their need was exactly as our need. Some of their responses are like some of your responses. And my hope is to use what Paul has written, as inspired of God teaching, to help us have some insight on how we should proceed as a church.

So we’ll begin in Chapter 2, verse 12. It says, “Therefore” – so we’ll stop right there. That seems like a good place to take a break. And “therefore” is picking up on what has transpired in Chapter 2, verses 1 through 11, and that is that Jesus Christ is God, who humbly came into human history to live a

perfect life without sin – the life we have not lived – to go to the cross and die as a substitute in our place for our sins, paying our penalty for sin, which is death. And that Jesus Christ died and was buried, but then three days later he rose, conquering our enemies of sin and death. That he ascended back into heaven and he is now glorified. He is exalted. He’s ruling and reigning over all people’s times, places, nations and cultures, from his heavenly throne, and that Jesus’ name is above every name. That in the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue confess in heaven and on the earth and under the earth that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father. Jesus has made a new people. Jesus has made a new way of life, and Jesus’ name is to be exalted in all things, in all ways, at all times by his people.

He says in light of the humility of Jesus to serve us, and the greatness of Jesus who has been exalted, we should live our lives like Jesus, with Jesus, for Jesus, by the power that Jesus gives us.

“Therefore, my beloved,” – this is his heart for his people. He pastored that church. He planted that church, as I pastor this church and planted this church, and as hard as one of love, as my heart is one of love for you. And he uses the word “beloved”. I know some of you dudes are like, “Pastor Mark, don’t call me beloved.” Alright, I’ll call you “Christian dude, who I really like in a masculine way”. Okay, we’ll call it that. You ladies, you’re the beloved. There you go. Maybe that feels a little better.

But he’s an older man at this point. He’s been a Christian for about 30 years, and as such, he started off as kind of a tough, rugged guy, and God softened his heart and now he uses words like “beloved” and “I love you” and “I care for you”, and he’s become more tender. Not less courageous, but more tender as he gets older. I pray that same thing for myself.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed,” – how many of you really don’t like that word obeyed? “Obeyed?” Obeyed. We live in a culture that is committed to disobedience. Children should rebel against their parents – disobey them. It’s sort of assumed, that’s why the teenage years exist. The whole point is disobey. That’s what you’re supposed to do. That’s your job description – disobey.

Parents are encouraged to disobey spiritual leadership in the church – their elders – adults are. People are encouraged to disobey God – to disobey scripture. It’s sort of hip and trendy and cool and admirable in some circles to be disobedient. To be disrespectful. To be defiant.

I’m guessing none of you woke up this morning and said, “God, teach me to obey. I want to obey. I love to obey. I long to obey. I pray that my boss would tell me a lot of things that I can do. I pray that leaders in my church would give me other things to do. I pray that my parents additionally would give me orders so that I might obey them. And God, I rejoice in obedience because I’m an obeyer and I’m all about obeying. And I memorized all the words in the Bible that relate to obedience, and all the verses that communicate obedience, because I am an obedient person.”

And what he is saying is this – if you have loving Godly leadership, obey that leadership. If you have parents who love the Lord, obey them. If you have a boss who is a decent boss, obey them at your job. If you have pastors, leaders, deacons in ministry who give you council, obey them, because here’s the deal – most of us disobey because we think we’re smarter than everyone. We think we’re better than everyone, and we think that we see ourselves more clearly than they do. And we’re wrong, because we’re blind to our own blindness and we’re foolish to our own folly, and if someone loves God and loves us and speaks to us, we should obey. We should listen. We should consider. And that requires what he spoke of last week – humility. Humility.

He goes on to say, “You have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence,” – he had been gone for four years. He’s about 800 miles away at this point – “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” – reverence and respect and sobriety – “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Okay, here is a very important verse. Many verses of Philippians are prone to be memorized. There are some very memorable verses in Philippians. This is perhaps one of the most memorable. And here what he is speaking about is what we’ll call the doctrine of regeneration. Jesus Christ is God. He died to take away our sin. That is true. But in addition to that, he regenerates us.

Some of you have been told that what it means to be a Christian is your sin is forgiven and you go to heaven. That’s true. But in the middle, there’s something else that is wonderful in this life called regeneration, and that is that the New Covenant, that’s the language of the Bible, is about God taking out your heart of stone, which is rebellious and foolish and hard hearted and obstinate and stubborn and wicked and depraved and sinful. God takes out that heart of stone and he replaces it with a heart of flesh. That is not a perfect heart, but a heart that is tender toward God that desires God.

Regeneration is being transformed, utterly changed from the inside out. A new heart, which Proverb says is the wealth spring of our life, or a new nature, to use that language, or a new identity. It’s a new center. “You become a new creation,” Paul says. You change from the inside out.

Now what accompanies that new nature – that new heart – is new desires. You desire things you never desired before. I’ll give you an example. I was 19 when I became a Christian in college. I went to college with the express plan of meeting girls and breaking commandments. That was my goal. I wouldn’t have expressed it that theologically, but that’s basically what was in my heart. And then I became a Christian and God gave me a brand new heart. And out of that heart I had brand new desires. Next thing I know, I really want to go to church. I’m going to church for the first time, and I remember walking in going, “What am I doing here? I really like going to church, I guess.” This is a whole new desire. Up until this point, church was the last place I wanted to go. If you would have said, “Do you want to hit yourself in the head with a roofing hammer or go to church?”, I’d say, “I’ll take the hammer. I do not want to go to church.”

