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Number two, our Bible is over to the book of Philippians chapter number two. We're going to begin our reading again in verse number 14. Philippians chapter number two and verse number 14. When we have it as a body, can we say amen? Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that it did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I'm glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me. Father, we thank you for the reading of the word this morning, and we just pray that as we humbly come to it, Lord, we ask that every word that we have the opportunity to look at, Lord, begins to do a work on the inside of us. We're humbled to stand in your presence. We understand, Father, that we're not worthy. But we thank you for loving us in spite of all that we are, in spite of the things that we do. We thank you for a grace that is more than sufficient and a mercy, Father, that is new every moment of every day. Guide the service in this time. Let those who are here, Father, continue to grow as they attune their heart to hear from you. Those, Father, who may be struggling in our walk with you, Lord, I pray that they're encouraged that you are guiding them, keeping them, and your desire is to strengthen, to use them. And for those who have yet to come to know you, Lord, if they're in the house this morning, they're here because you drew them here. So I pray, Father, that they recognize that this is an opportunity for salvation. That whenever the Word is preached, it's a call to turn to you. It's a call to surrender to you. It's a call to come to know your love and to love you. We thank you for this time. We ask you to guide this day and we ask this in Jesus name we pray. Let the body say amen. You can be seated. I don't know about you but it's been a great deal of time reflecting on the verses of study from last week, do all things without grumbling or disputing. You can honestly say that as we walk through Israel's journey from captivity to the brink of the promised land, I didn't realize how much they complained, how much they disputed against God. As we said last week, complaining seems to be one of those things we accept as being part of our nature. And I'm not sure we acknowledge that it's a part of our old nature. You see, it's easy to say when that person pulls into the parking spot that we feel it's for ourselves, or when we go through the drive-thru and we grab the food and we realize that they only give us just a handful of fries instead of the amount of fries that we expect, whether the food is cold, or when that telemarketer keeps calling and we want them to just stop. We feel as those situations, it's okay for us to begin to complain. Innocent complaining, it has nothing to do with God. However, I pray that we learned last week when we complain about the things we experienced inside of heaven, it's never innocent. It's always rooted in selfishness. It's saying, I don't deserve why this is happening to me, or I don't like the way this makes me feel or the way it makes me look to others. Our complaining, legitimate or not, is a result of the fall. We live in a fallen world with our unredeemed humanness still present as new creations in Christ Jesus. Remember, we're freed from the power of sin, but we're not freed from its presence. Remember Lamentations 3:39, it says, why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins? Clark says, he who has his life still lent to him has small cause of complaint. How great soever his affliction may be, he is still alive. Therefore, he may seek and find mercy until eternal life. Of this, death would deprive him therefore let not a living man complain but we have nothing to complain about this is the beauty of our relationship with God the beauty of living this side of heaven is so that we may obtain grace and mercy the salvation of our souls therefore anything that could and does happen this side of heaven is never a reason for complaining, but rather an opportunity to lay hold of and contend for the faith that honors Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives. The idea that every circumstance we encounter is to be met with a quiet and gentle spirit is foreign to many people. Complaining is the American pastime. We don't have to go far today in order to see this turn on your TV or listen to a podcast as debates are all the rage, as we complain about someone's opinion or their idea of truth. But we live in a day and age where truth is subjective. And so we complain about everything. We complain about government. We complain about finances. We complain about religion, moral and ethical standards of our day. Complaining is commonplace. We complain about sports. We complain about

the weather. It's interesting. Wake up and say, man, I can't believe it's raining today. But you might want to be thankful the forecast isn't 40 days of a universal rain. So quickly we forget. A complaining spirit is displeasing to the Lord. Now I'm doubling down on what we talked about last week because I don't want us to simply say that was a great sermon dismiss it and then all of a sudden we're complaining about something. My wife and I were walking to the car this morning and she said I knew it I should have brought my jacket it's cold outside. We're walking to the truck and I was like wait for it wait for it wait for I would have brought my jacket if it wasn't so hot in the house because everybody turns the heat on inside the house And so it wasn't hot inside the house I would have known it was cold outside and therefore I would have brought my jacket and I was like Rumble grumble grumble grumble as we're walking to the truck so she turns and she looks at me and she smiles and again It's innocent. We feel like it's just innocent. We're just talking about some things that are that are true but beloved if we dismiss this, then our lives begin to look markedly different. When the Israelites crossed over the Red Sea, the water before them was too bitter to drink. When they went a little bit further, the food was scarce. When the spies were sent to do a little recon on the land they were to possess, it was inhabited by people of great stature. In other words, what they spoke about was valid and true. What they were complaining about, the water was bitter, the food was scarce, the Giants were present. All these things were true. However, what they failed to consider was the sovereignty of God. See, the Word of God is clear on how we are to live regarding many things we complain about. For instance, Romans 13 1 says, let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God and those that exist have been instituted by God. We need to stop complaining Ephesians 6 1 children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right Stop complaining about our parents

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bond servants

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Obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling with a sincere heart as you would Christ when we go to work when we're out There when to stop complaining about our employers How about Matthew 22 19 show me the coin for the taxes they were talking to Jesus about paying taxes And they brought him a denarius and Jesus said to them whose likeness is inscription is this they said Caesars Then he said to them therefore render to Caesars the things that are Caesars and to God the things that are God Quit complaining about taxes James 5 9 we looked at it last week do not grumble against one another brother So that you may not be judged behold the judge is standing at the door quit complaining about the person next to you. Or how about Hebrews 13, 17, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, "for they keep and watch over your souls "as those who have to give an account. "Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, "for that would be of no advantage to you." Get the idea? The scriptures are replete with a command to accept the governing authorities. That means we shouldn't walk around complaining against the economic strategy. Render to Caesar what Caesars. We shouldn't complain about our employers or our spouses or our friends or our parents. We're called to be obedient and stand, not grumble and vacillate.

