

# Responding to a Changing Culture

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, I do appreciate this opportunity to be with you today.

! Always enjoy an opportunity to share God's word among his people.! Like your pastor and his family, we are, ourselves, still fairly new to the area. We moved to Oklahoma about two years ago. Before that, I was pastoring a church in Jamestown, New York. And we had four years of wonderful ministry there, but we knew that our ministry had come to the close. And my wife's family is here in the Tulsa area, so we made our move here two years ago.

We've actually been to Bartlesville. We actually enjoy your city here. One of my sons plays football. And so he's been here a couple of times to play a couple of football games. And we're discovering here in Oklahoma that you have God, you have family, then you have football.

Right there in close order like that. Well, this morning we're looking at Philippians chapter 2. So if you have your Bibles, turn to Philippians chapter 2. And we'll be looking at verses 12 through 18.

[ 1 : 18 ] Philippians chapter 2, verses 12 through 18. Philippians chapter 2, verses 12 through 18.

Will be our text for this morning. Recently, the Supreme Court ruled on two cases that I believe will forever redefine our culture.

One of the cases was a ruling against the Defense of Marriage Act. Signed into law in 1996 by then President Bill Clinton. The Supreme Court ruled that law unconstitutional.

Also on that same day, they upheld a lower court decision that outlawed or ruled unconstitutional the Proposition 8 of California.

If you recall, the Proposition 8 was a proposition that the people of California voted into state law, defining marital union as a union between a man and a woman.

[ 2 : 26 ] And on that same day, the Supreme Court struck both of those laws as unconstitutional. Now don't worry, this is not going to be a political message here. But I do want to open with that to illustrate to you that the culture that we currently live in is not the culture that we grew up in.

It's changing. It's changing very rapidly, in fact. And I fear it's not changing for the better. So the big question we want to look at this morning is how should I, as a believer, respond to this changing culture?

Will all these changes take place really from our government officials, even right down to our next-door neighbors? The culture that we grew up in, the norms that we were so accustomed to as we grew up in this country, are rapidly changing and declining, I fear.

So the question I want to pose to you this morning as we look at our text is how should I, as a believer, respond to these changes? Well, the text is going to reveal, I believe, three areas of our life that we need to examine.

Let's read, beginning in verse 12, Philippians chapter 2. It says, It says,

[ 4 : 39 ] How should I, as a follower of Christ, respond to this changing culture? This time, why don't we bow in prayer and ask for God to bless our time in His Word.

Our Father, we thank you for this day and for this opportunity we have to be in your house, to worship you, and now to examine your Word. And Father, we do live in a time that is changing, a time when we kind of scratch our heads and wonder what has taken place.

But yet, Father, we know that even in the midst of these changes, you're still very much in control, and you have a plan for us. So I ask and pray that you would help us to examine our own heart in life, and to know how we should respond in light of all these changes taking place around us.

For what you do in strengthening us, and encouraging us, and correcting us, we'll thank you and praise you, for we ask these things in Christ's name.

Amen. This morning, I believe our text reveals three areas of our life that we need to examine in light of our changing culture. Notice, first of all, if you will, we see our calling in verse 12.

[ 6 : 00 ] Our calling in verse 12. Two things I want to point out about this calling. Note, first of all, if you will, that it is an authentic profession. It is a calling to an authentic profession.

Notice what Paul says in verse 12. He says, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.

You see, Paul is commending them for their obedience. Not their obedience when he is around them, but also for their obedience when he is away from them as well. You see, this group of believers here in Philippi, they were accustomed to obeying the Lord their God.

And they would do that whether Paul was in their midst, obviously it's important when the preacher's around, you want to put forth your best effort and make sure that you are living in obedience to the Lord.

But Paul also understands that this same group of believers also lives that very same life when Paul is not around as well. You see, they were authentic in their profession, whether they were in front of Paul or whether they were away from Paul.

[ 7 : 09 ] And they were authentic in their belief. You see, it's easy for us to live out our profession in a setting like this. When we gather together with other believers who are like-minded like us of the same faith, and we meet and we worship and we have times of fellowship, we enjoy one another's company, you know, it's easy for us to live out our profession in these settings.

