

Introduction: We marveled last week that God can delight in us just as much as He delights in His own Son! How? It's because of His justifying grace given us freely in His Son Christ Jesus! How amazing that God intends to bestow upon *us* the very same pleasure which He has in His Son! But that is the truth about the new *status* which He bestows on us by faith – a status of being His justified and adopted children, saved by free grace – so that God can look upon us as covered with Christ's pleasing and perfect righteousness!

But as we return to Philippians 2, we will see that God's plan includes *more than* covering us with His Son's righteousness through justification! He also intends to conform us in the image of His Son – in knowledge, righteousness and holiness! In other words, the very Holy Spirit of God who applies to us the blood of Christ for our forgiveness of sin, ***is Himself given to dwell in us as our Sanctifier and the One who enables us to live the Christian life in holiness and good works!*** In this way, God the Father delights *in what we are to become as saints made holy in Christ* – just as much as He delights in us as justified in His sight by Christ's righteousness.

**Mon/Tues/Weds: read Titus 3:3-7 and Philippians 2:12-13.** Paul gives us hope that we will be able to *endure* in the arduous labor of, “working out our salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). How does he give this hope? By reminding us in verse 13 that God is at work *within us*. By His Spirit, God is determined to make us not only “accepted” by Christ's blood, but “acceptable” by the washing of the water of the Spirit. (John Owen)

Or to put it another way, Owen says, “Christ does not only purchase the love of God for the saints; He also makes them lovely ... He came not by blood only, but by water and blood. He does not only justify His saints from the guilt of sin, but also sanctifies and washes them from the filth of sin,” (vol. 2, pg 170). This is how God works in us, working out in our lives the very grace He has put in us! Take another verse about this subject - Titus 3:3-5:

<sup>3</sup> *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.* <sup>4</sup> *But when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared,* <sup>5</sup> *he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the **washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.***

Here, then, in two places in Paul's writings, Philippians and Titus, we have the great doctrine of the grace of sanctification. Note that word *grace* first of all. This means that, just as Christ purchased our pardon and our justification, He also purchased our being made holy and sanctified. Because of Christ's payment, *we shall* be conformed to Christ's character over time, (progressively), until we are called to glory. The way this happens is by the daily and continuous cleansing work of the Holy Spirit, as that Spirit cleanses us from the defiling habits and actual sins of our old natures and daily lives.

But even more, the Holy Spirit knows that *even our best duties* are defiled. Selfishness, unbelief, hypocrisy and pride insert themselves into everything we do. Were it not for this daily, cleansing and renewing work of the Spirit – we would be too ashamed for any of our good works to ever be remembered before God!

Meditate and Pray: Thank you, Lord, that you, “are not unjust to forget our good works” (Hebrews 6:10). But we are baffled that *any of our so imperfectly performed works* could ever bring you glory. Well – we haven't *seen* those impure good works resurrected and made new!

What a day it will be, when our good works, which are to us so, “black, deformed, defiled ... shall appear beautiful and glorious” (John Owen)! Whatever is of the Holy Spirit in our works God will glorify – whatever is of self and unbelief, God will burn away! Hallelujah!

**Thursday: read Philippians 2:14-18.** Sadly, this glorious work of sanctification, whereby we will be gradually changed into the glorious image of Jesus Christ, and prepared for Heaven, encounters many obstacles in our lives. Time and again we revert to habitual sins and failings. Our progress in holiness can sometimes be so halting that we can make faithful servants like the Apostle Paul wonder if their labor in our lives has been in vain, (Phil. 2:16)!

For remember that the Philippians had a real problem of taking the higher place of pride and privilege instead of serving one another in all spiritual lowliness. Paul hammers on this danger in Philippians 2:1-5, urging this church to have the “same mind as Christ Jesus” in terms of considering others as better than themselves. He returns to the same concern in Philippians 2:14 – warning them against the tendency to complain like Israel of old did in the desert! In fact, it was because of their grumbling spirit that Israel *refused to enter the Promised Land*, (Psalm 106:24-26). Listen to this old preacher on the chronic danger of murmuring, (taken from Spurgeon’s Treasury of David on Psalm 106:25). This is what Paul is warning the Philippians about in Philippians 2:14:

*Murmuring! It must have been a malady characteristic of the Hebrew people, or a disease peculiar to that desert. As we proceed with this narrative we are constantly meeting it, creaking along in discord harsh and chronic, or amazing earth and heaven by its shrill ear-piercing paroxysms. They lift up their eyes, and as the Egyptians pursue, the people murmur. They come to a fountain, the water is bitter, and once more they murmur. Then no bread; murmurings redoubled. Moses is no longer in the Mount; murmurs. He takes too much upon him; more murmurings. When shall we reach that promised land?—murmurs extraordinary, loud murmurs. We are close to the land, but its inhabitants are giants, and their towns walled up to heaven. Oh, what self-deception! And see how the last breath of the last survivors of that querulous race goes forth in a hurricane of reproach and remonstrance—a perfect storm of murmurs. James Hamilton (1814-1867) in “Moses the man of God.”*

