



If we have tried to imitate Christ at all, we would know that it cannot be done without a struggle. We are constantly struggling in our faith. Sometimes the struggle is inward as we try to figure out where and how God wants us to serve. Then it may progress to a struggle with God himself (as Jacob wrestled [struggled] with God) as we come to the realization that our flesh may not want to do or go where He has called us to go. Then at other times it is a life and death struggle with the enemy of our souls who is trying to kill, steal and destroy the image of God from our lives. The devil will do everything in his power to keep us from reflecting the image of God. This needs to be our one purpose – to reflect God’s image

### II. DETHRONE SELF – Philippians 2:5-11 (GWT)

<sup>5</sup>Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. <sup>6</sup>Although he was in the form of God and equal with God, he did not take advantage of this equality. <sup>7</sup>Instead, he emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant, by becoming like other humans, by having a human appearance. <sup>8</sup>He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>This is why God has given him an exceptional honor—the name honored above all other names—<sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will kneel <sup>11</sup>and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus said that he who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted (Matthew 23:12). We will never fully comprehend the glory that the Lord gave up to become a man. He did not come to be served by man but to serve us (Mark 10:45). He served us by giving up his life so that He could save us from our sins. The word says in Acts 4:12 that there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved – Jesus is the only way, the only truth, the only life. He came and perfectly reflected God’s image and demonstrated the Great Love of the Father for the purpose of showing us that we too can again reflect God’s glory.

There is too much of us in ourselves, few are there that truly are willing to give up themselves for the sake of living for, being like Christ. If we are unwilling to humble ourselves, we will never reflect God’s image. If we don’t reflect God’s image then we will not reach a lost and dying world with the gospel that transforms lives. So we must ask ourselves, has the gospel transformed my life?

### III. PARTNER WITH GOD – Philippians 2:12-18 (GWT)

<sup>12</sup>My dear friends, you have always obeyed, not only when I was with you but even more now that I’m absent. In the same way continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. <sup>13</sup>It is God who produces in you the desires and actions that please him. <sup>14</sup>Do everything without complaining or arguing. <sup>15</sup>Then you will be blameless and innocent. You will be God’s children without any faults among people who are crooked and corrupt. You will shine like stars among them in the world <sup>16</sup>as you hold firmly to the word of life. Then I can brag on the day of Christ that my effort was not wasted and that my work produced results. <sup>17</sup>My life is being poured out as a part of the sacrifice and service I offer to God for your faith. Yet, I am filled with joy, and I share that joy with all of you. <sup>18</sup>For this same reason you also should be filled with joy and share that joy with me.

Obedience to God’s word is the evidence of our love for Him. Jesus said he who loves me, will keep my words (John 14:21, 23). If we have any hope of rightly working out our own salvation, we must first obey God’s word. Psalm 119:9,11 both speak of the word keeping us from sin.

What does it mean to work out your own salvation?

Have you ever met someone who did nothing but gripe, complain and argue about everything? This behavior is not of the Lord and is probably the furthest from imitating Christ that one can get. We must remember that it was the complaints that caused God to destroy his people in the desert and kept them from entering into the promise land (Numbers 14:27-29). However, if we put away complaining and arguing the Lord promises that we will be blameless and innocent and that we will shine like stars.

Paul spent the first part of his life (before the Damascus conversion) looking/hoping for God’s approval upon his works. After he met Christ, he spent the rest of his life striving to be a part of what God was doing in those around him. As a result, he influenced the world with the living gospel!

I have often found that it is our own fleshly desires (complaints) that drive our prayer requests. “Lord bless me”, “Lord give me”, “Lord do this”, “Lord do that”...We should seek to be a part of what God is doing rather than continually seek God’s blessings on what we are doing.

Finally, we must strive to please God as much as possible; whoever said the Christian faith is easy obviously has not lived it. As we continually seek God He will produce within us the desires and actions that please Him – this is imitating Christ.