But the real challenge is to maintain that same profession throughout the entire week. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, to be authentic in your profession when you're at work, in the office or in the shop.

To be authentic with your profession when you're in classrooms, sitting in the classrooms or riding a bus and you're being challenged in your faith. You see, that's the calling that God has issued to each and every one of us.

That we would be authentic in our profession. That we would live it out not only when we're here among each other and with each other, but we would live that very same profession out each and every day of our lives.

A couple of months ago, I was with our student minister and one of our college students and just kind of hanging with them as they were conversing among each other.

[ 8 : 31 ] And our student minister asked our college student, he's a college student at OSU, he goes there during the week and takes classes, but he comes home every weekend because he effectively serves in our church.

And so our student minister was asking this college student, hey, how's your classes going? And he said, you know, they're going pretty good, but I've got to admit, it's a pretty tough culture to live in. In fact, he went on to say, many times I feel like I am the long fish swimming against a strong current. You see, that's the challenge that we have, especially today in light of our changing culture. It is tough to live out your profession. It is difficult to stand up and say, I belong to Christ.

I am a follower of Jesus and I hold to his word without any reservations with strong conviction. You know what? It's not always easy to do that. But these people in Philippi had learned to live in obedience, not only when they were with each other in the presence of other believers, but also when they were out there in the nitty-gritty dirt of life.

[ 9 : 49 ] They were authentic in their profession. So this calling is a calling to an authentic profession. But secondly, it is also a calling to intense labor.

Notice what he says at the end of verse 12. He says, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Now we need to make a point of clarification here.

Paul does not say, work toward your salvation. Paul is not teaching that there is something that you need to do, there is some kind of work that you need to accomplish in order for you to be saved.

You see, if that's what Paul is teaching here, he would completely contradict himself in the rest of the New Testament. See, Paul is very clear in his teaching on salvation.

Salvation is received as a gift from God, and we receive that through faith. That's Paul's teaching on salvation. In the book of Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, Paul says, for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves.

[ 10 : 59 ] It is the gift of God. In the book of Romans, chapters 1 through 4, Paul lays out, I mean, in incredible detail, how a person can obtain this gift of salvation.

And he starts by talking about our condition. Chapters 1 through 3, talking about the condition of mankind. He starts, first of all, with the barbarian, or those we would consider to be really lost, to

really bad people.

Yeah, we all recognize that they're sinners. But then he goes on to the moral person in chapter 2, and says, you know what? Before you moral people get too high and mighty, you've got to realize that you're also in that same condition.

And then he goes on to chapter 3, and says, by the way, all of you religious people out there, you're also in that same condition as well. And he concludes in chapter 3 by saying, we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

That there is none righteous. No, not one. And that includes everyone, from those who are living in horrible, despicable lifestyles, to those who are living what we might even consider to be a good religious, moral lifestyle.

[ 12 : 16 ] Everyone has the same condition, that we are all sinners before God. But, chapter 4, he goes on to give us some good news. Because he goes back into his Old Testament history, and he brings up a man by the name of Abraham.

And he says, now let me tell you about Abraham. Abraham, he came from a very bad background himself, by the way. But Abraham became justified with God, because of his faith. And you can find justification with God, through faith as well.

You see, that's Paul's teaching on salvation. So, so what is Paul talking about here in verse 12? when he says, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Paul is not talking about how you earn salvation, but what he's talking about is what salvation will do for you once you obtain it. You see, there's going to be some work involved.

God is going to expect you to get busy. You see, God is not just going to save you, and just kind of let you sit down in the seat somewhere, and say, alright, just be comfortable there, until I come for you again.

[ 13 : 21 ] No, no, no, he's got a different plan for you. He expects you to get up off that seat, get out into the field, and get busy for his honor, and for his glory. This word, work, here in the Greek, the word literally means, to work intensely, to work hard, until the task is completed.

