

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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SALVATION,
GOD,
AND THE WORD
OF LIFE

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Living Stream Ministry
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In [Philippians 2:5-16](#) we have Christ, salvation, God, and the word of life. These are the four basic elements of the structure of these verses. In this booklet we shall consider how these four elements are related to one another.

CHRIST AS THE PATTERN

Philippians is a book on the experience of Christ. If we would experience Christ and live Him, we must know Him as our pattern. In [2:5-11](#) Paul presents Christ as our pattern. We need to be deeply impressed with this pattern and even have it infused into us.

Christ is wonderful; He truly is all-inclusive. This all-inclusive Christ is nothing less than God. But even though He is equal with God, He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men” ([v. 7](#)). He did not regard His equality with God as a thing to grasp. Rather, He laid aside this equality and emptied Himself. This does not mean, however, that Christ was no longer God. It simply means

that He put aside His outward expression of God. Although He subsisted in the form of God, He took on the form of a slave and became in the likeness of men and in the fashion of a man. As a result, He had the appearance of a man instead of the expression of God. On the one hand, having the form of God, Christ emptied Himself. On the other hand, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross. As the Savior, Christ has both divinity and humanity. He both emptied Himself and humbled Himself. Thus, according to [verses 6 through 8](#), we may speak of the self-emptying and self-humbling Christ.

[Philippians 2:9](#) says, “Wherefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.” This verse indicates that God came in to exalt Christ. For Christ to be exalted means not only that He was uplifted to the third heaven from the lower parts of the earth; it also means that in a glorious way He was brought back with His human nature to the form of God. Before His incarnation, Christ did not have the human nature. But through incarnation He took on humanity. Then He brought this human nature to the cross,

shedding His blood for our redemption. After His resurrection, He was uplifted to the heavens and with His human nature was brought back to the form of God in glory. Now He is our pattern. The pattern of the Christian life is the God-man Savior who emptied Himself and humbled Himself and who was exalted and glorified by God.

REPRINTING THE PATTERN

The very pattern revealed in [2:5-11](#) must now become our salvation. This is indicated by the words “so then” at the beginning of [verse 12](#). After giving us a clear view of Christ as our wonderful pattern, Paul says, “So then, my beloved,...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

As our pattern, Christ is both inclusive and exclusive. The pattern is exclusive because it excludes everything worldly, fleshly, or sinful. There is no way for negative things to have any part in Him or access to Him. But, on the positive side, He is all-inclusive, for He is the God-man Savior who emptied and humbled Himself and who has been exalted and glorified by God. With such a pattern available to us, we now must work out our own salvation.

To work out our salvation is to work out this pattern and to become in our experience a reprint of the pattern. Christ as the pattern can be compared to a page of type used in printing a book, and our subjective experience of the pattern becoming our salvation can be compared to the printing of the pages of a book. In making a book, each page of type is reprinted again and again until there are many copies. In our experience, the God-man Savior should be reprinted and become our subjective salvation. The very salvation we are to work out is Christ as our pattern.

MURMURINGS AND REASONINGS

The salvation in [2:12](#) is not salvation from the condemnation of God or from hell. Rather, salvation here refers to the salvation we experience day by day. In particular, it is salvation from murmurings and reasonings. In [verse 14](#) Paul says, “Do all things without murmurings and reasonings.” We need an instant salvation to deliver us from our murmurings and reasonings.

We have pointed out that the sisters have a particular problem with murmurings, and the brothers, with reasonings. Usually the wives are

given to murmuring, and the husbands to reasoning. Because we all are troubled by murmurings or reasonings, we need the kind of salvation that can rescue us, not only from God's condemnation and from the lake of fire, but also from our murmurings and reasonings. This means that we need a subjective, moment-by-moment salvation.

We have seen that, as our pattern, Christ emptied Himself and humbled Himself and also was exalted and glorified by God. Sisters, do you think that while you are murmuring, God will come in to exalt you? Brothers, do you believe that while you are reasoning, God will come in to glorify you? Surely God will not exalt us or glorify us when we are murmuring or reasoning. Oh, we need salvation from murmurings and reasonings!

