

# Fellowship of Joy in Perfection: Integrity

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[0:00] Well, take your Bibles this morning and open them to Philippians chapter 2.

! Philippians chapter 2, verses 12 through 18 is our text.! And I'm, of course, continuing to preach through this marvelous letter.! Philippians, Philippians chapter 2, starting with verse 12.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works it in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. 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, holding 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.

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.

[1:38] For the same reason, you also be glad and rejoice with me. Now, to again remind you, the theme of this section of the letter is the fellowship of joy in perfection.

The fellowship of joy in perfection. And Paul covers three broad areas of spiritual perfection or maturity that should define the body of Christ.

Three broad areas of moral maturity, spiritual maturity that should define us as a church. Not just the church at Philippi, but the church here in Bartlesville called Highland Park Baptist Church.

Three areas that should define us. Three areas, if I might use Paul's word back there in chapter 1, verse 27. Three areas of conduct.

Conduct in the church that, according to Paul, are worthy of the gospel of Christ. And what are they? Well, we've already covered two of them. Unity, number one.

[2:47] Unity within the body of Christ. First, humility, secondly. Humility. And then third, and this morning, integrity.

Integrity. We've finished, of course, looking at what Paul said concerning unity and humility. And now we're ready to look at Paul's instructions concerning integrity.

Integrity. Spiritual integrity in the church. Now, the dictionary defines integrity as an adherence to moral and ethical principles.

Or, I like this one better, a soundness of moral character. A soundness of moral character. Now, that's the dictionary.

Dictionary, you know, most dictionaries are not known to base their definitions on the word of God. And so, we need to make the connection here. Obviously, I think it ought to be obvious to the believer, to the follower of Christ.

[3:49] Moral and ethical principles. Soundness of moral character. All of these are to be defined solely by the word of God. Moral character.

Always defined by God's word. The Bible. All right, now, spiritual and moral integrity. That's what we're talking about here. Is what Paul is talking about.

That's what this passage is all about. Is what he's getting at here in these verses that I just read a moment ago. Spiritual and moral integrity. A soundness of moral character.

And this is an important subject. Right? It certainly is in our day. Now, it was in Paul's day. And really, there's nothing new under the sun. And some of the things that Paul confronted.

And some of the things that were very much part of the culture of Paul's day. Are still a part of our culture today. I think there is an ebb and flow of morality and immorality within cultures.

[4:51] And America certainly started out more on a moral stance and biblical stance. But in latter years, we have declined morally.

And so, we're living in a time when in our culture, our American culture, there has been, is being such a degrading, such a disintegrating of morals to a level that I think reveals an all-out assault upon God and upon His Word.

It really is more of an in-your-face kind of thinking, kind of an attack upon God's moral law.

Adrian Rogers used to say, and I've heard him say it a number of times, he said, you know, in America, what used to hide in a closet now struts down the main street. And that's where we are today.

And it's getting worse. It was bad enough when I heard Adrian Rogers say that for the first time.

And it certainly has become worse. Incredibly worse.

[6:01] Take J.C. Penney, for example. Probably your favorite department store. For years has been our favorite department store, J.C. Penney.

J.C. Penney, by the way, founded by J.C. Penney, Christian man, man of very high morals, high ethics. But J.C. Penney has fallen a long way from J.C. Penney, the man.

Did you know that earlier this year, the J.C. Penney company employed Ellen DeGeneres, a lesbian, very outspoken lesbian, very outspoken advocate for gay rights.

Did you know that J.C. Penney company hired Ellen DeGeneres to be their kind of spokesperson, kind of the face of J.C. Penney? You know, their advertising.

You've seen the commercials. Did you know that they did that? Francis, or excuse me, Michael Francis, president of J.C. Penney, said this in a press conference just earlier this year.

[7:05] He said, importantly, we, that is the J.C. Penney company, share the same fundamental values as Ellen. Oh, really?