No one, but no one, but no one, will be able to say in this lifetime, I've arrived. I need to do nothing else, in order to complete my salvation.

Will not happen in this lifetime. We must work, we must labor, we must strive, we must continue to work, we must continue to labor, we must continue to strive, until God calls us out of this world.

That's when it's completed. But until then, it's intense work. It is labor.

We labor in God's word, we labor in prayer, and we labor in our service to the Lord, and we will continue in this labor, until God calls us home.

[ 14 : 30 ] That is our calling. This is what God expects of us. That we labor for Him, and for His honor, and for His glory.

This labor is not always easy, but it is our calling. Our calling. Now notice, secondly if you will, our power. Verse 13.

You see, God is not going to abandon us, to this work all by ourselves. He's going to provide us, with the power that we need, in order to fulfill this calling. Notice first of all, if you will, the source of this power.

In verse 13, He says, for it is God. God is the source, of this power. God is the one, who will provide us, with the ability, to labor, for His glory.

The power source, is God. Now, to be honest with you, it appears to be a conflict, between verses 12 and 13. First, Paul tells us, you work out, your own salvation.

[ 15 : 41 ] Now, he's telling us, for it is God, who's going to work in you. I don't understand. And in my mind, when I, you know, when I kind of read, these two verses, back to back, I kind of see, a little bit, of a contradiction here.

It is not a contradiction, it is a cooperation. See, God is at work. God is in a process, this very moment, of building His kingdom.

We just saw a message, from your pastor, in Ukraine. Hey, He is building His kingdom, in Ukraine, right now. He's building His kingdom, here in Bartlesville, right now.

He's building His kingdom, in Tulsa, or in Jinks, or all across Oklahoma, across this country, across the world. God, right now, is in a process, of building His kingdom, and His calling for you, is to join Him, and labor with Him, and build in this kingdom, with Him.

See, He's not just going to call you, to stand on the sidelines, and watch the game, from over there. No, He calls you, into the game, and says, now get busy. This is what you're, supposed to do.

[16:54] This is your calling, this is your labor, but don't worry, don't fret, because I have, the power, to enable you, to help you, go into that, and to labor for me.

James tells us, in chapter 2, verse 10, that faith, without works, is dead. Yes, you are saved, by grace, through faith.

there is no work, that you can do, to earn that salvation, but once salvation, has occurred in your life, God expects you, to demonstrate, some works, to labor for Him, to get into the game, to understand, that He is doing something, and He wants you, to be a part of that.

If God wanted to, He could just do it all Himself, but He doesn't do that. He calls us, to join Him, and to be a part of it. I think probably, one of my, favorite miracles, to read about, in the gospel accounts, is when Jesus, feeds the multitude, of 5,000.

By the way, that's the only miracle, that's recorded for us, in all four of the gospel accounts. But if you go back, and read that miracle, Jesus has been teaching, this multitude of people, all day, and it's getting late, and He realizes, you know what, these people, I bet they're getting, pretty hungry.

[18:21] And so the scripture, tells us that He turns, to His disciples, particularly Philip, and He says, guys, feed these people. Are you serious? Yeah, I'm serious.

Feed, these people. They're hungry. Well, I'm sure the disciples, started standing around, looking at one another. We're supposed to feed, all these people?

I mean, Lord, do you realize, how much we got? Yeah, feed, these, people. So they begin, to scramble around, and look around.

Finally, Andrew notices, this little boy, with a picnic basket, and he goes to him, brings him up. Well, Lord, you know, we found this, this boy, with this little lunch, and you know, he's got five loaves, and two fishes.

He says, I don't see how you're going to be able to do it, but, here we go. So the Bible tells us, that Jesus took that small little portion of food, broke it, gave it to his disciples, and then from his disciples' hands, they went out, and fed the people.

[19:34] Technically speaking, it was the disciples, that fed the multitude. Now obviously, we recognize, that the power for that miracle, came from Jesus himself, but the people in that crowd, were fed, from the hands, of the disciples.

You see, Jesus just could have told the guys, why don't you guys sit over there, watch this.