God gave me a new heart with new desires. “Hey, I want to go to church.” I would go to church, and then I would stay and go to church again. Those were the people I made fun of before I had a new heart. In addition to that, all of a sudden I wanted to go to Bible studies. I never wanted to go to Bible studies, ever. I never went to a Bible study. I made fun of the Christian kids on campus who carried their little Bible. “Oh, look at that guy. He’s

apparently lonely. He needs friends. He'll hang out with the other kids with Bibles. I'm glad their quarantined." And that was my thought. And then all of a sudden God gave me a new heart. And a kid asked me, "Do you want to go to Bible study?" I'm like, "Yeah."

I remember one quarter where I had five classes and six Bible studies. I was that guy that I made fun of. I would be like, "Bible study, I love that. Hey, do you guys have any other Bible studies?" And I'd go to all their Bible studies. I was like a Bible study addict. I just couldn't help. It was like chocolate ice cream. "You got any more?" I just kept going. And then I got invited to my first prayer meeting. This guy says, "Do you want to come to our prayer meeting?" I'm like, "Yeah! Yeah, I want to go to the prayer meeting." I show up, there's a bunch of students in a circle. They say, "Mark, since you're new, would you like to pray first?" I said, "No, I don't know how to pray. I've never prayed out loud with a group. I'm here to learn. You guys go first." So they all bowed their head and closed their eyes, and I kept mine open to figure out what you're supposed to do in the prayer meeting. And I really liked it. I thought, "This is awesome." I was at a prayer meeting. New desires.

How many of you had that experience? You're making fun of Christians and then you are one, and now you're making fun of yourself. You're going, "What happened?" It wasn't that you were trying to change your desires. It's that God regenerated you – gave you a new nature that had new desires.

You'll hear people say things like, "I was doing drugs. I met Jesus. I never want to do drugs again. I was sinning. I was rebelling. I was foolish. And I just totally changed from the inside out. I used to have an appetite for certain things – sin and rebellion and folly – and then I got a totally new appetite and now I want to read the Bible and pray and repent and be humble and change." Totally different desires.

Regeneration is God does good work in you. That's Paul's language. "God is at work in you." "If you're a Christian, God is at work in you." That's what he says. He gives you a new heart. That heart has new desires. With it comes your spiritual gift – new capacity to serve God. With that additionally comes a new power through the indwelling Holy Spirit, who is God at work and powering and enabling you. And so what we're talking about here is that God is at work in you.

But the Christian life is not without passion. It actually is very passionate. It's not about white knuckling and grinding your teeth and, "Okay God, I won't do the fun stuff because I want to go to heaven someday, but I'm really not happy about this." It really is a joyous life – new nature, new desires, new gifts, new power, new life that's passionate, that's joy filled, that's meaningful and purposeful, because I'm doing what I was made to do – live in relationship with God. And my will and God's will are synchronized, and God gives me his power so that I might obey him and live a new life with him and for him, and like him and through him.

And Paul says, "This is the best life there is. There's nothing like this."

Let me say that this is absolutely antithetical to religion. The religious view of God is that he is far away and he tells you to do things and he stands back and keeps score. What we're talking about here is a God who initiates. A God who comes near. A God who works in us. A God who loves to serve. A God who delights in helping us because we need help. That's how great God is.

There's been a debate theologically about divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Does God do things or do we do things? And Paul here says, "Well, you work with God." Now first God works in you. God makes you a Christian. You and I, we don't do anything to become Christians. Jesus did all the work. He lived the sinless life, died the substitutionary death and rose in victory. That victory is ours if we trust in him. It's totally a gift of grace. We don't do anything to make ourselves Christians. We trust in Jesus.

Now after that, we call our ongoing maturation growing in the likeness of Christ, sanctification. And what this is is where we react to God. He initiates and we respond. That's the language we like to use. So what he's saying is this – God gives you a new nature, so live according to it. God gives you new desires, so feed them – nurture them. God gives you new gifts, so serve in ministry. God gives you a new power through the Holy Spirit, so live in accordance with the power of the Holy Spirit, not of your own desires and will, which were previously incapable of obeying God.

One theologian says that divine sovereignty and human responsibility is like two pedals on a bike. It's a good simple analogy. God works. You respond. God works something in you. You work it out with him. God gives you a good desire. You obey him. God convicts you of a sin. You repent. God teaches you something and you learn it. God initiates. You respond. And together you make progress working with God to grow in your relationship.

Those who overly stress your responsibilities, they put too much pressure on you. Those who overly stress God's work can have the proclivity of causing you to be lazy, indifferent and passive, instead of acknowledging God's work and "I want to work with him. God's at work in me, so I want to work it out through me."