He went on to say we're thrilled that she's joining our team to help convey the exciting transformation underway. And just what kind of transformation is he referring to?

Well, certainly he's referring to the business itself and maybe they're transforming their business.

But to use Ellen DeGeneres and say that she is conveying this transformation underway, what does that mean?

Well, we really don't have to guess about that. It's not a mystery. In the advertisement that appeared in J.C. Penney's June catalog, a Father's Day advertisement, by the way, two children are pictured hugging their two fathers next to a headline that reads, First Pals.

What makes Dad so cool, says? He's the swim coach, tent maker, best friend, bike fixer, and hug giver all rolled into one. One or two.

[8:23] I'm not making that up. That's exactly what it says. And under the picture, the picture of the two, quote, dads and their children, under the picture, there's this caption, Real life dads, Todd Koch and Cooper Smith with their children, Claire and Mason.

Kind of in your face kind of rebellion against God and His Word. Without any qualms about it.

Let me give you another example. And really I could cite a number, quite a number of examples. But let me give you another one. One more recent. If you have been watching the London Olympics, and many of you have been, we have been, I guess about every night, getting kind of sick of it.

But anyway, it is interesting. And we've been doing well, you know, we Americans. But if you've been watching the London Olympics, you've been watching, you have already watched, dozens and dozens of commercials advertising NBC's new situation comedy that is scheduled to air this fall.

It goes by this name. The New Normal. Have you seen these commercials? Unless you're one that always gets up during the commercials or turns the TV to another spot and try to miss all the commercials.

[9:48] You've seen this commercial many, many times. It ought to stick in your mind because it ought to have appalled you, even to watch the commercial.

Now, the new show, this New Normal show, is tagged as a postmodern family. Family. That's how they tag it. Postmodern family, this New Normal.

And with this tag, she's having their baby. What's the show all about? Well, what's this new normal in America, according to NBC?

Well, here is how NBC is advertising it. Quote, It's 2012 and anything goes. Well, that's true. It goes on.

Brian and David are a Los Angeles couple. And they have it all. Well, almost. With successful careers and a committed and loving partnership, the one thing missing is a baby.  
[10:56] Can you believe this? To sum it all up, here is what the show is all about. Here is the kind of the scenario out of which grows all the comedy in this program.

Here's the scenario. A homosexual couple, two men, hires a surrogate mother to have their baby. Funny. Funny. Huh.

Not really. Now, someone will argue, you know, well, that's free speech in action there. And Michael Francis of JCPenney and the NBC executives and leadership, they have the right to say and promote whatever they believe.

And I would say, yeah, they do. Sure. They have that right. Let me ask you something. Does Dan Cathy have the same right?

Dan Cathy, CEO of Chick-fil-A. Does he have the same right? Apparently not. According to many. Certainly, he does not have that right according to the LGBT.

[12:06] You're familiar with LGBT, aren't you? The collective community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. The LGBT.

Dan Cathy said in an interview with Baptist Press, he said this, that his company is, quote, very much supportive of the family, but only when it involves heterosexual couples.

Amen. That means that marriage is defined by a man and a woman. Not a man and a man and a woman and a woman. Or a man and a goat or a woman and a whatever.

It's a man and a woman. Heterosexual couples. Here's the head CEO of a very significant restaurant chain.

He was making a very bold statement. He makes quite a few others. In fact, a little bit later, when asked about that comment in a radio interview, he said, well, guilty as charged.

[13:12] And Cathy said this, and I quote, I think we are inviting God's judgment on our nation when we shake our fist at him and say we know better than you, God, as to what constitutes a marriage.

And I pray God's mercy on our generation that has such a prideful, arrogant attitude to think that we have the audacity to define what marriage is about. Amen.