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I'm gonna say it again.

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We're called to be obedient and to stand on the gospel, not grumble and vacillate. I know we hear this and we think, yeah, can we go on? I could almost just stop right here, just preach right here all over again, and then come back next week and keep continuing. Because I sometimes wonder, do

we grasp it? Beloved, it's not innocent. It's not innocent. To get to a place to where we're standing and fully trusting in the Lord. And let me tell you something, it's not easy. And it doesn't happen overnight. But it is what God calls us to. Okay, well, it seems like you captured quite a few things that we complain about. How about I just take it all the rest of the way. Remember when Jesus said in Matthew 6:25 in a sermon on the mount, therefore I tell you do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Where does anxious care come from? What if I told you it came from a lack of trust in God? It's a lack of trust that leads to grumbling, disputing, and ultimately unbelief and no trust in God's sovereignty. This negative practice of worry brings about complaints against God's providence. I hope we're starting to grasp why complaining at any level is displeasing to the Lord but Paul doesn't stop there it's not only that complaining is displeasing to God a complaining disposition doesn't prove us to be obedient children of God now I want to see if we can't take this section of Scripture apart a little bit down in verse number 15 of Philippians 2 and just kind of keep your hand there Paul, he says, he calls us children of God. Now, I want you to think about this in this context. All of mankind is God's creation. However, Paul's use of children of God carries the idea of regeneration. I want you to make sure you have that in mind. Being born again, as he spoke to Nicodemus about seeing the kingdom of God. When we come to saving faith, we not only become new creations, we become God's children. Therefore, our obedience to God is like that of a child to their parents. We've already seen the perfect example of this in the son's obedience to the Father. Jesus' humility was on display when he became obedient to the point of death on the cross. Why? Because it pleased his father. As parents, we desire our children to obey because they love us and trust us think about this Jesus was the Son of God how do the disciples know this how did they know he was the Son of God because he looked like God God spirit how did they know do you remember when Jesus declared to his disciples the time his departure was at hand and immediately they became afraid this led to that upper room discourse as he sought to declare to them that he would be leaving but they wouldn't be left alone. Now they didn't understand. They either wanted Jesus to be with them or they wanted to be where Jesus was going. One or the other, but being without him was not an option in their mind and they were trying to understand what he was saying and they were struggling with that. And so Jesus begins to respond to Philip in chapter number in John 14:8 He says this Philip says to him Lord show us the father and it's enough for us in other words I don't understand this But if you just show us the father if we can just see the father that will be enough for us and Jesus said have I? Been with you so long and you still do not know me Philip whoever seen me has seen the father How can you say show us the father? Do you not believe that I am in the father, the father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the father who dwells in me does his work. Believe me that I am in the father and the father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. Beloved, Jesus is the revelation of God and he wanted them to know, he wanted them to see that his father was in him and he was in the father. In other words, seeing him was seeing the father. Jesus showed them the father through his love. He showed them the father through his righteousness. He showed them the father through grace. The whole of Jesus's life was making the father visible. His life evidenced the father. They saw the father by how he lived. So think about that. It wasn't as though God was unknown to them. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob was not unknown to them. But as Jesus began to live out his life they could see the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. So when Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says in Ephesians 5:1 therefore be imitators of God catch this as beloved children as children we are to be like our father this isn't a new concept we've discussed this before remember we use our children as an illustrative illustration by showing how their behavior around others is a direct reflection to us as parents when your kid is pitching a fit in the local Target store because they can't have what they want or When they refuse to eat the food that you said before them, especially when you're in a restaurant, they're like now And they start pushing it away from them and you can see the look on parents faces as they start to look around and see Who's looking and they start to put their head down Love as children of God there is a way we're called to live that word imitate is where we get our word mind. Now remember, minds imitate not through speech, but through gestures. In other words, through actions. Many of us

can sit down and biblically discuss what it means to be Christ-like. We've been discussing it for weeks now. But when you think about a mind, it's not what he says, it's how he acts. So when J.B. Phillips says, as children copy their fathers, you as God's children are to copy him. I wonder, do we truly grasp the fact that we have God as our father? It's because we're God's children, we can actually imitate him. Just as natural children copy their parents, as children of God, we copy our father. Now, think about this in light of what Paul is saying to the Philippians. Stop grumbling and stop disputing because that's not the attitude of a child of God. Plain and simple. It's not the attitude. That's not the disposition. You ever have somebody who's just grumpy all the time? It doesn't really matter what's going on. They just always seem to be in that place where they can just flip and go from 0 to 100 because they're just always in this bad mood. Beloved, I want you to think about this. Does this represent our Father? Is this how we're supposed to be as children of God? Recognizing that I've become a son of the Most High God and He possesses everything and everything answers to Him and that He is sovereign over all things. That should change the way I respond as a son. It should change the way we respond as God's children. Our trust in His providential will is without question because we know He loves us and there is nothing he wouldn't do for us because he already sent his son to die for us. This is why we read last week 1 Thessalonians 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God and Christ Jesus for you a couple of weeks ago actually. As we work on our salvation it's with a thankful and joyful heart. This was the attitude of Jesus. It's what our Father desires of us. Now consider all this in line of what we've been reading. So I'm gonna read the first two verses again. Do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world. When we live without grumbling it causes us to become blameless and innocent children of God. Now if you're thinking I've already said that we are God's children, then what do you mean become that way? Aren't we already that way? Remember we said we're saved and we are being saved through that process known as sanctification by which we become more and more like Jesus? Think about like this, when you have children they learn how to behave through you, as you lead, as you guide, as you teach them. In other words, doing leads to becoming. What were you doing this week? What was your week like?