Now in saying this, I will acknowledge that you will have conflicted desires. You will have conflicted desires. We call that temptation. You'll be tempted to sin. But if you truly have a new heart – a new nature – your deepest desire will be the desire to obey God, to live for him, to live life like him, to be someone who follows in the pattern of the life of Jesus. So this is one of the ways I know whether or not somebody's a Christian. I'll meet with them and I'll ask, "What is your deepest desire?" If they say, "My deepest desire is sin and folly and rebellion." Okay, then you need a new heart. If your deepest desire is, "I want to please Jesus and love Jesus and know Jesus and be like Jesus," well that only comes out of a new nature. That only comes out of a new nature. And the good news of this is this is absolutely antithetical to behavior modification. Behavior modification is you look at what you're doing and you change your behavior. God wants more than your behavior. He wants all of you. He wants your heart and your will and your mind and your strength. He wants to change you from the inside out. God doesn't want you to just change your behavior. He wants you to have a changed heart with absolutely new desires and new gifts and a new power to live a new life that is filled with passion and joy.

And so the Christian life is not so much about what you need to stop doing. It's about what you need to start doing – to replace an old affection with a new affection – to replace an old pattern with an even better life through Jesus. And some of you are here today and you're trying to stop certain sins. You want to stop eating too much, or drinking or lying, or sexual addiction or pornography, or pride or gossip, or whatever your thing is. You are dealing with the fruit. The real issue is the root. You're dealing with the affects. The real point is to address the cause. It's always a hard issue. It's always a hard issue.

And that "God changes us from the inside out." That's what he says. "God is at work, so work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Now what I love about this is he goes on to say "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work." The first thing that God changes in us is our will. Usually the problem is our will. We want to do evil. We want to do sin, so God has to change our will. God has to change our will. And I would say if you're struggling with sin, you've got to wrestle with the issue of will, desire, appetite, motive, your greatest passion, your deepest desire. Is it for Jesus or sin? That's really the issue. But God changes our will.

How many of you are here today, newer Christians, absolutely shocked at how your will has changed? Your will was to sin and now your will is different. It's because God is at work in you and he's changing your will so that your will and his will are congruent.

Some people argue for free will. I don't want free will. I want God's will. That's what I want. God, what do you want? That's what I want, 'cause God is good. That's what he goes on to say – that God works in you – "both to will and to work" – he changes our will and then it works itself out in our life. The way we deal with sex and power and money and glory and fame and loneliness and hurt and suffering and disappointment – all of that changes because God works in us and then God works through us.

Yes, why does God go through all this trouble? It says "for his good pleasure". God owes us nothing. But here's the truth. God is a great God. Satan is horrible. Sin is terrible. The world is fallen, but God is good. God is a good God. And God takes pleasure. He delights in doing good.

Now what I love about this, so many religions say that God is bad, and if you want his help, you kind of need to manipulate him. You need to pay him off with a gift, an offering, a sacrifice. You need to have a montree whereby you can manipulate him to do good.

What's he's saying here is this – God is good and God is pleased to do good for you. God wants to save you, help you, change you, encourage you, convict you, instruct you, transform you, change your desires – change, transform your heart from the inside out. God enjoys doing that. God loves saving people. God loves forgiving people. God loves changing people. He just does. It's all for his good pleasure.

So what Paul is saying is this – you really should be so grateful that God is who he is. He's good. He's happy to help. He's at work before we are. He starts the change and he asks us to participate with him in a relationship.

The Bible uses the word "covenant" to explain that relationship. The Bible also uses the word "covenant" to explain marriage – the marriage that I have with my wife, Grace. And like any covenant relationship, if only she works on the marriage or only I work on the marriage, it's not going to be a very good marriage. Likewise, in our covenant relationship with God, he initiates. He's always at work. He's totally faithful. It pleases him to help us and we need to respond, and that's the essence of our relationship.

Now he says that there are a few things that get in the way – that get in the way of working out of your new heart and new desires and new passions and new appetites and new gifts and new power. He addresses those in verse 14. "Do all things without grumbling or questioning," – grumbling. You're like, (Grumble tone to voice) "What is that?" That's you. Seriously, this is complaining and whining and nitpicking. And it's grumbling.

Now what he's not saying is that you need to lie. Somebody comes up, "How are you doing?" "Great. I'm doing great." Get hit by a car.

"Rejoice in the Lord always." That's not what he's saying, right? You can be honest. Paul's honest. "Hey, I'm in prison. They might kill me. It's not my favorite thing to do. It's sort of a rough go for me." He's honest. You can be honest without complaining and grumbling. Complaining and grumbling is, "God, you have no right to do this. God, where are you? God, I thought you were a good God. God, what about the promises? God, I'm hurting."

When you think of grumbling, complaining, whining, what group of people in the Bible come to mind first? The Israelites in the Old Testament. They kept complaining. Until what? They died. That's one way to stop complaining. You can just complain until you die. Some people do. Let me submit to you, it would be good to find another way to stop complaining other than dying.

And here's what it looked like for the Israelites. They're walking around in the woods for 40 years on a journey that actually wouldn't have taken them that long. 40 years. It was like, "I don't like the food. I don't like the weather. I don't like walking. God, I'm angry. God, what are you doing?"

"I'm teaching you not to complain."

"Well of course I'm complaining. I hate the food. I hate the walk. I hate the people. I've seen these woods before. God, what are you doing?"