Amen. Now, those are the comments that started all the uproar. And did Cathy and Chick-fil-A back down from this? Well, Dan Cathy said in an interview just a few weeks ago, he said this, and I quote, well, this is the quote from the article, that their stance on same-sex marriage, that it's between a man and a woman, our stance on same-sex marriage may not be a popular one with everyone, but this company's leaders intend to stay the course.

Good for them. Good for them. And I believe God has blessed them. It certainly did this past Wednesday when they had record sales as many Americans observed Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day.

Did some of you get in on that? We don't have a Chick-fil-A here in Bartlesville. I would have gone. Sherry and Jonathan tried three times to get into the building in Tulsa.

[14:36] They had a record day. Well, that's free speech in action, isn't it? Of course, the homosexual community will not be denied.

And I've heard the report that they plan what they call a kiss-in at the Chick-fil-A restaurants nationwide or company-wide. That's their version of free speech in action.

All right, now, this may be interesting to you. I mean, it ought to make you sick to think about it.

And I could cite a number of other things. There's Target and there's Procter & Gamble and there's the Disney Company and just a host of others. It's impossible to escape it.

I could talk about all of those things here, but really, here's the bottom line. Here's the most important thing. It's not what is happening to our American culture that should be the most grievous to us.

[15:36] I mean, unbelievers acting like unbelievers. Who knew? That is not the most appalling thing and grievous thing. It is grievous.

Because it's our America. And we know our God and we know the result of that kind of disintegration morally within a culture.

We can go back in history and find a number of cultures over the years that have risen to the pinnacle and have been destroyed. And we'll be no different.

So it ought to appall us and grievous and frighten us on that level. But it's not what's happening in the American culture that is the most grievous.

It is what is happening in the Christian community. That is what should grieve us. And we ought to look at it.

[16 : 39] We ought to look within ourselves. See what is happening. And even among Baptists. And I'm very, very proud to be a Baptist. Baptists have always been people of the book.

Not all Baptists have been, but Baptists in general have been people of the book. And I'm very, very proud of our Puritan lineage as Baptists.

But what is happening to us? What is happening to us? We are becoming so immersed and enmeshed into our immoral culture.

So much so that one can barely tell us apart. Hmm? I mean, we watch the same movies and the same TV programming.

And sit in our living rooms and laugh at the same immoral humor. All the while not realizing that the devil in his craftiness knows that when he can get you to laugh at something, you can never, ever again take it seriously.

[17 : 59] And we watch the same stuff. Same stuff that blasphemes the Lord Jesus, degrades the Bible, destroys the biblical worldview on every issue.

Our Christian women and young women wearing the same revealing clothing that the world wears. kind of clothing that a number of years ago you would see on the street corner of some city with some woman selling her body.

What's happening to us? We're not different than the world. Our young people are embracing and engaging in the same sexual freedom of our culture today.

And we, we as parents and grandparents are allowing the standard, the line to go further and further away from God's standard.

What's happening to us? We have the same beer in our refrigerators? Same wine and liquor in our cabinets? Hmm?

[19 : 28] Can I get a witness? The spiritual and moral integrity of the church is in decline in America.

I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news and discouraging news. You know, you'd rather not hear that kind of thing. And especially if you're a part of it.

But we are to be different. That's not a message that we embrace very much anymore.

We don't hear from the pulpits anymore. That we're to be different. Different from the world around us. Love different things. Embrace and value different things.

Fill our minds and our thoughts and our conversations with different things. To live differently. To act differently. A spiritual integrity about us.

[20 : 33] We're to be so different. And why? And here, we're getting to the point here of this passage. Why should we be different? I mean, why should we be?

Well, the lost world needs us to be. Certainly so. Now, they don't see it that way, but they need us to be.

Different. But what do you think Paul is getting at when he says what he says in chapter 1, verse 27, when he says, conduct yourselves in a way that is worthy of the gospel?

What does he mean by that? What does he mean by that? To conduct yourself in a way that's worthy of the gospel. Well, it means to live in a way that always shows, reveals the great worth of Christ.