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Great.

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Great.

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What were you doing in order to become? What were you doing in order to become? Seven days since the last time we were here. What was the week like? Again, doing leads to becoming. Not doing you, doing Him. So the question is, what does that look like? And hold it, I'm not talking about an appearance. I'm talking about, can you look throughout your day, every day, throughout the entire day, the last seven days, and say that I live doing so that I could become. In other words, is that you? When he talks about not complaining, not disputing, it's not just those things. As believers, we're in this process of becoming Christ-like. When we have children, our desire is to watch them grow up. We want them to become. So when Paul says in verse 15, that you or so that, those words indicate a purpose statement. What Paul is saying is that when we do things without complaining, we show ourselves to be blameless. That means outwardly in terms of our actions and innocent that's terms of inward in terms of our motive. We show ourselves to be blameless and innocent children of God. The Greek actually says in order that you may become, we do all things without grumbling and complaining in order that we may become. He's painting the picture of a process by which we become blameless and innocent like a child maturing morally and ethically.

Now some verses will say so that you will prove yourself to be and that word prove means to acquire a state. Paul's saying when we do and let's turn that verb into a present participle so we'll add ing so when he says in doing all things without grumbling and complaining we're working out salvation by becoming catch that becoming blameless and innocent children of God without blemish we prove ourselves to be blameless and innocent children of God that's your question do you care I love reading the faces of people in the audience.

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You sure about that?

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It's Sunday, about 11.10. He should be done in about maybe 30 minutes if he starts breaking away like this, maybe 25. And I can get on with the rest of the day.

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You mean the rest of the day

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in becoming blameless and innocent? What are your plans when you leave here? Who do you plan to come alongside? Who did you come alongside before you got here? What are your plans on serving as we continue to move forward throughout the week? Do you already have them laid out? In other words, are you hearing what I'm saying? Are you listening to what the Word of God is saying? It's important. We have to live a certain way. The word blameless means faultless. To live in a way that there's no accusation that can be made against you. A life that can't be criticized. The word innocent is without mixture or unmixed. Figuratively it pictures a person who is guiltless, sincere. Both of these words speak to purity. Paul's describing the type of children whose lives are patterned after their father. Think about it this way. Have you ever changed the way you behave because someone knew who your parents were?

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Ever thought about, oh, whoa, yeah, no, not here.

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They know my folks. I see Gabby smiling as she looks at her mama. And so, every time we take that moment, we identify with our Father. This is what he's saying here. He's saying being both blameless and innocent speaks directly to a person's manner of living their conduct as it relates to their Father. In other words, can your conduct be brought under scrutiny? Is it innocent? Is it pure? That's another way of saying it. Unmixed. Jesus, he instructed his disciples in Matthew 10 16. I'm sending you out of sheep in the midst of wolves So be wise as serpents and innocent or harmless or pure as doves The word is speaking to our motives and intents of the heart Paul say that we're to live in such a way that no accusation or criticism can be leveled against us Love is this the beginning of this chapter? Think about all of it from the very beginning of chapter number two, we're called to be of one mind, to have the same love, to have the same mind. He moves right through and he calls us to humility, humble obedience. So think about that. He's moving through and he's painting a picture. We're to do it without complaining. We're to obey because we desire to. Beloved, we know who our Father is. Therefore, no matter what we face this side of heaven, we're to view every circumstance as an opportunity to draw nearer to Christ. Everyone. That's the good ones and the

bad ones. Last night I had an opportunity to, young adults were out skiing up in a mountain. Or should I just go? And then I know some of the other ladies had an opportunity to go exchange ornaments and

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cookies.

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I don't know who got my wife's cookies, but congratulations. I'm joking, they were fantastic. and so I found myself at home alone. I was working on the sermon and I just stopped. I said, I'm going to the movies. And so I went online and I looked and there was this movie called The Carpenter. Never heard of it. Didn't see it last week there. So I looked at the previews of it and The Carpenter obviously being Jesus. So I buy a ticket, earlier that afternoon, and then I go to do a ceremony for somebody's daughter, and I do a couple other things, and then I drive back, and I go to this movie, and I sit just by myself. Oh, David was good at popcorn,

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had that lickin' wrist bounce,

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they did have the both arm rests belong to me.