Whoosh, here comes the bread, running down from heaven. He's done that before.

Whoosh, here comes the bread, just sweeping in out of the winds. He doesn't do that. He calls his disciples together, and says, guys, I got a task for you to do.

We're going to feed, these people. You see, that's the power, that God gives us, as we go out, and fulfill our calling, to labor for him, the source, of this power.

Notice, if you will, the working of this power. At the end of verse 13, he says, for it is God, who works, works in you, both to will, and to do, for his good pleasure.

[20:52] There's a little bit of play in the Greek language here. Verse 13, the word power is translated from a different word, and you find in verse 12. Verse 12, the word work, means to labor hard until it's complete.

But in verse 13, the word labor, comes from the Greek word, it means to energize, to stimulate. You see, this is what God does for you, as you work and labor for him.

He energizes. Notice, first of all, he energizes your will, both to will. And I have to acknowledge to you, there are times, when I simply just do not feel, like laboring for the Lord.

will. But that's alright, God's power will energize, that will. And give you, the desires that you need, to fulfill his task, and his will.

He energizes your actions, both to will, and to do. You see, it's God that steps into the scene, in those moments, when you don't feel like doing it, when you think you're too tired to do it, when you just, you would rather do something else.

[22:02] All of a sudden, God's power steps in, and he begins to energize you, and all of a sudden, you begin to feel like, well, you know what, I think I actually feel like doing this. And then, all of a sudden, you notice your works, that you're doing.

I don't understand, I don't see how this is happening, but I can see God is at work here. He is doing this, and he is doing it, through my hands. See, that's the power of God, at work.

And I've discovered, in my own life, that when I start to engage, even though I don't feel like it, God steps in. And before long, I just feel like, I'm involved with something special here.

When we were in Jamestown, New York, we pastored a small church there. It was a small church, but we had a big vision, to reach our community. So we were doing stuff, throughout the entire year, trying to reach into the community there.

Unfortunately, because we were a small church, the only way of advertising, these events, was to go out, and pass out flyers, door to door. I'm going to tell you something, that's not always fun.

[ 23 : 12 ] People aren't always happy, to see you come to their door, and give them a flyer, for vacation Bible school. For some reason, they get real offended by that. And in New York, you never know, what the weather's going to be like.

I remember one spring, we were passing out flyers, for the Easter weekend, and it started to snow on us. That's not fun. So I remember, many mornings, as we were gathering together, as a church family, to go out, and pass out flyers, to advertise this coming event, that there was some mornings, where I'll be honest with you, I just did not feel, like doing it.

But I did it anyway. And you know what? Before long, I began to sense, that my feelings were changing. And all of a sudden, as I was going out, and meeting people, and greeting people, yeah, there was those people, who weren't responsive.

But you know what? There was some people there, that was responsive. And it was a real joy, and pleasure, to get to meet them. And then what was really neat, is when you saw, those very same people, come into your church building.

For that event. Or sometimes, just even come to your church service. I'll tell you what, it's hard. And sometimes, you just don't feel like doing it.

[ 24 : 34 ] But God gives you the power. And he will enable you, to fulfill the calling, that he has placed, upon your life.

Our calling, our power, and I'll notice thoroughly, if you will, our witness, verses 14 through 18.

Notice first of all, if you will, that our witness is seen, through our life.

Verse 14, he says, do all things, without complaining, and disputing, that you may become, blameless, and harmless, children of God, without fault, in the midst of a crooked, and perverse generation, among whom you shine, as lights, in the world.

When you are content, when you are blameless, when you are harmless, I guarantee you, you will stand out. Your life will be different, from the life, of everybody else, around you.

And don't be surprised, when somebody comes to you, and say, why is your life, so different? What is it about you? I can't quite, put my finger on it.

[ 25 : 46 ] I mean, yeah, we work in the same place, and you kind of, in the same environment, with me, but for some reason, there is just something, different, about you.

You see, that is your light, shining, in the midst of that generation. You are blameless, you are harmless, you shine as a light, and keep this in mind, the darker the culture, gets around us, the brighter your light gets, in that dark place.

