

## JOY – Gospel Maturity, part 1b: God Works.

### Philippians 2:13

**MPS** Christians mature in Jesus' likeness as they empty self to submit to God's work that transforms our whole being.

**OBJ** Every person can understand Christian maturity that produces abounding joy by three distinctives.

**INTRO** I began last week referring to the "time" of growing up, when personhood aligns with age or stage of life. Now the standard by which this is measured varies widely, but there are some common denominators. Most important for our consideration is that we acknowledge our need for and, hopefully, our desire to grow and mature in Christ. Today we see the true source of all Christian maturity.

**READ** Philippians 2:12-13

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. **Philippians 2:12-13***

**Christians mature in Jesus' likeness as they empty self to submit to God's work that transforms our whole being.**

**SERIES Point** Paul exhorts the Philippians to gospel maturity for maximum glory and joy because God is working, and this is how Christians pursue true joy. The process of maturity reminds us that joy is neither the frills nor the feels that we often reduce it to, but that true joy is the fruit of our walk with Jesus because God's staying power in life is the reality of His staid presence in our life. **Christian maturity is the Joy-factory of the faith, the difference between joy-deficiency or joy-abundance.**

**TRANS** Today we complete our look into Christian maturity to motivate us to a zealous pursuit with our whole life.

**OBJ** **Christian maturity that produces abounding joy should be understood by three distinctives.**

#### **1. Christian maturity is determined by obedience to Jesus.**

Two gaps help us measure our maturity; the "Obedience Gap", the difference between one's knowledge and obedience; "what have done with what you know?", and the "Response gap", the time between when we learn and when we obey; "how quickly do you trust to obey once you learn?" These gaps remind us of two realities; to know and not obey is an act of sinful rebellion against our King, and delayed obedience is the same as disobedience. **A maturing Christian constantly lives to "close the gaps" and live fully aligned with God's Word by obedience. \*The Christian who wants to experience abounding joy from maturity must be careful to obey Jesus.**

**TRANS** Then, to confront the lie that Christian maturity means perfected performance, we stated that it is never a point of arrival, but a process, which led to our second distinctive.

#### **2. Christian maturity is a learned process of trusting Jesus.**

Maturity in the Christian life is a continual process of becoming more like Jesus because obedience must be learned. Our learning is two-fold; learning lessons and learning to identify the process through which God matures, which is of greatest value. This learned process that matures always produces greater worship and glory for God in life. **The lessons learned IN the process spur our growth, but when we learn to discern the process, the Lord becomes our focus to catalyze our transformation. \*The Christian who wants to know Jesus' joy must follow the same path as the Master, the learned process of obedience.**

**APPL** Exercise of discerning the learning process. **Have you ever taken time to pray through that time / moment / season in your life to discern the hand of God?** If not, "why not?" Think with me for a moment of one of the most difficult moments in your life. A time when you were under heavy burden or severe pressure due to some situation, decision, circumstance, or



relationship. This may have been due to your own mistake, wrong-doing or sinful action that created the situation, or it may have been a situation that was placed on you. Here are some **questions to help you discern the learning process**.

- **How did you respond (react) to the situation?** (Record your first reaction.) **What were your first questions, thoughts, feelings?**
- **When do you remember first turning to seek the Lord in the process?** Was it early or later, did you do it on your own, or did others have to remind and encourage you to seek the Lord?
  - **What was your first disposition to the Lord?** Did you turn to or away from His Word? What verses brought particular help, comfort, or encouragement to you? Did you seek Him in prayer or just talk to Him?
  - **Were there important people that came near to you or that you went near in the process?** Did you turn to or away from the church? Did they point you to Christ first or some other method, thought, or relief?
- **How have you processed the situation?** Have you recognized / confessed your struggle to the Lord? Have you pursued help and encouragement from people in the church or just other friends?
- **Has the process drawn you closer to and filled you with more Jesus?** Do you love and trust Him more deeply, learned how to give thanks, or depend on other Christians more? Has it caused you to hold suspicion against Him or the church?

**TRANS** Today's distinctive of Christian maturity can only be valued as one learns to "review life" by Holy Spirit's guidance. Let's see what it says, then we'll return to our application. Today's distinctive is the most potent of Christian maturity.

### 3. **Christians mature as God works to cultivate His divine pleasure within.**

*for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Phil 2:13*

Be Careful not to move past this quickly. This is not theory, but glory that deserves immediate worship!

**PAUSE** for a moment and ponder this glorious truth: **the God of all is working, personally, in your life!** May our prayer be: "God, we thank and praise you that the very purpose for which our lives were brought into being is to know and be known by the One who created us for Himself. Every inkling and deep longing of life is fully and perfectly satisfied in you! Make us the people you Will for us to be, that you are working to make us, to do the work you Will for us to do! By Jesus and through Holy Spirit, have your way in us, and bring your glory alone through our lives!" **When you move quickly past this verse and the reality of it for your life, you stunt your growth and maturity in the faith by reducing it only to your earning. And while maturity in the Christian life comes from our strategic effort, it Never comes from our earning.**

**God is working to carry out His Will by His command in you, Christian.** The "God who works in you" means that the divine energy (*energon*) of His being is acting to cause and carry out His purpose in you. This is the **key** to understanding Christian maturity. **The full measure and scope of God is working to align our will and our work with His divine pleasure.**

**First, God works to transform our inner being, to will.** The active work of God in the Christian's life begins within us in, in the place of desire, motivation, resolve, and purpose. God is not interested in adherence or performance. He changes us completely at the deepest part of our being by making us new within. Listen to His covenant promise in Ezekiel 36:25-28.