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I mean, it was on point, right? And so I'm sitting in this theater, there's probably about five other people inside there with me, infringing on my space, but that's okay, I let them in there. And so I'm sitting there and I'm watching this movie. And as I'm watching the movie, it wasn't anything fantastic or bad. It's a movie about a guy who's a fighter who encounters a carpenter. The carpenter is Jesus. And so as I was sitting watching the movie, I was just sitting there listening, and he said something. And he asked the question, he says, why do good things happen to bad people? And the carpenter said, it gives you an opportunity to react, to either trust God or not. And I thought about that for a second. How do we respond? Chad taught a couple of weeks ago, can we give thanks for the bad circumstances that come our way? We have an opportunity to respond. Are we going to grumble and complain? Or will we humble ourselves, accept God's providential will, and bless His holy name in spite of all that we're going through? See, this is the picture. This is not the way most people look in the world. And this is why he's trying to paint this picture for us as believers. We have to move away from our old way of living. We are to live in such a manner that when people begin to look at us, they have no reason to criticize or saying, beloved, can we be like Job and all that he went through? He says, though he slay me yet. Well, I trust him. We spend so much time grumbling against things that aren't that significant, which is why it's so easy for us to grumble and complain when the real problems come. There's something about Job that I found interesting. Do you remember how the Lord described Job in 1.1? There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job and the man was blameless and upright. Catch that word, blameless and upright. One who feared God and turned away from evil. Now skip down to verse 8 and it says this, And the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job? There is none like him on earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He was described as being blameless, but when he began to endure suffering, knowing that the suffering that he was enduring was also God allowing it, what did Job He complained. Now it's interesting right? His concerns were warranted. He couldn't understand why the Lord allowed him to suffer. Therefore he complained to God. But do

you remember how God responded to Job? 38 1. The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man. I will question you and you will make it known to me. In other words, God said, I'm tired of listening to you complain. You wanna talk about it? Let's talk. And then the Lord just lays everything out. Now, if you're thinking, well, hold on a second. I mean, Job was upright. And the Lord is never pleased with those who seek to dispute or complain against him. Well, the reason why I'm showing you this is because it said that Job was blameless and here's where it shows up when God speaks to Job in chapter number 38 Job does not retort by complaining he doesn't say okay well what about this he doesn't say okay well what about that what Job does is he responds humbly and he repents Job 42 1 then Job answered the Lord and said I know that you can do all things. Man has lost everything, children, finances, everything, he's lost everything, his own body was touched and he says I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I've uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know. He recognizes God is God and God can do whatever God chooses to do and his will is always perfect Even if I don't understand it, even if it involves suffering it doesn't matter He's God and his will is perfect and just Here and I will speak I will question you and make it known to me. I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear But now my eyes sees you Just now I see you therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes a

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Blameless man a

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Man who is truly blameless a man whose life can't be criticized as a man when he's confronted by God repents Because that's his character So when God called him blameless and upright it was true And as we get to the end of the book, we see it living out to be true. As children of God, we're called to live in a way that shows us to be God's children. Hold it, his obedient children. We have to ask ourselves a question. How do I behave as a son and daughter of God? Do I conduct myself in a manner that is innocent, faultless, pure? You may be tempted to say, well, I'm not perfect Remember I said this is a process as we humbly obey as we humble ourselves placing the needs of others before our own as We seek to obey our Heavenly Father as we yield to him to work out what he worked in all for his good pleasure Without ever raising a complaint our character becomes Blameless our character becomes pure in thus so does our conduct. We're not perfect, but our heavenly father is. Therefore, we're to live as those who not only share in his identity, but those who share in his life because we bear his name. Last week, I described my father. And I can tell you that throughout my 20s, no one ever said, well, we know who Will's father is. No I look nothing like my father. My conduct was not consistent with who my father is. As children of God is your conduct consistent with who your father is? Remember what Peter says in 1st Peter 1 14 as obedient children do not conform to the passage of your former ignorance but as he who called you was holy you also be holy in all your conduct. Since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy. This is a Hebraism, as Peter is actually saying, as children of obedience, not obedient children. Seems like I'm splitting hairs, but the phrase obedient children speaks to conduct, while children of obedience speaks to character, what you are on the inside. Paul's saying is that their character is that of obedience. When you become a child of God, that's your character. You take on a new nature and you share in the divine nature of God and you've seen that divine nature lived out in Christ who was obedient to the point of death. It's a part of who you are. You're actually fighting against it. Hence the reason why there's a struggle in Galatians 5 where it says the flesh wars against the spirit, then the spirit against the flesh. They're contrary to one another so you don't do the things that you wish because your nature wants to obey that new nature. The Holy Spirit in you desires to obey. It's a part of who we are. So Peter's saying while your former conduct was that of disobedience, now as children of God, it's obedience. God is holy and he calls upon all who believe in him to imitate his