"You need to stop complaining."

"Well you said you were a good God, and you didn't give me any good food. And you said you'd lead me to a good place, and you're leading me into a bad place and I'm very frustrated about that. So where are we at?"

"I told you, I'm trying to work on the grumbling thing."

"Well grumbling? You haven't heard anything yet. I'll tell ya."

Just 40 years. God's trying to teach 'em one lesson. Had they learned it, they may have been able to move on.

Now some of you, you complain all the time. "No I don't." You're complaining. That's my point. If you don't think you complain a lot, ask someone. And when they answer, don't grumble. "Do I complain a lot?" And if they snicker, that would be an indication that you are a grumbler. You're like, "Are you serious?"

Complaining, grumbling. Because when you're grumbling, you're so busy arguing with God, you don't have time to listen to him. You don't take – you accuse. "God, you're evil, wrong. You can't do that. You have no right." You've not taken the time to ask the question, "Okay, God you're good. You're doing something good in me. What do you want me to learn? How can I grow? What are you trying to teach me? What do I need to repent of?" He says, "Do everything without grumbling or questioning." Or questioning.

Now some of you will ask, "Does this mean I can't have a question?" You can have a question, but there's a difference between having a question and always questioning. A question is "I don't understand. This doesn't make any sense. I'm confused. Explain this to me. Show me what God is saying here. I don't know what happened. Could you help me understand?" That's a question. Questions are perfectly fine.

Questioning is more like interrogation. Questioning is, "I don't trust you. You're guilty until proven innocent. I'm holier than you and smarter than you, and until you convince me, I'm convinced you're wrong."

How many of you were this kid for your parents? You were like this very little attorney who had lots of questions for your parents. And it wasn't that you had questions, you were always questioning. "Why? How come? Johnny gets to do that." "What do you think about this?" "What do you think about the war in Iraq?" You're like, "You're four. Shut up and drink your juice box."

And some adults are just always questioning. And what this is, these are suspicious people. There are people who are mistrusting and distrusting. These are people with critical spirits. These are people that if you answer their question, they've got 25 more questions, and they'll have questions forever. And it's not that they have questions. It's that they're sinning through questioning. The heart is not good.

And some people even do this with God. "God, who do you think you are? God, how do you think this is fair?" "God, you said you'd never leave me or forsake me." "God, you said this and that." "God, you said you'd come through me." "God, I deserve better."

Questioning, grumbling – sins to be repented of. Sins that actually get in the way of working out what God has worked in you.

Stopping to say, "Okay God, what are you trying to teach me? What are you trying to grow me in? What do I need to repent of? What do I need to learn here? Please don't make me walk around my house for 40 years until I die. Please give me the humility to learn so I can figure this out and move on with my life."

Some of you are very angry at God. You question if he's good and you grumble against him. And the issue may be that there's one lesson that he keeps trying to teach you and you're just stubborn and stiff-necked and hard hearted and proud, and you just refuse to learn, so you keep marching anticipating that at some point he'll repent. He'll give in. He'll cry uncle. He won't. You're gonna learn that lesson.

"Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent."

When someone isn't seen and they're really not that repentant and they're grumbling and questioning, if you address them honestly, say, "Hey, I think you're being proud. I don't think you're listening. I don't think you're growing. I think you're stuck on this issue. I think you're blind to your own blindness. I think you're foolish to your own fault." Usually they say, "Oh no, no, no, no. You don't understand. You don't see it the way I do. I'm not wicked. I'm multi-perspectival. I just have a different advantage point than you do on this."

We need to come up with big words to justify our rebellion. "That's your interpretation. I have a different interpretation that lets me wack people and be naked a lot. That's just your interpretation."

We have all these silly ways of getting our way. And the best thing to do with someone who's hard hearted, rebellious and stubborn, is to go up and ask these questions – "Are you blameless and innocent?" Gotcha. They may argue over the finer points and perspective and motive, intent and what the Hebrew word is in Leviticus, but if you ask questions like, "Are you blameless and innocent?" "Nope." "Okay, then tell me where you're not blameless and innocent." Then that would be your sin – your grumbling, your questioning, your fighting, your disobeying. God's a good God. He's trying to do a good thing in you and you're making it really hard because he's pushing down his pedal and you're not pushing down your pedal.

Are you blameless? Are you innocent? There's always something for us to repent and learn.

"Children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life," – what he's saying is this – sometimes people who say they're Christians get so consumed in their own disobedience. They get so consumed in their own self-righteousness. They get so consumed in their own feelings and their own hurts and their own wants and their own needs, that they forget that they're supposed to be a witness to the world. They lose sight of their mission. He's saying, "You know what, it's as crooked, jacked up world." And non-Christians are watching you, and they are asking the question, "Does Jesus make a difference?" And if you're questioning God and if you're one who continues to complain all the time and one who disobeys God, what he's saying is people are watching. And they're gonna say, "You know what? The church is as joke. That person's a hypocrite. And Christianity doesn't work because Jesus is a fraud."

Some of you may not understand that a lot of people are watching you – friends, family, co-workers, neighbors – and how you live will indicate to them whether or not this doctrine of regeneration is true and Jesus really changes anybody. That's very serious business.