I don't think we consider it in those terms. To conduct ourselves, to live our lives, whether it's in public or private, to conduct our lives in a way that shows clearly the great worth of the gospel of Christ.

[21 : 53] The great worth of Christ. And the absolute truth of His Word. We're to live in that way. That's what he's talking about. Clearly. And see, we have been given a great and gracious gift.

The Lord Jesus Christ. And salvation in His name. Through His supreme sacrifice. We've been given that. We didn't deserve it. We didn't really go seeking after it.

And God graciously gave it to us. And so, let's ask ourselves, does your lifestyle prove the worth of that gift?

I tell you, this is a searching reality. It's a mind-making up kind of reality when we think of it in these terms. That we would evaluate our life, our lifestyle, the way we're living it.

does it always prove the worth of Christ? The worth of the gospel. Well, let me ask you this question as we kind of go deeper.

[23:06] We're going to connect to the text. Alright? I'm not on some soapbox. This is where we're going here. Where Paul is taking us here in this passage. But let me ask you this question.

What was it worth to God the Father? The cross. The sacrifice of Christ, His Son.

What was it worth to Him? Well, did He prove its worth? Did He? Let me show you something in the text here.

Really, it's easy to miss. That's there very plainly, but because we have to pay attention to single words, it's very easy for us to miss this.

In verses 9 and 12, do you see that there? Chapter 2, verse 9 and 12, verses 9 and 12 begin the same way. And I know there are different translations, different versions.

[24:07] In the New King James, I think, well, the King James is a little different, but in the passages I quoted a moment ago, they both begin, verse 9 and 12, begin with the word therefore.

again, translated various ways in some versions, but the idea is the same. Therefore. Then He would go from there.

Therefore. Twice. Verse 9, verse 12. Do you see it? Therefore. Verse 9, therefore God. Therefore God.

God what? Look at it. God has highly exalted Him. That is Christ Jesus. Therefore God.

God has highly exalted Christ. Christ Jesus. And why? Well, that's why therefore is there. For. Point us back.

[25:05] Tells us why. Why God highly exalted Christ. This is very clear from the text. This isn't hard to see. Therefore God. Therefore God what?

Highly exalted Him. Giving Him a name above every name. Why? Because He humbled Himself.

Verse 8. That's why. God highly exalted Him because He, Christ, humbled Himself.

We've already covered this territory. Verse 8. He, Christ, humbled Himself. He went down to the earth, down to the cross, down to the curse for us.

For lost and condemned sinners. That's what He did in verse 8. And then verse 9 says, therefore God has also highly exalted Him. Okay?

Clear it. That's how God proved the worth of the gospel of Christ. But there is a second therefore. Verse 12.

[26:06] Therefore, my beloved. Now get this. God, or rather there is God's therefore.

Verse 9. And there is the Christians therefore. Verse 12. And both introduce responses, their respective responses to the great worth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The great worth of the cross. Both introduce responses to the great worth of the gospel. And so here is Paul's point in this entire text. And if we don't get this, we're not going to get all of what God is trying to tell us here.

Here's the point of it. God the Father assesses, evaluates the cross of Christ, His Son, and then responds appropriately to the worth of His Son's sacrifice.

And what is His response? He highly exalts Him. Gives Him a name above every name. The believer then must also assess and evaluate and ponder the cross and then respond appropriately to the worth, the great worth of the sacrifice of Christ when He left heaven, came down to the earth for us, came down and took the cross for us, and came down and took the curse for us, loving us, dying for us, saving us.

[27:43] Therefore, what should we do? What should be our response? Verse 9 gives God's response. Verses 12-18 give our response.

Our response. Look at verse 12. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed. There it is. Now, you're not through, but this is kind of introductory.

Here's the response. And He says to these believers of Philippi, you are my beloved. You have always obeyed. The believers in the church of Philippi considered the cross.