*<sup>25</sup>I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup>And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. <sup>28</sup>You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. Ezekiel 36:25-28*

Every outward action of our life begins within. God works within us because that is where He has made us a new creation. He desires for our whole life to be one. We see His work in His Great Commandment; "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."<sup>Matt22:37</sup> God works for our integrity of our new creation; to align our whole being – the center of our conscience being (heart-thought, emotion, and conscience) with the center of our inner being (soul-psychological faculties) with the center of our intellectual faculty (mind-understanding, reasoning) – to direct our whole being to Him. **God is the One working in you to bring your whole self into alignment with Him!**



**TRANS** So, if God begins His work in us, should we wait until He is done until we go and do? NO! He works for our work.

**Second, God works to unite our whole outer being.** God works so that our outward person, in actions, attitudes, and exertion, aligns with our inner being. By conviction of Holy Spirit we recognize how our sinful (faith-absent) actions do not align with our new nature In Christ, so by faith we change our behavior. The Bible does not separate emotions, or feelings, from thoughts. They do not always align perfectly, but they are never separated from one another. God works to bring both our will and our work into alignment with His good pleasure, the 'intersection' of transformation. The change that takes place in life to make us more like Jesus is a supernatural work of God. **APPL** When I know my attitude has changed, when I commit sinful acts less or desire sinful things less, thanks and glory to God! [What God commands in the Great Commandment is what God is working to mature in every Christian, a transformation of one's whole being into the "new" He has made us in Jesus Christ that exists fully in His perfect love and overflowing of glorious joy.](#)

**Finally, God's work is what effects and enables our obedience.** So, for us to say, "I cannot obey", or "I do not want to obey", becomes a statement about what we believe God wants to or is able to do even more than what we can or want to do. Grace upon grace from God is the energy of motivation and fuel to obey His commands. [Knowing what God is working in us, Christians work out because it is God who is at work in us.](#)

God is not satisfied with adherence in our activity, He aims for whole life love! Scottish Puritan Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) elaborates on why God works this way in his book titled, "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection", when he wrote, "how impossible it were for the heart, by any innate elasticity of its own, to cast the world away from it, and thus reduce itself to a wilderness. The heart is not so constituted; and the only way to dispossess it of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one." The Christian life is compelled / controlled by love<sup>2Cor5:14</sup> because God works to purge our life of lesser glory by His greater glory, or lesser and pseudo loves by His perfect love. He doesn't make a simple substitution for us. Rather, by revealing His glory in any of its varied manifestations of wisdom, power, might, or beauty, God woos our will by His overwhelming glory to purge us of lesser loves and fill us with His glorious, divine light, so that our whole being, from the tips of our appendages to the marrow of our bones and the depths of our soul cry out in glorious praise, "Yes! Amen!" **God works in you to align both your inner being and outward actions with His divine pleasure.**

**APPL** We often say, in response to His Word, "But God, I can't do that." God says, "I will do it in you and through you." Sometimes we say, "But God, I don't want to do that." God says, "Look to me. I have a greater glory for you. I will accomplish My will by changing your want in such a way that you can't not do it." [God wants to get our eyes off of all the lesser glory' the world and sin consumes us with and fill us with His glory.](#)

**Testimony** You may ask, "[Pastor, how do you know this is true?](#)" I'll tell you; I never wanted to preach. And now, I give my life all the way to death doing nothing else. That's a transformation from within by purging self-glory for His glory!

You need not fear what God commands, neither in accomplishing it nor in enjoying it. God is working right now by His energy for His glory in your life. God's will for you is not merely to get you to adhere or comply, but to consume you with His glory so that you can do no other!<sup>1</sup> When God works, He woos the heart and wows the mind to lead a life in His work. The Christian life is not the killjoy Satan wants you to think it is. God works for His divine pleasure to consume your whole being, Christian, all the way through body and soul, so "Then sings my soul, My Savior, God to Thee, How Great Thou Art." This is why we say that the continual growth unto maturity into Christ-likeness is the joy factory of a Christians life. [The Christian who wants to know Jesus' joy submits fully to recognize it is God working to cultivate His good pleasure in you.](#)

[Christians mature in Jesus' likeness as they empty self to submit to God's work that transforms our whole being.](#)

<sup>1</sup> Homer A. Kent Jr., "[Philippians.](#)" in The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 130. Kent writes, "Hence, Paul depicts God as actively and continually putting forth his energy in believers to insure the accomplishment of their task."