So as our culture changes, and again, I fear changes for the worse, be encouraged. It's just an opportunity, for your light to shine brighter.

your witness is seen, through your life. Secondly, your witness is heard, through your message.

Verse 16. He says, hold and fast, the word of life, so that I may rejoice, in the day of Christ, that I have not run, in vain, or labored, in vain.

Lifestyle, is important, but, it's incomplete. complete. You see, you bear witness, not only through your life, but you also bear witness, through your words as well.

[ 27 : 11 ] Yes, we, we shine as lights, and people see the difference, in our life, and they notice, there's something different, but, it is not until you open your mouth, and deliver the words of life, will they be able to comprehend, and understand, their situation, and how they stand, before the Lord.

They have to hear, with their ears, from your lips, that they do stand guilty, before God, as a sinner, before Him, but because of God's, great love for them, He provided a way, for them to find forgiveness, and cleansing, of their sins, through His Son, Jesus, as He came into this world, as a human being, but a sinless, human being, and He took upon, His body, the sin, that we had done, and He went to the cross, and paid the penalty, for that sin, now God, has a gift, for us, if we would be willing, to turn away, from our sin, to embrace Jesus, as Lord and Savior, of our life, we can find forgiveness, and cleansing, of that sin, and be promised, of an eternal home, in heaven one day,

see they have to hear, that spoken, from our lips, because lifestyle, is important, but it's not until, we verbalize it, that it's completed, our high school, senior boys, had this quote, on their whiteboard, for a number of months, they used to challenge, each other, with this quote, preaching the gospel, without words, is like sending, a text, without letters, smiley faces, are nice, but it's not until, you put letters, on that screen, that you communicate, a message, lifestyle, is important, but it's not until, you verbalize the message, is it complete, thirdly, we witness, our witnesses magnified, through our sacrifice, notice what he says, in verse 17, he says, yes, and if I am being, poured out, as a drink offering, on the sacrifice, and service, of your faith,

I am glad, and rejoice, with you all, now this is the point, we really don't want, to hear, and I understand, because I'm really, not excited, about communicating, either, but here it is, our witnesses magnified, through our sacrifice, and through our suffering, yeah, people can see, our lifestyle, that it's different, people can hear, our words, others, but when I see you, going through a difficulty, through a trial, through a very dark moment, all of a sudden, it kicks in, I mean, it's like something, goes off in their head, this is real, what they have, is real, and I don't have that, see that's our witness, so how should I respond, in this culture, understand my calling, understand my power, and understand my purpose, my witness, three points, of final application, I want to leave with you, this morning, number one, please make note, of the order, which I present, these to you, first, your calling, then, your power, then, your message, it's kind of similar, to the calling, that Jesus issued, to Peter, and Andrew, and a little bit later on, to James and John, Peter said, to those men, follow me, and I will make you, to become, fishers of men, you know, there's actually, two parts, to that calling, first part, follow me, by the way, that's number one, guys, you follow me, all right, you know, these fishermen, they don't have, a great education, they got to keep things, kind of simple, so guys, here it is, follow, follow, me, now once you get that down, the result of that, is you will become, a fisher, of men, so you know, first of all, you're calling, what God has called you to do, is to be a follower, of him, get that down first, and once you do that, you can rely upon his power, to lead you, and to direct you, and to labor for him, remember this, you will not change, your culture, until God first, changes you, respond to your calling, first, secondly, have faith, and believe, that God, will give you, the power needed, to accomplish, the work he has, called you to do, once you get the calling down, and you're following him, don't be surprised, when God begins to whisper, in your ears, now I want you to do this, who, me, yeah, you, feed these people, no, no,

I don't think, I don't think I can do that, yes, you can, have faith, to believe, that whatever God, has called you to do, he will give you, the power, to do it, and do it, believe it, and act on it, thirdly, in order to have, an effective communication, of the gospel, your life, and your words, must be in line, with God's will, one final challenge, this morning, how will you respond, will you allow, your culture, to change you, or will you be, an agent, to change your culture,