holiness and the reason We should imitate his holiness It's but God because God has called us to be holy Make sure you understand that your father has called you to be holy if you've had children There are certain things you call yours to you're calling your children to be a certain way in this world. Beloved, our standard as children of God is our father. Calvin says this, God sets us apart as a peculiar people for himself. Then it follows we ought to be free from all pollutions. Remember that word innocent means pure. We're commanded to be holy. And the reason for obedience to this command is simple, because your father is. Spurgeon says, children should be like their fathers. There are many children who bear in their very faces evidence of their sonship. You know who their fathers were by the image that the children bear. But one of the reasons we're to be blameless is because of our father. But that's not the only reason. He continues, we are to be children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation Among whom you shine as lights in the world. Let's talk about this for a minute We're becoming blameless and innocent children. Why? for the sake of our father for the sake of the world in which we live How will the Lord find us when he returns? We ever thought about that How will the Lord finds you when he returns Peter says in 2nd Peter 3 14 therefore beloved since you are waiting for these The promises waiting for the return of Christ be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace When the Lord returns, how will he find you? blameless and innocent? Listen, I'm not talking about perfect, I'm talking about in the process of becoming blameless and innocent. Remember, doing leads to becoming. So as we humble ourselves, as we obey the Lord, as we surrender to the Holy Spirit to work out what's worked in, we then become or we are becoming blameless and innocent children of God. Yes, we're children of God, but we're being sanctified. I hope this is making sense. There is a process, but you have to be involved in the process. You have to be aware of the process. You have to be engaged in the process and you have to desire the process and work the process until completion or to the day the Lord calls you home, whichever comes first. That's the picture. This is how we are to be living out our lives. Paul's calling for a life that is above reproach. That means without blemish or spot. Remember when they would offer an animal as a sacrifice? That animal had to be without blemish. It had to have no defects. Think about your life in Christ. Again, I know immediately we say, okay I'm not perfect, neither am I. And so I was sitting in that movie last night, I was reflecting on the day before and thinking, should I have done that? Should I have done that? I should have done this. I should have done that. I'm reflecting on all these things inside my head and I'm thinking to myself, if it weren't for your mercy and your grace, where would I be? Where would any of us be? And so you don't just sit and just say, okay, you want to know it? Dodge that bullet. No, you sit back and you say, Lord, do a work on the inside of me, purify my heart. The same way you do metals. Metals are heated in order to work out the infirmities to make it pure. So when we go through the process of sanctification, our lives are being worked out. They're becoming pure and undefiled. It's God who is at work within us. We shouldn't fear hearing somebody say, living above reproach. It should be our desire. No one, when you're telling your kid, listen, I don't want you doing what all the other kids are doing. I want you to listen to what I'm telling you. Well, yeah, but if I do that, I'm gonna look different than them. I don't wanna seem like mom, like I'm good and they're not. And you, oh, that's right, I don't want you to feel like you have to live above reproach. Go ahead and do everything that they're doing. No, it's not exactly how we respond, is it? I don't care what they're doing. This is the standard that I've set for you. There is a standard your father has set for you as children of God and that standard is above reproach we go to the book of Timothy and we look at Timothy and Titus the pastor or pistols and we go through the qualifications for elders and for deacons and we say okay these you do know that those are bare minimum qualifications every Christian should be hospitable every Christian should be able to speak the Word of God every Christian should show love every Christian that's the bare minimum that an elder or a deacon should have.

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It's not the top.

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We're all called to live above reproach because that's who we are. We are now in the Christmas season. Are you living above reproach? How are you living? How are you taking advantage of this time and of this season? Are we still only looking at ourselves or are we looking out at everyone else? How are you living? Because your conduct matters. And here's why. Because it gives testimony that Jesus is Lord. You want to know what it's testifying to? Up until this point, Paul's been talking to them in the church. Now he's shifting. It's testifying to the world. You have a perfect opportunity right now to testify to the Lord. Leroy Brownlow says this, you're writing a gospel a chapter each day by the things that you do by the things you say. Others read that gospel whether faithless or true say what is the gospel according to you. How are you living it out? Our personality should match our proclamation. If you're preaching it are you living it? Are you bearing witness to Jesus? Catch this, in a crooked and twisted world. Well, we live in a truth where, in a world where truth is completely subjective. There are no moral or ethical absolutes any longer. Many live as they did in the days of judges where each man did what was right in their own eyes. Now those two words are interesting. And the word crooked comes from the word in which we get our English word scoliosis, a curvature of the spine. Some of your versions don't say twisted, it says perverted, and I actually like that, because it really drives the point home. It's to distort, it's to turn something aside. It conjures up something in our mind, practices and tendencies that are abnormal. The world we live in is crooked and perverted. The debate for a long time was, I'm a man trapped

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in a woman's body.

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I'm a woman trapped in a man's body. Now we've moved to, actually, this is just how I'm supposed to be. A brand new species, a brand new gender. It gets worse and worse and worse. Sexual immorality is everywhere. My grandkids can't even watch a simple Disney movie that doesn't promote sex, homosexuality, lying, cheating, you add, you name it. It's all over the place. Isaiah was so correct when he said in the 53 6, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. Love it even when the world sees behavior deviating from its low standard, it's so twisted, we now explain it away. You want to know why he or she is behaving that way? Because dad didn't go outside and toss the baseball with him. He'd have been a better kid if you'd have took him to soccer practice. He'd have been better off if you'd have done this, or she'd have been better off if you would have done that. The reason why they're doing this is this, beloved, listen, there's wisdom in a multitude of counselors, the Bible tells us. Can you make sure your counselor is a Christian? And can you make sure he's counseling you according to the will of God and not to the will of Freud? I'm just being real, because counseling's all the rage these days, and everybody's seeking to get help not recognizing one thing one fundamental thing you are broken before you ever began to speak sinful before you ever began to walk we've talked about this a hundred times over babies are cute don't give them what they want don't give them what they want at six months old and one years old what they get mad they say no they pull away. They'll throw something. Can I ask you a question? Where do they learn this? Is there a school? Like is there a place where babies go at six months old and you go pick them up a month later so they can learn how to do all these different things? How to be selfish? How to make it all about me? Or could it be that that's just how we're born? Beloved, that's how we are born. It's all about us. We don't like saying it and people don't like hearing it because it seems to take away. They're still cute. They're still lovable. Just in somebody else's house and not mine. They're even more beautiful when they're grandchildren and even better when they're great-grandchildren. You can pass them two, three times down. And so get the idea, right? There's this picture. We live in a crooked and perverse generation. And we, as believers, have to live in such a way to where people can begin to see Christ at work on the inside of us. Can I tell you, it's not optional. We can't explain away sin or embrace it as a social norm. The