Both murmurings and reasonings are signs of rebellion and disobedience. In [verse 12](#) Paul says that the Philippians “have always obeyed.” We also need to obey—to obey Christ as our pattern. As the One who became our pattern, the Lord Jesus did not murmur or reason. Instead, He emptied Himself and humbled Himself. Now we must obey this pattern, realizing that Christ does not murmur or reason, but empties Himself

and humbles Himself. When the brothers are tempted to reason, they need to remember the pattern of the self-emptying and self-humbling Christ. The brothers should then obey this pattern without reasoning. This obedience is the working out of our salvation. Whenever we obey Christ as our pattern, we automatically work out our salvation from our murmurings and reasonings.

Christians often ask others if they have been saved. When I was asked this question as a young man, I answered strongly that I had been saved. But if I were asked this question today, I would reply, “What do you mean by ‘saved’? If you mean saved from God’s judgment and from the lake of fire, I most assuredly have been saved. However, if you mean saved from reasonings, I would have to admit that I have been saved in part, but not yet in full.”

Years ago, I used to wonder why Paul included [verse 14](#) in this chapter. It seemed to me that what Paul had written was so high that there was no need for this verse. After saying that Christ was exalted and given a name above every name, that every tongue would confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that we must work out our own salvation according to God’s operating within us,

Paul suddenly tells us to do all things without murmurings and reasonings. It seemed to me that murmurings and reasonings were too insignificant to be mentioned here. However, after more experience, I learned that we definitely need to be saved in a practical way from reasonings and murmurings.

In the church life and in our married life, there are a lot of murmurings and reasonings. The sisters may behave properly, but within they may murmur against the brothers. What sister can say that she has never murmured about anything in the church life? If the sisters do not complain outwardly, they certainly murmur inwardly. When the brothers hear of the sisters' murmuring, they may react by reasoning. Because we have murmurings and reasonings, we need the practical salvation revealed in [Philip-
pians 2](#). The salvation here is not the salvation we have received once for all. On the contrary, it is the salvation which we need to work out in order to be rescued daily from our weaknesses. We have pointed out that this salvation is Christ as our pattern. Hence, the pattern and the salvation are one. The pattern is the salvation, and the salvation is the pattern worked out in us.

GOD OPERATING IN US

[Philippians 2:13](#) says, “For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.” The little word “for” at the beginning of [verse 13](#) connects it to [verse 12](#). This indicates that we can work out our own salvation because God is operating in us. Salvation is the pattern, and God is the One who is operating, working this pattern into us. Therefore, we may say that salvation is God Himself operating in us. Salvation, the pattern, and God are not three separate things; they are one. The pattern is the salvation, and the salvation is God. Here we have one thing in three aspects. The pattern is Christ, the God-man, who emptied and humbled Himself and who has been exalted and glorified by God. This Christ, however, is the very God Himself to be the daily salvation for us to work out. Furthermore, this salvation is actually the God who is operating in us.

The matter of God operating in us to be our salvation should not merely be a doctrine, but should be something we experience in a practical way day by day. Often when a sister is complaining or murmuring, she may sense that something within is constraining her and urging

her to stop. This inner sense comes from God operating in her. If by God's mercy, she obeys this inner sense, she will experience salvation and be filled with joy.

We may say that, outwardly, objectively, Christ is the pattern. But when the pattern works within us, it becomes the operating God. Not only did Christ die on the cross as our Savior, but now He lives within us as the operating God. Christ as a man was not able to live in us. However, as God it is possible for Him to dwell in us. Thus, Christ is both the pattern objectively and the operating God subjectively. Once again we see that the pattern, Christ, and God are one.

In [2:13](#) Paul clearly says that God is operating in us. But elsewhere he usually speaks either of Christ or of the Spirit being in us. For years I did not understand why in [2:13](#) Paul spoke of God and not of the Spirit. Now I realize that Paul did this deliberately in order to show us that the Christ who is the pattern for our salvation is the very God operating in us. If we consider the context of this verse, we shall see that Christ as the pattern is also the operating God. Objectively, He is the pattern. Subjectively, when He comes into us and operates within us, He is the operating God. On the cross, He was Christ.