They evaluated the cross. They assessed the cross. And they responded how? With obedience. Obeying God's Word. Living out God's moral laws.

Spiritual integrity. That's how they responded. I tell you, this church at Philippi was the real deal. Unlike a lot of churches in America today, sadly.

[28:51] This church was the real deal. Look how Paul describes it, what he says about them. He says, as you have what? Always obeyed. And it's a reference to their beginning and the initial days,

the early days of their church and the growth of their church.

Paul had gone there to Philippi, remember? And he found this prayer meeting taking place down there at the river. And he shared the gospel with a couple of women there.

And they, in turn, shared the gospel with their families and their household servants. And the gospel and the church, rather now established, grew exponentially.

And Paul is referring back to those days and leading up to the present day. And he says, you've always obeyed. That is, you really got it. This was a church that was committed.

And so he says, you've always obeyed, not as in my presence only. Do you see that there? This interesting thing he said. That is, not just when I was with you.

[30:00] But you have continued to obey. In fact, he says, but now, much more in my absence. See, he's saying your commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ is real.

It's real. It's not a sham. It's not a facade. It's not just going through the motions. You weren't doing it to impress me. It's real and it's growing.

Now let me ask you something. Why do you worship the Lord on Sundays? I mean, why are you here today? Why are you here?

Why do you serve the Lord through His church? As I look around, nearly every one of you are engaged in some way, connected in some way to serving the Lord in the church.

Some of you are not. You need to get on board. But why do you do it? Why do you sing in the choir? Work in the nursery. Teach this under school class.

[31:03] Why do you play the piano? Why do you go on a mission trip? Why do you serve the Lord here? Why are you a deacon? Why are you an elder? Why are you involved in the church? Why are you serving the church?

Why do you read and study your Bibles? You do, don't you? Why do you do it? Why do you show love and compassion for people?

Why do you obey God's laws? God's Word? Let me put it in a little different terminology and you'll start to see where I'm going with this. Assuming you are doing these things.

For whom? For whom are you doing? And for what reason?

For your parents? I mean when we really just kind of cut through it all. I'm not just talking to our young people whose parents are here.

[32:02] But even older ones whose parents may already be gone now but you're worshiping and committed to the church in their memory. Is it for your spouse?

Your kids? You want to make sure at least they get you know church in them? Is it for your peers? People you run around with and just you know you want to be thought rightly of them? Your business? I mean it's just good business.

Why? Why? Why are you engaged in these things? Is it for self-esteem and pride? You know it can be a point of pride to be involved in the church and serve in the church.

Is that why? Maybe it's your desire for some blessing from God. You know sometimes people think that way.

[33:12] You know I've got to be committed to the church because I want God to bless me. Now God will bless you. I'll bless you but that's not the motive. Or maybe it's on the negative side so that God won't get me.

Won't do something bad to me. Won't curse me. You see all kinds of different thoughts. Maybe you're here because of your preacher. You want him to think good of you.

I mean Paul did say your obedience he was talking to the church of Philip your obedience continued even in my absence. And so it was clear they weren't continuing on for the you know for the sake of Paul their preacher.

What what is it? See here's here's the point. Here here's real Christianity in action. I mean the real thing.

Here's the only way it really works actually. And that is a lifestyle that is constantly being held sway by the cross. Motivated by the cross.

[34:21] Kept in check by the cross. Spurred on by the cross. Obeying God's word. Worshipping him. Serving him. Living for him. Obeying him.

Always as a response to the cross of Christ because for you dear people he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death even death of the cross.

Therefore verse 12 do you see? This therefore is therefore you and for me and for us collectively as a church God's therefore is to be matched by our therefore.

That's Paul's point. And then Paul lays before his readers three areas of spiritual integrity. I wish we had more time to really dig deep into these but let me give them to you.