He goes on to say, "so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering" – this is to die – "upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me."

Here's what Paul is saying – "One day we're all gonna stand before Jesus. Is that going to be a good day for you?" That's his question.

And here he says that he wants to be proud of the people in his church who claim to be Christians. You may say, "Didn't he just say at the beginning of Chapter 2 that pride is bad?" There is such a thing as good pride. There's bad pride, where you compare yourself to someone else, you think you're better than them, you cut them down, you're proud, arrogant, self-righteous. That's evil.

What he's talking about here is if God works a new heart, new nature, new desires, new gifts, new power in someone – God initiates and then they respond and they repent and they humble themselves and they read their Bible and they pray and they pursue accountable relationships and they change and they're committed to living a life of repentance and change – what you should do is encourage that. You should walk up and say, "I am proud of you. I'm proud of you. I see you changing. I see you growing. I see you maturing. I see you learning. Where you're at, that's different than where you were at last year. I'm seeing progress."

This is not the kind of pride that got Satan kicked out of heaven. This is the kind of pride that comes with the spiritual gift of encouragement. "I'm proud of you." Because in a fallen crooked world, not a lot of people are going to commend you for growing to be more like Jesus. But as Christians, we should find God's work in the hearts and lives and minds of our brothers and sisters, and we should tell them, "I see it and I'm proud of you and I'm encouraged. And God is working good things in you, and you're working with him and it's showing. It's coming out in your life and I'm seeing it."

Paul says, "I want to be able to say that about our church." See the truth is, you will stand before Jesus and give an account. But also as one of the elders of the church, I must stand before Jesus with you and give an account. Hebrews 13 says the same thing – that I serve as a man among the other leaders in the church who must give an account for you. So some day when you're standing before Jesus and I'm there, please, let me be proud of you in the right way. Let the leaders in this church who will stand there and give an account say, "You know, I've seen him change, Jesus. I've seen him grow. I've seen him mature. I've seen him repent. I've seen a market increase in humility. Jesus, I know you did a great thing for them. I know you did a great thing in them and they partnered with you and I've seen great things through them. I'm encouraged."

Some of you make it so easy to be proud of you. I could tell stories for months and years of people that I'm exceedingly proud of. The pastors and leaders, the deacons in this church, could also likewise tell stories of people we're exceedingly proud of. We see God's working in them and we see that they are working with God. They're not grieving, quenching or resisting the Holy Spirit. They're not people who are committed to sinful disobedience. They're not complainers. They're not people who are constantly questioning. They trust that God is good. They use every circumstance as an opportunity to grow, and as a result, they make a lot of progress quickly, spiritually.

Some of you, however, it's a little hard, if I'm totally honest. There are some that I have concerns about because I haven't seen much, if any, progress. They'll say that theologically they believe things that are true, but even demons say that there's one God and they shutter, but they still don't have regenerated hearts and redeemed lives.

I would just really encourage you to search your heart and ask yourself, "Do I have a new heart? Do I have a new nature? Do I have new desires? Do I have new passions? Do I have a new power? Or am I just a religious person who is the same as I was years ago? And I'm disobedient and I grumble a lot and I'm always questioning, and as a result, I'm either a Christian that's not maturing as they should, or I'm maybe not even a Christian at all."

I don't know your heart and I'm not Jesus, but I think that's what he's talking about. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Really be careful on these issues and think it through soberly.

I want to be proud of you and I want to be proud of our church. Now part of that is incumbent upon me to continually practice repentance so that you can be proud of me, and then you practicing repentance so that I can be proud of you, because there's a crooked world that's watching, and we want them to meet Jesus. And when we all stand before Jesus, we want that to be a good day when he says, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into your rest." Not, "Depart from me. I never knew you."

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, to will and to do according to his good pleasure." He also says though that this is a cause for joy. He says, "I am glad and rejoice with you. Likewise you should also be glad and rejoice with me."

I don't want to leave it on a note of discouragement. He says, "You know what? I rejoice because I do believe that you are Christians and I do believe that God has given you a new nature, and I do believe that God is working in you. And I just want to see you mature and I want to see you get beyond this season of grumbling and questioning and get on with the mission that I have for your church."

He says the same thing in Chapter 1 – that "He who began a good work in you, will see it through to completion on the day of Christ Jesus when we stand before him."

If you're a Christian, here's the good news – God is good. He's already at work and he's invited you to join him so you can have a whole new life. And

he gives us two examples, because sometimes these theological categories become a little obscure for us. And when we have historical concrete examples that we can meet someone and look at their life and know them, it helps us to see what he's talking about. That's why you need to get in a community group and pursue relationships with other Godly people.

The first person he'll give for us as an example, not a perfect example, but a humble repentant example, is this man Timothy, beginning in verse 19.

Oh, I forgot one point. That's what happens when you do this four times. He says this, and I'll hit this point, "That I may be proud" – in verse 16 – "that I did not run in vain or labor in vain."

I'll tell you, as a pastor, the greatest fear is that you give your whole life to people who don't change and you feel like you wasted your whole life. "I preached every week. I served. I worked overtime. I invested. I tried and we built this church and people didn't change." That is not what God intends for us. God does not intend for the leaders to work hard and for it to be in vain.

