

# Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

## *Philippians: A Choice to Rejoice*

### Lesson 7: Growing in Obedience

#### Bible Text

Philippians 2:12-18

#### Memory Verse

“Do all things without arguing and talking about how you wish you did not have to do them.” (Philippians 2:14)

#### Word List

**character:** the way a person thinks, feels, and behaves; the qualities or characteristics that make a person who they are

**mature:** fully developed or formed; developed to a desired level

**specific:** special or particular; exact

**tantrums:** angry outbursts by a child or someone who is behaving like a child

to clean. There were diapers to change and laundry to do. There were cries to soothe and **tantrums** to calm. There were lessons to teach and games to play. There were errands to run and chores to do. These things kept me busy from early in the morning until late at night. Sometimes the days seemed very long and full of work. At the end of each day, I was tired!

But my friend’s advice pointed out something else that was true. My children will only live in my house for a small portion of their lives. The time I have to parent them will pass by very quickly. The years will pass by quicker than I realize. I know that this is true. In fact, this fall we will drop off two of our children at college. And two more will graduate in the next two years. My college-aged children live away from home most of the year. Indeed, the years have gone by very quickly in my memory. To me, it seems like only a short time ago when these children were playing in my backyard.

Parents know they have a limited number of years to instruct and teach their children. As we launch our children into the adult world, I sometimes worry: *Have we taught them what they need to know? Have we trained them to have strong **character**? Have we shown them how to follow Jesus? Will they remember what we taught them?*

*The days are long, but the years are short.* When I was a young parent, a wise friend shared this statement with me. When she said this, I understood what she meant. My five oldest children are only six years apart in age. The daily work it took to parent my young children could be exhausting. Every day there were meals to cook. There were messes

The church in Philippi was the first church Paul helped to start in Europe. Paul loved this church the way a parent loves a child. He helped form this church from its beginning. He prayed for this church. He encouraged this church. He corrected the church when they made mistakes. As the church grew, Paul could not always be with them. His letter to the Philippians is full of advice. It is the kind of advice a parent gives a child who is growing up. Paul gave advice to help the Philippian church as it grew up. It is the kind of advice that helped the Philippians become **mature** believers.

### **God Works In A Christian's Life (Philippians 2:12-13)**

**12 My Christian friends, you have obeyed me when I was with you. You have obeyed even more when I have been away. You must keep on working to show you have been saved from the punishment of sin. Be afraid that you may not please God.**

**13 He is working in you. God is helping you obey Him. God is doing what He wants done in you.**

Following Jesus is like walking on a narrow path. Jesus said it like this in Matthew 7:13-14: "The door is wide and the road is easy that leads to hell. Many people

are going through that door. But the door is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life that lasts forever. Few people are finding it." Paul knew it would be easy for the church to go away from Jesus' teaching. It is very different from the way the world lives.

Paul encouraged the Philippians to keep following Jesus. He wanted them to keep growing. This is what he meant when he said "keep on working to show you have been saved from the punishment of sin" (v. 12). God's work in a Christian's life begins by saving them from the punishment of sin. But that is just the beginning. God keeps on working in a Christian's life. God is not pleased when a Christian does not grow in faith (v. 12).

The Christian life begins with faith in Christ and continues with obedience to Christ. When a Christian grows in obedience to Christ, he shows that God has saved him from the punishment of sin. Christians only grow with God's help. This is why a Christian must always depend on God. A Christian depends on God to save him from the punishment of sin. A Christian also depends on God to live a life of obedience. Paul reminded the Philippians that this is what God "wants done" in every Christian's life (v. 13).

## Obedience Shines Like a Light (Philippians 2:14-16)

**14 Be glad you can do the things you should be doing. Do all things without arguing and talking about how you wish you did not have to do them.**

**15 In that way, you can prove yourselves to be without blame. You are God's children and no one can talk against you, even in a sin-loving and sin-sick world. You are to shine as lights among the sinful people of this world.**

**16 Take a strong hold on the Word of Life. Then when Christ comes again, I will be happy that I did not work with you for nothing.**

The Philippians were already obeying the things they understood about Jesus' teaching. Paul wanted the Philippians to keep pleasing God. Paul knew that greater obedience would bring the Philippians greater

blessings. He encouraged them to grow in obedience. His advice was very **specific**.

Paul urged the church at Philippi to obey without complaining. He told them to obey "without arguing" (v. 14). This kind of cheerful obedience would honor God. With this kind of obedience, they would "shine as lights among the sinful people of this world" (v. 15). Not only would this honor God, it would draw others to Jesus. It would also bring Paul great happiness and joy.

## Paul Rejoices in God's Work (Philippians 2:17-18)

**17 Even if I give my life as a gift on the altar to God for you, I am glad and share this joy with you.**

**18 You must be happy and share your joy with me also.**

Paul gave His life to telling others about the Good News of Jesus. Even as Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was a Roman prisoner. He was in chains for preaching about Jesus. This was the kind of obedience that God worked in Paul's life. Most people do not take joy in suffering. But Paul was glad to suffer so that people could hear the Good News about Jesus.

God was at work in Paul's life. God was also at work in the lives of the Philippians. Paul wanted to rejoice with them

### Things to Think About

1. What important advice did your parents or grandparents give you when you were growing up?
2. Why is it important for a Christian to keep growing in obedience?
3. What was Paul's specific advice to the Philippians?
4. How has obeying God brought you joy?
5. How are obedient Christians like lights shining in the darkness?

about all God was doing. God was working in their lives to make them more holy. God was working in their lives to make them more like Him. God was also working *through* their lives. He was working through them to bring other people to Himself. God's work brings joy. This is what mature Christians experience as they grow.

### **Things to Remember**

The Christian life begins by faith when a person asks God to forgive him and save him from the punishment of sin. This is just the beginning of the Christian journey. God works to help Christians grow and mature in their faith. If Christians stop growing and maturing, it is a serious thing. The church suffers. People who need to know Jesus suffer. And God is not pleased.

Paul's advice to the church in Philippi is important to Christians today. Many Christians have lost the joy that comes with growing obedience. Many churches have lost opportunities to share the Good News about Jesus. The world needs strong, healthy churches. Strong, healthy churches are full of obedient, growing Christians. Ask God for grace and help to grow in obedience. Then you will "shine as lights" that shine bright "in a sin-loving and sin-sick world" (Philippians 1:15).

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