But within us, He is the operating God. On the cross He, as Christ, established a pattern for us. But within us He, as God, is the operating One to work out this pattern. Therefore, the pattern is the salvation, and the salvation is the operating God.

We may experience the operating God daily as our practical salvation. Whenever we cooperate with God operating in us, we enjoy salvation. God's operation becomes our salvation. Furthermore, this salvation is the reprint, the reproduction, of the pattern. When the pattern is reprinted in us, it becomes our salvation. The reprinting of the pattern is accomplished by God operating in us.

THE WORD OF LIFE

Verse 16 opens with the words, "Holding forth the word of life." When God operates in us, we spontaneously hold forth the word of life. In fact, the word of life is actually the God who operates in us. God works in us by His word. He operates in us by being the word of life. We have spoken repeatedly of the operating God. Now we must see that God is embodied in the word of life. This means that the word of life is the embodiment of the operating God.

We need to put this understanding into practice by coming daily to the word of life, the Bible. Whenever we come to the Word, we should also come to God. This, however, is not to regard the Bible as God Himself. But we should not separate God from His Word, for God is embodied in the Word. Because God is mysterious, it is difficult for anyone to apprehend Him. How we thank Him that He has embodied Himself in the Word, the Bible! The Word is the condensation of the invisible and mysterious God. Many of us can testify from our experience that whenever we come to the Bible and open ourselves, we touch God, and God works within us. Whenever we touch the word of life, we experience God operating in us, moving in us, to produce a reprint of the pattern. This is our practical salvation.

Now we can see that Christ, salvation, God, and the word of life are one. Furthermore, to experience Christ, salvation, God, and the word of life in the way we have described is to live Christ.

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD

Paul speaks of salvation both in [Philippians 1:19](#) and in [2:12](#). In [1:19](#) Paul could say that his circumstances would turn out to him for salvation. This indicates that even in his imprisonment

Paul enjoyed God's salvation. The salvation in [2:12](#) is the practical salvation which rescues us daily from murmurings and reasonings. However, salvation in both [1:19](#) and [2:12](#) is the same in principle. In both cases salvation is a practical, daily, moment-by-moment salvation.

According to [1:19](#), Paul enjoyed salvation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Apparently, we do not find this bountiful supply in [chapter two](#). Instead, we have the word of life. However, the bountiful supply of the Spirit and the word of life actually are one. Paul enjoyed daily salvation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit, and we may enjoy daily salvation by the word of life. Moreover, Paul says that to enjoy salvation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit is to magnify Christ and to live Christ. In the same principle, when we enjoy salvation daily through God operating in the word of life, we also live Christ. Thus, to enjoy God's salvation in a practical way is to live Christ, that is, to hold forth the word of life. In order to live Christ, we must first take Christ as the living pattern. Then we need to obey the operating God within us and receive His word of life. Then spontaneously we shall live Christ.

Salvation, Christ, God, and the word of life are four-in-one. Eventually, in our experience, the pattern is the word of life. The word of life works out the pattern by the operating God to apply salvation to our daily life. In this way we enjoy Christ and live Him.

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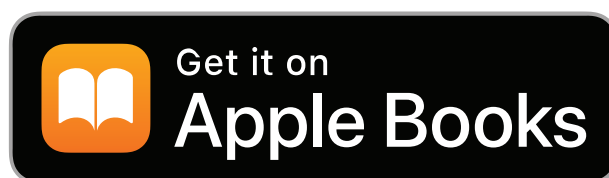
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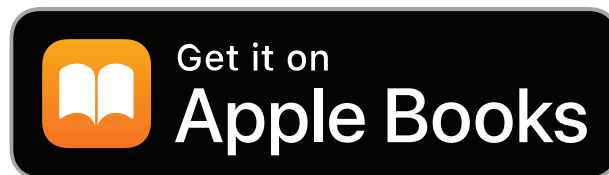
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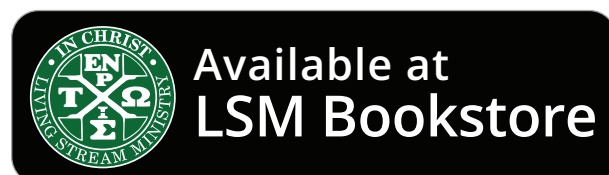
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