world continues to get worse and worse. But as followers of Christ, we're called to live in such a way that causes us to stand out different than the world in which we live in. You see, the call to be holy, remember, that simply means to be separate. It doesn't mean we're called to go live in communes. Remember Jesus' priestly prayer, John 17, 14? I've given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. Think about this. We are in the world for a reason. He didn't ask for them to be taken out. He said sanctify them. Sanctify, holy, set apart, set apart. Your word, it sets us apart. We are to testify to the goodness of God. We're all called to evangelize the lost. And we do so not only by preaching, but by allowing our character to match the content of the message we preach. As children of God we're all evangelists at heart living in a crooked and perverse generation and guess what we don't get to do? Turn aside and act like it's not my problem. We are to live above reproach. It's time for us to start to speak. It's time for us to start to stand. It's not supposed to be just taking place behind here in the pulpit. It's supposed to take place outside the church. Monday through Saturday we should see our light shining. This is what we're being called to. Spurgeon says, more is expected from you than from other men because you have a higher pedigree. For you are descended from the very highest himself and therefore should be the highest and best in the world. Do not soil the fingers that are soon to sweep celestial strings. Do not let those eyes become the windows of lust which are soon to see the king in his beauty do not let those feet be defiled in merry places which are soon to walk the golden streets do not let those hearts be filled with pride and bitterness which are soon to be filled with heaven and to overflow with a static joy purpose 2818 says one who walks blamelessly will receive help but one who is crooked will fall all at once. We're supposed to live in a way that we appear as light shining in a dark world. So how is your light shining? A favorite preacher of mine said, a Christianity whose effect stops at the door of the church building is of little use to anyone. If the only place we shine is here, then we're not shining. You've heard me say this time and time again. Light doesn't shine in light. Light only shines in darkness. It dispels darkness. Just think about that. If it stops at the door, we're the most holy people when we come here. But when we leave, it looks completely different. We walk out and we go back to some of the old things we used to do. Remember the beginning of this chapter once again. When focus is self, we live according to our own standards. When we sit around and complain, can I tell you what? Your unbelieving Unbelieving family and friends are usually the ones that are present They hear and they see I Submit to you that if that's how you're living your light is off Our Lifestyle should be so dynamic It should be characterized by humility coupled with love and willing obedience to the Lord and as we become those whose lives Give no occasion for criticism or offense as we proclaim Jesus as Lord, we are living in the world, but we're not of it. It's here we're set apart as our lives shine in a perverted and dark world. This isn't a complicated message to understand. Sometimes not the easiest to live out. Jesus said in Matthew 5.14, you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a stand and gives light to all in the house in the same way let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven have you ever walked outside and looked up at the stars at night you see the moon and it's shining and when you see clusters of stars it just seems to light up the night. Can I tell you something? That's the way the unbelieving world should see the church. As clusters of stars, and when they come around, it just seems to light up everything. There's something different about that marvelous light, and we know this light is life for all who come to Do you appear as light in the world? Or have you come from out of the world? Have you stepped aside? Beloved, we're called to truly live holy among those in the world. We're not called to accommodate darkness. Jesus is clear. We must shine as lights in the crooked and perverted world. Let me make one more statement, and then I'll close. And I pray that when I make it, you won't be grumbling about me on your way home. Notice the call is to shine as lights in the world. Spartan says this. Where does the text say that we are to shine? In their house? No, in the world. True, they are to be lights in their own family. But moreover, if they come up to the full standard of what they should be, they are to be lights in the world. There is this growing tendency to withdraw from the world and an even greater focus on

simply ministering to our families. Beloved, the call upon us as believers is to be becoming lights. To be becoming lights, where? Not in your house, not with your kids, not with your friends, in the world. There is this growing thing that seems to be sweeping throughout the church where we're just kind of isolating ourselves and we want to do this over here, we do this with our children, we do this with our family, we do this with this group of believers, this is what... light is just shining greatly in light. But you do know you've been called out to the darkness. That means that we're to go out and shine outside. We can't withdraw our kids from everything and if I'm stepping on toes I apologize because this is not an issue of homeschooling. So let me just go ahead and put it out there so you don't have to wonder if I'm thinking it. Let me just go ahead and put it out there. I am. But I'm not criticizing it. What I'm simply saying is that we're called to be lights in the world. In other words, that's our children, that's us, that's all of us. That doesn't mean you can't homeschool. So let me make sure I'm clear about that. But let me make sure that I'm equally clear. We're all to go out in the world and shine, all of us. We can't withdraw from everything and then all of a sudden wonder why the world is going to hell in a handbasket. Nothing's shining. And so we have to go out into the world. Is it a scary place to be? Of course it is! But God's sovereign. He's not sending you to a place that He's not provided for you for. He's not sending you to a place He hasn't empowered you. He's keeping your children more than you are and He's keeping you if you trust His providence, if you trust His sovereignty. Listen, we're not turning this world back. It's unfolding exactly the way the Scripture said it would. But He's not calling you back. He's still sending you into it Just like he sent the disciples and just like he sent his son So we have to make sure that we're diligent To go out. I know it's a fearful place and it's dark out there and we're unsure. We're even safe but beloved This is about your trust in him He's not asking you to shine in light. He's commanding you to shine in darkness It's not an option But we treat it like it is one And then we wonder why we see the things that we see Listen the last thing I want to do is put my wife or put my son or put my daughter put my husband in the Situation where they could be hurt Beloved Job was just serving God and he lost everything. And then God said, and you're complaining against my will? I know exactly what I'm doing. Let's make it very clear, beloved, we don't keep ourselves from anything. But by the mercy of God, but by the grace of God, we all stand. This is the picture this is what we're being this is what we are to understand and this is how we are to move forward listen this isn't the most popular message I should be in Advent I should be talking about the birth of Christ I should be getting ready getting you all ready to be able to deck the halls and listen there's nothing wrong with that but can I encourage you to let your light shine in some very dark places? Can I encourage you to maybe put some of your usual things aside and say, I'm going to be very intentional about going out. I want to be able to be out in the world so that the Lord can shine through me. Ever walk away from someone and you just go, man, there's something different about that