I'm asking you – I mean I've given you 11 years of my life. By God's grace, I'll give you everything I've got for the rest of my life. Please, let me at the end of my life say this – "It wasn't in vain and I'm proud of those people." That's all I'm asking. That's all I'm asking.

He lifts up two examples of people that haven't been ministry in vain. They've been totally worth all the investment and people that he's proud of in the right way.

"I hope to send you" – verse 19. "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also."

He says, "Guys, I'm gonna send Timothy. I need him here a little longer. See if I'm gonna get out of jail, die, what's going on. And when I figure that out, I'll send him to be with you."

Let me tell you the story of Timothy. Timothy's a guy who grew up, I believe, in a single parent home, most likely. His mom and his grandma knew the Bible and they were Jewish women. They didn't know Jesus yet. We know his dad was a Greek. We know nothing about his dad. It seems like he was raised in a single parent home. Paul came to town. Timothy was a young guy who knew a lot of Bible, but didn't know Jesus. Paul told him about Jesus – that all the Old Testament was about Jesus. "He's Messiah. He came, lived, died, rose, gave salvation, regeneration."

Timothy got a new heart from Jesus. He became a Christian. Out of that came new desires to do ministry – came new gifts as a minister – came a new power through the Holy Spirit. And all of a sudden, Timothy started growing very quickly. Paul went on with other missionary journeys to plant churches. Came back, saw Timothy, and these two men just absolutely connected.

Paul said, "I don't have any son," and Timothy said, "I don't have any dad." Paul says, "I'll be like a father to you. You be like a son to me. I'll mentor you and encourage you and train you in ministry. And you and I together, we're gonna go serve Jesus." And they do. They plant churches. They write books of the Bible together. They have this loving relationship. "Father, son and nature", Paul says here. He trusts Timothy to establish elders and sort our church conflict and discipline and handle finances. He's trustworthy.

And what he says is this – "There is no one like Timothy. There's a lot of people who do ministry, but there's" – Paul says in his day – "no one like Timothy. No one who is concerned about the well being of others above themselves." That is a great example of true humility. What he's saying is this – there's a lot of guys in ministry. They want money. They want fame. They want power. They want glory. They do what's best for them. He says, "Timothy," – he asks two questions – "what's best for Jesus? What's best for the people? That's what needs to be done."

Timothy is a selfless, humble, and in a very good way, a simple man. He looks out for people's best interests. Paul says, "I don't have anybody like him."

Now in reading that, I would commend those of you who are older and have been Christians to be like Paul and to find new Christians and to be in a mentoring, loving, developing relationship of encouragement. I know that many of you are new Christians and you wish you had a mentor. You wish you had a Paul. You know what? I do too. I have never had a Paul. I have a lot of people who love me, pray for me, invest in me. I have a lot of people that I thank God for, but there's nobody I would say, "That's my Paul. That's who I go to for help and council." So what I've decided is that rather than grumbling, "God, where's my Paul?", questioning, "How come I didn't get a Paul?", to instead say, "Okay God, what are you doing in me? I need to appreciate the people you brought in my life and learn from them, and I need to grow and mature so that one day I can be a Paul."

I look forward to, like Paul, having been a Christian for 30 years and being more of a father figure to mentor more younger and developing leaders. And if you have someone who's like that for you, who's older and mentoring you, praise God. You're really blessed. That's a wonderful gift. For some of you who don't have that, then inspire to become that. That's what we'd ask.

This guy Timothy though, what a great, humble, faithful servant he is – trustworthy and everything. In addition to him, there is this man, Epaphroditus.

Verse 25, "I have thought it also necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for

the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.”

Here’s Epaphroditus. Timothy is a guy who got saved under Paul’s ministry, grew up, matured. It’s like I don’t have anybody like this, ‘cause I’m not old enough to be your dad. But Pastor Jamie here is the closest like Timothy to me. Came in as 19 year-old, pot smoking kid listening to a lot of Bon Jovi. Obviously he had an old nature with old desires, and then he met Jesus and all of a sudden he wanted to be a pastor, and he had the gifts and the capacity that needed to be developed. So I’ve seen Jamie become a pastor here, become a Christian here, become an intern, get married to a great gal, birth four children here, become a pastor, now become the lead elder, and I trust him. I trust him.

I’ve gotten to see that with some of our leaders. Actually a lot of our leaders became Christians here and we’ve seen them grow. That’s Timothy.

Epaphroditus is another guy. We don’t know how he became a Christian or when he became a Christian. We do know, as far as we can tell, he wasn’t a pastor like Timothy. He wasn’t in vocational paid ministry like Timothy. He was probably a guy like some of you. He just was a guy who loved God and was serving in his church. I don’t know if he’s leading community groups or serving teams – an usher, a greeter – he’s helping out. He loves God. He’s totally dependable. He’s a guy who gets the job done. And so what happens is Paul has been gone four years. He’s 800 miles away. It takes a six week journey to get to him. The church that he founded loves him and hears that he may be dying under the death penalty. So they take a generous special offering. They’re a very generous church. They hand it to Epaphroditus. They say, “You need to get some time off work. Take that six week, 800 mile trip,” – a lot of walking – “go see Paul. Tell him we love him. See how he’s doing and bring us back a report and give him the gift.”