Meditate and Pray: “Oh, Lord, please enable us, by your grace and by the full salvation provided for us through Jesus Christ, to be increasingly immune to the great danger of discontented complaining. Give us grace to heed to the words of Hebrews 13:5... “Be content with what you have.” Even more importantly, teach us increased appreciation for and satisfaction in, who you are as our God. In the words of Ronald Wallace in commenting on the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, (“Thou Shalt Not Covet”), help us to believe the promise implied in this prohibition, (namely), that:

*“God Himself will provide for us in everything we think we lack. We will not need even to covet what is our earthly neighbor’s, since we share so much of what belongs to our heavenly Neighbor!”*

Please help us, therefore, “to learn to be content in whatsoever state we are”, (Philippians 4:11-12). In Jesus Name, Amen.”

**Fri/Sat/Sun: read Philippians 2:14-18.** A murmuring spirit was a huge danger, not just for Israel of old, but for the Philippians too! More than that complaining spirit, they also faced the unsettling insecurity of having their founding pastor Paul in jail, and an uncertain future in a Roman empire increasingly hostile to Christians! How would they find the grace to be, “content in whatsoever state they were”, (see Phil. 4:11 compared to 1:27-28)? The answer is contained in Paul’s metaphor in Phil. 2:17, when he speaks of himself as being poured out as a “drink

offering”. In other words, just as the Apostle used Christ’s free-will offering of Himself in Philippians 2:5-11 as *an antidote to the Philippians’ disunity and ambition*, so, when he faces that same selfish spirit in the Philippians in chapter 2:14-18, he again brings up the theme of *sacrifice*. This time, he cites his willingness to sacrifice everything by his life poured out on the Philippians’ behalf. This is the antidote to selfishness among believers – to consider not only Christ’s incarnate sacrifice of His life – but also to consider *His Spirit at work in Christian servants such as Paul*. The same Spirit that supported Christ on the Cross also supports Christian apostles, pastors and elders as they learn to lay down their lives for the sheep!

Meditate and Pray: “Thank you, our Father (who *gave up your only Son to be our Savior*); thank you our Savior (who *gave up your life in our place on the Cross*), and thank you, dear Spirit, that you are every day committed to bringing glory to Christ and not to yourself! Please help us as a church to be in like manner selflessly committed to Christ alone as Head and Savior of His church. Only by your Holy Spirit at work within us can we learn to let Christ receive all the accolades! Thank you, Father, that you have put just such an omnipotent Spirit within us to accomplish this daunting work of sanctification! Amen!” Sing about the might of the Spirit of God in us to enable us to lay down our lives and interests in Christ’s name, using the words of hymn # 707:

*Jesus, I my cross have taken,  
All to leave and follow Thee.  
Destitute, despised, forsaken,  
Thou from hence my all shalt be.  
Perish, every fond ambition,  
All I’ve sought, and hoped, and known.  
Yet how rich is my condition—  
God and Heav’n are still mine own!*

*Go then, earthly fame and treasure!  
Come, disaster, scorn and pain!  
In Thy service, pain is pleasure;  
With Thy favor, loss is gain.  
I have called Thee Abba, Father;  
I have set my heart on Thee:  
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather,  
All must work for good to me.*

*Take, my soul, thy full salvation;  
Rise o’er sin, and fear, and care;  
Joy to find in every station  
Something still to do or bear!  
**Think what Spirit dwells within thee;**  
What a Father’s smile is thine;  
What a Savior died to win thee—  
Child of Heaven, shouldst thou repine?*

*Let the world despise and leave me—  
They have left my Savior, too—  
Human hearts and looks deceive me;  
Thou art not, like them, untrue;  
And while Thou shalt smile upon me,  
God of wisdom, love and might,  
Foes may hate and friends disown me:  
Show Thy face, and all is bright.*

*Man may trouble and distress me,  
’Twill but drive me to Thy breast.  
Life with trials hard may press me;  
Heav’n will bring me sweeter rest.  
Oh, ’tis not in grief to harm me  
While Thy love is left to me!  
Oh, ’twere not in joy to charm me,  
Were that joy unmixed with Thee.*

*Haste then on from grace to glory,  
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer,  
Heaven’s eternal day’s before thee,  
God’s own hand shall guide thee there.  
Soon shall close thy earthly mission;  
Swift shall pass thy pilgrim days;  
Hope soon change to glad fruition,  
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.*