Three areas of spiritual integrity. Three areas of spiritual integrity that are motivated not by any external thing earthly thing or even internal things such as pride or whatever but are motivated solely because you look to the cross and you assess the cross and your salvation in Christ and you respond in this way.

[35 : 55] Spiritual integrity. Three of them. Number one. Paul says work out your salvation. Working out your salvation is an ongoing thing.

This really is speaking of our sanctification. That is our side of sanctification. Our participation with what God is doing in our hearts and lives as He is transforming us into the very life of Christ. But he says here very clearly work out your salvation. Look at verse 12. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Without taking time to just really do a deep word study. Here's the idea. Work out your own salvation because it's a very serious and sober work. Working out your salvation. And then he says for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

And that is simply put you cannot work it out until He works it in. But what does it mean to work it out? Well, my goodness, that's the whole of God's Word.

[37 : 11] Just read the Bible and you'll find out. What does it mean? Maybe we could just highlight some major headings or categories.

Number one, since I mentioned the Bible, one thing that we ought to do to work out our salvation is to feed our souls with this book. Constantly feeding our souls.

Feeding our souls with the Word of God. Daily feeding our souls. See, God's not going to put His Word in you by osmosis. It didn't work when you were in school with your textbooks, putting it under your pillow and all that kind of folder all.

And it doesn't work with God's Word either. This is our participation. This is what involved in working out your salvation. You are weak.

Are you struggling with sin? Are you having trouble obeying? Are you kind of weak and tired and not hungry for God and for spiritual things?

[38 : 14] It's because you're not feeding your soul. Not feeding your soul. That's a part of working out your salvation. that's a huge topic.

But just naming it I think you understand. Feed your soul with this book. I think also it includes forsaking sin. Feeding the soul, forsaking your sin.

Every day constantly forsaking it. Forsaking sin. Depriving your flesh of its cravings. Getting yourself out of the equation when it comes to the temptation of sin.

You don't fight sin. You flee sin. And so we forsake it constantly, day in, day out, and whatever that may take. Not going certain places, not running with certain people, not engaging in certain reading, not engaging in certain watching of things, and not immersing yourself in any place where sin's temptation is strong.

Forsake it. Forsake it. Mortify it. Put it to death in your life. And that too is a huge category. And the Bible gives instruction after instruction after instruction.

[39 : 33] We're talking about working out our salvation. This is the first point of integrity. Work out your salvation. Feed your soul. Flee and forsake sin.

And I would even add to that, fight Satan. Fight him. How do you do that? Prayer. Prayer primarily. I think we do it in a number of other ways as God is leading us, as we live our lives, as we are influences for good, for spiritual things in our culture as citizens.

And there are a number of things that we do that are part of the battle against the forces of darkness. darkness. Work out your salvation.

Second, walk in your salvation. You have it. God has graciously worked it in and you're working it out. And every day we're to walk in it.

[40 : 34] Walk in a way that is consistent with it. Walk in a way, to put it negatively, that is not contradictory to our salvation. We say we believe, we say we're followers of Christ and the words of our mouth and the actions of our bodies say something else.

That should not be the case. Our lives, the way we walk it, the way we're living it, should always be consistent with our salvation. Now look at what he says in verse 14.

Do all things without complaining and disputing. And right off, we connect that with church squabbles. But that's not the point here really. complaining and disputing, two words, speak really of a process that we go through.

Complaining or grumbling, which is probably a better word. It's more of a transliteration out of the Greek text. In fact, the Greek word here is an onomatopoeia.

Remember what those are? that is the word just speaking the word sounds like the action, the activity. And so it sounds like, you know, murmuring, groaning, grumbling, complaining, blah, blah, blah.

[41:58] Can't exactly put words to it, but you know what I'm talking about. And so it refers really more to the emotions. It's an emotional kind of thing.

Then the word disputing is a word that refers to thinking. Rational thinking.

And, of course, eventually working itself out into the things we do. Action. All thinking will come out to action. Actually, it starts further, deeper, it starts with the emotion.