Along the way, Epaphroditus gets really sick. James Montgomery Boice, this commentator, says, “He may have been sick for three months near death.” I mean maybe he’s in a comma in a hospital bed. I don’t know what’s going on.

Now the church is really worried. “Is Paul dead or alive? Is Epaphroditus dead or alive? What’s going on? We love these men?”

Epaphroditus gets better, gets up, and what I love is, he doesn’t go back to the church at Philippi and say, “Hey guys, I got half way there. That whole near dying thing – I’m tapping out at this point. I’m a volunteer. Get one of the guys on staff to go.” He doesn’t do that. Instead he gets healed and then he goes to see Paul. He completes his mission. I don’t know if he’s in a wheelchair, on crutches, dragging an oxygen tank. I don’t know what’s going on with this guy, but he is just – he is determined to get to Paul, ‘cause that was his job. Gives Paul the gift. “Paul, how you doing?” Gets the report. Paul says, “Let me write a letter to my friends at the church at Philippi. Epaphroditus, I trust you to deliver it. Bring it back to them.” That is Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

Epaphroditus faithful service continues to bless you and I today 2000 years later. Had he not finished his journey to see Paul and not faithfully delivered the letter from Paul, our Bible would be missing a book.

I want you to know that when you serve Jesus, you’re doing very important things, even if they seem very simple. And by virtue of the fact that you’re a Christian, everything you do is vocational. It is ministry. It is done under the Lord. You have a new nature. You have new desires. You have new gifts and new passions, and you also have a new power, and that affects how you work your job and do your ministry and love your friends and treat your spouse and raise your kids and handle your finances. And all of life is sacred, and all of life belongs to God, and all of life is ministry. And here was a guy who it seems like he’s just doing the UPS FedEx job. Take something to Paul. He’s doing kingdom work. Very important. Very important.

How many of you really need to repent because you’re not that dependable faithful person? How many of you are in management of the company and you would die to have one Epaphroditus? “I gave them a task and they did it.” Oh, wouldn’t that be great?

There are so many people who want work, but there are so many people who don’t want to work. There are so many people who want to be given responsibility but aren’t responsible. There are so many people that if you give them something, they’re not going to finish it. Epaphroditus was that guy. Sees it through to completion. Why? Because he had a new power through the Holy Spirit to have perseverance. Because he had new gifts of service that he offered in ministry. Because he had a new desire that he wanted to do whatever would help Paul and the church and Jesus. Why? Because he had a new nature. Because he met Jesus.

You know how many people were alive in that day? Why does God include this man in the Bible? Because he wants to show that a regular person with a regenerated nature is vitally used of God for important Kingdom service. It’s super encouraging.

I’ll close with a few questions. Ask your friends these questions. Ask yourself these questions. Ask your community group these questions. If you drove here with someone, talk about these things on the way home.

First, what is Jesus doing in you? If you’re here and you’re not a Christian, I’ll tell you what he’s doing in ya. He’s wanting to give you a new nature. Some of you come here saying, “Well I’m coming to church hoping to learn some God stuff so I can improve my life.” Here’s the answer – Jesus. Give him your sin, receive his salvation, ask him to give you a new heart so that you can then live a new life. Stop trying to fix your life. First get connected to the living God. Get your past sins forgiven and get your new nature for the future. God has been working in your heart. If you’re not a Christian, bring you to an understanding of your sin and your need for Jesus and his love for you and how you can trust him. So we want you to become a Christianite by giving Jesus your sin and asking him for a new nature.

Secondly, if you’re a Christian, what is Jesus doing in you? It promises us here that he’s at work in you. Where is he working? What is he teaching you? What is he convicting you of? How is he calling you to repentance? What burdens for ministry and service has he laid on your heart? What people has he brought into your life? This is a really good question, because the question we tend to ask people is, “How are you?” “Fine. How are you?” “Fine.”

They're all lying. They're breaking one of the Ten Commandments. The better question to ask someone is, "What is Jesus doing in you? How is God at work in you?" That's a heartfelt core center question. Draw them out. Let them talk. Get to know what's really going on. Everything may look great outside. Inwardly it may be real turmoil.

Secondly, what grumbling and questioning do you need to repent of? What do you need to just stop complaining about? Maybe it didn't go the way you wanted, but you've got to forgive and move on. You can't be bitter. You can't continually revert back to whatever it is that was painful. What grumbling just needs to stop? What questioning needs to stop? That on this side of eternity we know in part, and you're not gonna know your answer until you see Jesus. You need to live by faith and stop questioning God. It doesn't mean you don't have questions, but it means you stop that questioning disposition.

Thirdly, what do you need to work out? Has God taught you something and you need to apply it? Has God brought someone into your life and you need to learn from them? Has God convicted you of a sin and you need to go apologize to somebody? What do you need to work out?