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dude.

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There's something different about him. I worked at Intel, and I used to always be around this guy. His name's Abel. Actually, pastor's a Spanish church up the street. I worked with him for years. I was always, there's something about him. I liked him, but I didn't know why I liked him. And so he was just a cool dude, but he never hung out with us. If we go to the movies together as a group of guys from Intel, he didn't go. If we would go down to have lunch, he didn't go have lunch. But yet when we're up on the floor, we laugh, we joke, we talk. I mean, he was just a cool dude. Then when I went to Oregon and the Lord saved my life, opened my eyes to the glorious gospel, the light shined, I came back. And when I came back, I was talking to him and I made a comment about Christ and he said you should check out this Bible study group that meets here at Intel and I said what a Bible study group meeting at Intel and he's like yeah and I turned and I stopped and I said that's it that's why I couldn't put my finger I said you're a believer he said yeah I said you've been a

believer all time I've been working here huh he's like yeah he said it's good to see God call you I remember looking at him it's all pretty crazy what now you see yeah I said is that why you didn't go with this he said listen I would go to the Christmas parties I didn't he didn't withdraw but he knew when to be engaged and when not to be engaged and so there was something about him. Can I ask you a question? When you leave people who don't know Christ, do they say there's something about her? There's something about him? There's something they can't put their finger on? Do they say that about you? Does your conduct and the way you carry yourself, does it light up the room so that the Holy Spirit, who is the one doing all the work, begins to draw them, begin to convict them, begins to bring them to Christ? We have to make sure and we're not just complaining about why things aren't moving but we just go out and accept what the Lord is doing. We must not hide our lamp under a bushel but we need to put it on a mountaintop where it can shine. Listen, I pray that you're listening. I pray that this is causing you to go home and just sit. That's what I've been doing the last 24 hours, just sitting. My wife came back from the thing she was at last night and she said, she's telling me she had a good time, so on and so forth. And she's talking, she's telling me how great everything was fantastic, we did this. I pulled up, when I pulled up to my house, Alicia was there with her SUV pulling stuff off the top, the skis and then everybody's getting the stuff out. So I can't park, cause they're right in front of my driveway. And so they park right there, so I get out holding my Harkins cup,

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and I'm looking at them,

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she's up there untying the rope, and they're telling me how she cut her fingers because it was cold, and I was looking at everybody move stuff, and I was like, yeah, it's a little chilly outside, so I'm gonna go back in. I went on the inside and just stood there, and so they're moving everything around and getting everything situated, so we're gonna get somebody a ride home, and so one car that said well tell you what you can just take my truck it's already out there the heat's already on I'm not coming out of this house ever again so they go and do what they got to do and then I go upstairs open my laptop and I want to finish working on this because I had stopped and my wife comes home and I hear her downstairs and so she comes in and she starts telling me about everything and I'm sitting there and as I'm just typing she's just talking she's just talking she's just talking I said hey I kind of need to work on this a little bit it's like 10 o'clock and and she's like what do you mean work on what have you been doing and I was like uh I went to the movies she said you did what and I said I went I went to the movies and when I say her whole demeanor changed, it's just like she shifted. So she started folding clothes on the bed. And I said, well, you can tell me about the good times. You went to the movies? And I said, yeah, I just, you know, sitting here. No one was here by myself. And I just figured I'd go to the movies. I was like, okay. She's folding more. I said, so how were the cookies? And how are the ornaments? And she said, I can't believe you just went to the movies without me. You know, and I was like, what do you mean without you? I mean, you were doing something and I went to go see a movie that you wouldn't see anyway. I always wanna see those movies. You're the one who always wants to see blow me up stuff. And I'm just sitting there, I'm just looking at her and I'm like, okay, well, I mean, I guess I'm sorry. No, you could go, you could go. And then she just stopped talking and I was like, okay. So then finally she goes off to do whatever. She sends me a text with a little smiley face. She says, no, really, I'm not mad. I'm glad you got a chance to go to the movies. And I was like, okay, I'm good. So I knew I was safe. But in my mind, I was thinking to myself, why? Why was she bent out of shape? That I would go off and do something. And I get it, because we usually do everything The reason why I went was because I needed to think. Sometimes I get away just to think, and most of you know me, I very rarely will go to a theater and see a Christian movie. Sometimes I just, I'm always critiquing everything against the Bible, and then I'm like, yeah, like Noah, the only thing real in that was the water. And so I'm just