And then we think, and then we act. And this really is the kind of the course of things. And so we first we start by feeling a certain way about God's word or God's law or God's ways, and we start feeling a certain way about it, and then we start thinking a certain way about it, and we start rationalizing.

And that's the way it always works when it comes to disobedience. first there's the dissatisfaction. That's emotional. God is just too strict.

[43:14] Or this is just too hard. Or this is no fun. You know, it starts with the grumbling.

And then it works itself out in rationalization. First there's the dissatisfaction with God and His word and the way He wants us to live.

We get dissatisfied with that. And then it begins to move to the rationalization, the intellectual. It worked that way back in the Garden of Eden, by the way.

Now it kind of played itself out with this dialogue between Satan and Eve, and first Eve got to thinking that God was holding out on her.

Can't eat that apple from that tree over there. I can eat everything else, but I can't have that one.

God's not being fair. Doesn't He want me to enjoy life?

[44:19] Doesn't He want me to have the sweet fruit of that tree? What could be wrong with that? God's just not fair. And then, with the aid of the serpent, she got to rationalizing about it.

You know, if I eat that apple, I'll be as God. It'll be a real boon for me. And so this is how we think. First we're dissatisfied. God is just too strict. This just doesn't make sense. And then we start rationalizing. You know, this is not fair. You know, it may be sin, but it's not as bad as other sins. And by the way, I can ask God and He'll forgive me. Or by the way, you know, other people are doing it. So, it's rationalization.

Paul says, no, that's not the way. Devoted obedience to my Word, to the Word of God, that's the way.

[45:26] And why? Well, verse 15. Why is this the best way? That you may become blameless and harmless. That's spiritual integrity. That you may be blameless and harmless.

Children of God without fault or above reproach. And why do we need to be that way? Because we're living in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

An absolutely morally twisted generation. And perverted generation. This is Paul speaking about his generation. I wonder what he would think if he were alive today.

We're living in the midst of a perverse, perverted, morally twisted generation.

And so we're to become blameless and harmless, have spiritual integrity in the midst of these people. Children of God above reproach so that no one can bring an accusation of sin against us.

[46:35] Above reproach. Work out your salvation. Walk in your salvation. And one more, witness of your salvation. Witness of it.

Now, Paul's point here is not learning a maybe three or four or five point gospel presentation. I think we ought to do that.

I ought to take God's word and say here's what God says about sin and about Christ and about repentance. I think you need to share the gospel in that way, but this is not his point here.

It's something else, something much more broad. But what does he say in verse 15? Among whom and who are they?

The crooked and perverted world. Among whom you do what? You shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.

[47:36] Verse 16. The word lights here is the Greek word that generally is used to refer to stars. The stars, bright shining stars.

We're to be stars. Not in the way that we think of stars, but we're to be rather luminaries. We're to be luminaries.

See, as believers and followers of Christ, we're to be among the people of this perverted, twisted world. We are to be spiritual luminaries that shine the light of God's life-changing word, His truth, in the midst of a spiritually and morally dark, very dark world.

That's who we're to be. Spiritual luminaries. Everywhere we go, we shine as the lights of the gospel. In whatever context of life, we are spiritual luminaries. See, dear people, we are to be so different.

[49:00] I'm not talking about being odd balls and being a nuisance. We carry on our lives and do our work and we live out our lives, go to the grocery store, we work our work, we do many of the same things, have recreation, but everywhere we go, we're to be so much different.

Different. To be different. Now, they may not win any popularity contests. Of course, that makes us feel bad.

We want to be liked. But it may not win us any popularity. It may not give us some windfall financially if we live as luminaries of the gospel everywhere we go.

But we have been given a gracious and glorious gift, one that we sing about all the time. And it is the Lord Jesus.

What a gift and salvation in Him. And so, what should be our response? What should be our response to that gift?

[50:24] Thank you.