And lastly, who needs you to be like Timothy or Epaphroditus? Who do you need to humbly come along side like Timothy and help them? Maybe this is at work or in ministry. Or Epaphroditus – what important task do you need to see through to completion because people are depending upon you? And maybe it's even at school or work where people are watching you, seeing if Jesus really does make a difference.

Let me conclude with this perhaps. When I say "let me conclude with this", that's just so that you'll keep listening. I don't really intend to stop talking. I'll say this – God is good and God delights in forgiving people of their sin, giving them a new life through a new heart with new gifts and new passions and new desire and new power. And God wants to help you live a life that you can be proud of. Not that you boast, but you boast in Jesus, that he worked good into you and he helped to work good through you. And let me tell you this, this is the best life there is. Nothing beats this life. It's a joyous life. It's a purposeful life. It's a passionate life. It's a meaningful life. It's an eternal life. And it's a life that is only lived for those who are willing to obey, both spiritual authority and Jesus as well, those who are willing to stop grumbling and start learning, those who are willing to stop questioning and start trusting, those who are willing to feed the desires of the new nature that God has imparted to them by grace. We want that for all of you. I want that for all of you.

In closing, we're going to show a video. It's a biography. We like to end these sermons in these series with a biographical sketch. I'll leave it as a little bit of a secret. It's cool. You'll watch it and then the campus pastors at the various locations will come and call you to a biblical response. Again, God initiates and then you have to respond.

Narrator: Testimonies of temptation are hard to find. There are very few songs written about being tempted, and almost none of them have any stories attached to them. The unfortunate reality is that Christians don't tend to talk about real temptation and struggling with sin. In order to find a testimony a little less polished and a little more honest, we're gonna talk about the life of someone a bit more recent – Johnny Cash.

We are all shaped by our upbringing and environment, and Johnny Cash was no different. He grew up around church, gospel music and radio. He lived in a poor family during the depression era, and at the age of five, he was already working in the cotton fields with his family.

Johnny was a creative child, a constant dreamer, drawn to music from the very beginning. This often put him at odds with his hard working blue-collar father. Johnny idolized his older brother, Jack, and was devastated when he died in a tragic sawmill accident. Because of these things, Johnny Cash wanted to leave the hurt of home, looking for freedom and success in a life as a musician. He quickly found both.

Johnny soon met Sam Phillips of Sun Records and plunged into the life of a touring musician. He met with immediate success and was soon on the road more than home.

In his autobiography, Cash, he said, "My affair with pills had already begun. It quickly became all consuming, eating me up for the next decade or so." What started with an occasional pill to stay awake and a beer to calm down, quickly mastered him and became an addiction to alcohol, amphetamines and barbiturates. Perhaps as a way to deal with his success, the taxing life as a performer, his strained relationship with his wife and his kids, or his continual running from the Lord Jesus, he yielded to the temptation all around him and worshiped his music and the various substances that sustained him.

Johnny Cash said this of his addictions – "The first, and perhaps worst thing about it, was that every pill I took was an attempt to regain the wonderful natural feeling of euphoria I experienced the first time, and there was not a single one of them. Not even one, among the thousands that slowly tore me away from my family and my God and myself, that ever worked."

Bit by bit, Johnny Cash destroyed his life. He wrecked numerous cars and was arrested for bringing a massive quantity of amphetamines across the border from Mexico. He began cancelling shows and eventually whole tours. He even carelessly burned several hundred acres of the Los Padres National Wildlife Reserve and became the only individual sued by the State of California. Worst of all, he completely wrecked his marriage and left his four daughters virtually fatherless.

One thing you didn't see in the movies is that as he hit rock bottom, Johnny Cash decided to take his own life. As a kid, he had explored the depths of Nickajack Cave – an immense abandoned cave system that was about to become a water reservoir. Many people went into the cave, got lost and died over the years. Johnny crawled into Nickajack Cave to lose himself and to die. He crawled for hours until his flashlight went out. He described the experience like this – "The absolute lack of light was appropriate, for at that moment, I was as far from God as I have ever been. My separation from him, the deepest and most ravaging of the various kinds of loneliness I'd felt over the years, seemed finally complete."

Then thinking he was near death, he said, "I felt something very powerful start to happen to me – a sensation of utter peace, clarity and sobriety. There in Nickajack Cave, I became conscious of a very clear, simple idea. I was not in charge of my own destiny. I was gonna die at God's time, not mine."

Johnny Cash miraculously crawled out on his hands and knees in the total darkness. When he got out he said, "I was ready to commit myself to God and to do whatever it took to get off drugs, and I wasn't lying." Cash went on to say, "Eventually, slowly, with relapses and setbacks, I regained my strength and sanity, and I rebuilt my connection to God. I was able to face an audience again, performing straight for the first time in more than a decade. God had done more than speak to me. He had revealed his will to me through other people, family and friends. The greatest joy of my life was that I no longer felt separated from him. Now he is my councilor, my rock of ages, to stand upon."

Through submission to Jesus, Cash faced his temptations and overcame. Today we sing one of his great gospel songs, "Redemption", as a remembrance of the work that Jesus did to set us free from the power of sin.

Years later Johnny wrote, "It's an ongoing struggle. I do know though that if I commit myself to God every morning and stay honest with him and myself, I make it through the day just beautifully."

[Singing]