like, so then I just kind of sit back, so I kind of steer clear. And so, but I just felt led to just go sit and to think, how's my light shining? Spent a lot of time this week complaining in my mind about a lot of different things, feeling a certain way about a lot of different things. And God was just dealing with me in those things because it's important that my light, which is not mine, it's his light that's shining. So men may see my good works, know his good works, and that they will glorify my father where? In heaven. So Paul closes. He closes by saying we must shine as light to the world, holding fast to the word of life so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith. I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise, you should also be glad and rejoice with me." The gospel is the word of life. It's what we believe and in a present and dark world, it's what's needed. Paul is saying we are to present the gospel of life. Our character, as we said earlier, must match the content of the gospel we proclaim. So Paul gives one more reason as to why he desires our life to shine so his labor's not in vain. Paul's under house arrest. He doesn't know whether he's going to be released. He does, and eventually gets in prison again, and that's when he loses his life. But at this point, he doesn't know it. So he's urging them to live in a manner that if he is to be poured out like a drink offering, meaning if I'm going to die, Paul said, I don't want to die as if I ran in vain. Paul didn't live to please himself and neither should we. Remember, no man lives unto himself and no man dies unto himself. Whether we live or we die, we are the Lord's. His desire is the rejoicing that comes with knowing that his labor among the men and women he was preaching to was not in vain in that they came to saving faith and one day he'll rejoice with them in the day of Christ Paul desired to have reason for glory not him not in himself he had reason for glory in their salvation because this is pleasing to the father so when Paul says in Ephesians 4 1 I therefore a prisoner for the Lord urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called with all humility and gentleness with patience bearing with one another in love eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace we are to live in light of Jesus return with joy and thanksgiving for the salvation we've been blessed to receive the Word of God never declares this to be easy. No preacher by the name of Matthew says, he who would shine as a light must burn. No candle can give light without the wax being consumed.

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Think about that.

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I love lighting scented candles in the house. But they get lower and lower and lower and eventually the wax is consumed Beloved Paul had no problem with being spent for Christ and neither should we We must be willing to surrender to the Lord to work out what he has worked in He continues if we're going to shine for Christ, we must give of ourselves Don't be surprised if the Lord does not use you if you are unwilling to give of yourself and be used by God. So much of our lives are lived in vain. It accomplishes nothing of eternal value. We have to live as Paul lived, with the focus on pleasing the Lord Jesus who saved us, by taking the gospel to the world with the desire to stand side by side one day with those in whom the Lord used us to draw near to him for his glory. I want you to think about this. If you have the gospel of life, you have all that you need, therefore it should be your aim to give that to others. It's interesting, I was watching that movie last night, a character who played Jesus said to the gentleman that he was talking to, it's not what we get, but what we give to others that's pleasing to the Father. Beloved, we receive salvation. There's nothing else. It's not what we get. We can't keep going, God, can you? He's not a genie. But can we now go give? Can we give that cup of cold water? Can we give that clothing that's needed? Can we help with that rent? Can we be that ear to listen to? Can we be the person to walk side by side? Can we be the conduit through which they hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and are saved? It's not what we get. It's what we give to others. In this crooked and perverse generation, God's calling upon his church. And the beauty is he's empowered it. So it's not left up to you, it's left up to Him. He's saying, I just need

you to surrender. He will energize your energy as we have been talking about for the past couple of weeks, if you surrender to Him. So my prayers as we count down, today being what the 12th 11th 10th whatever we're a quarter of the way three quarters of the way a third of the way I got it a third of the way through the month with two-thirds left can I encourage you to go home and spend some time in prayer then pull out a piece of paper and just ask the Lord what do you want me to do and where do you want me to shine and write down whatever he says don't try to figure out if you can fit it if he told you you can fit it even if it means you have to cut something else go home and ask him see those are questions we don't like to ask and if we do we like to ask him passing you know I thought we're driving we can't write and then we forget about it when we get to our destination so I'm asking you to go home. I'm asking you to pray. I'm asking you to pull out a sheet of paper and ask Him, where do you want me to go so that your light can shine? We already know it can't shine in light. So He's sending you somewhere. The question is, where? And will you be willing to go. If so, you prove yourself to be becoming blameless and innocent children of God, shining as lights in a crooked and perverse generation. Stand with me. Father, we thank you for your Word is always timely. You're calling upon a group and a body of believers, Lord, to heed your call, to obey your command, and to go, not by our might or by our power, but by your Spirit, declares the Lord. So we thank you. We thank you for a group that left over the weekend and returned safely. We thank you for keeping us as we travel to and fro. We pray beforehand for those who will travel to and fro. We pray for those father laying in hospital beds right now. We pray Lord for those who are in touch of need of a healing. Lord I pray for my son. I pray for Erica Marchand. I pray for Tatiana. I pray that you touch her body, Lord, take her family safely to where they're going. Bring them back in the same manner. Father, touch her body with just a spoken word, causing all that ails her to be banished, because you can. We trust in your sovereignty, Lord. We trust in your providence, not just for her, but for countless people in hospices and in hospitals and countries around the world. Father, the greatest need isn't the healing of our body. It's the saving of our soul. Therefore, call us and send us out as light to shine so that men and women may be saved. And the byproduct of that salvation, if you so will, is the touching of our bodies and the leading of our lives for your glory. We thank you and we ask these things in Jesus name we pray and at the body of Christ say amen. and at the body of Christ say amen. Hug somebody before you leave.

Transcribed with Cockatoo