

# Your Work, His Power

Humble Unity Part 10  
Philippians 2:12-13 4-24-2016

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Summary: The commands God gives us are like a foreman telling a worker to move a mountain. A shovel (his own strength) won't work, but neither will a lawn chair. The power comes from the earth mover, but operating that entails hard work. We work hard to tap into divine power. When we try to do that and get discouraged because it's hard, we should remember 1) God is for you, like a gardener nurturing a flower, 2) God likes you, and regards you as one of his beloved friends, 3) God counts your life of repentance as life of obedience, and takes note of every act of godliness.

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**Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act for the sake of his good pleasure.**

## Introduction

From the time I was a kid I have always been captivated by David's mighty men of valor. If you're into superheroes, you'll love 2 Samuel 23.

**2 Samuel 23:8 ... Josheb-Basshebeth ... raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter.**

**9 Next to him was Eleazar ... at Pas Dammim ... the men of Israel retreated, 10 but he stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day.**

**11 Next to him was Shammah ... When the Philistines banded together ... Israel's troops fled from them. 12 But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the LORD brought about a great victory.**

In 1 Samuel 14 Jonathan wiped out a whole Philistine garrison by himself. He killed the first 20 men, and the rest panicked and ran away. And 1 Samuel 14:15 says it was a panic sent by the Lord. Do you notice a theme in all those accounts? In each case, the man did the fighting, and the Lord gave the victory. William Carey put it well. He said, "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." That is what each one of those men did, and God did great things through them.

## Review

Last week we found that Scripture calls for strenuous effort in the Christian life. The argument of Philippians 2:12-13 is not, “God is at work in you, therefore stop trying, stop working, and just yield.” The argument is, “God is at work in you, therefore work your salvation with fear and trembling.” The fact that God is the author of our salvation, our sanctification, and all of our spiritual growth does not imply that we should be passive, rather it implies that we should be active, and that we should take that activity very seriously – with fear and trembling. We made it that far in the sermon, and then ran out of time. So last week’s was a heavy sermon. I imagine some of you left last week feeling pretty overwhelmed. Or maybe guilty, or discouraged, or burdened. You have been working as hard as you can, and not getting very good results, and then you hear a sermon about how the solution is to work even harder, and it just doesn’t seem like that matches up with what Jesus said in Matthew 11 when he said “Come to me and I will give you rest, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” What do you do when the responsibility of the Christian life just feels overwhelming?

## Your Work, His Power

One simple answer to that question is to remember this little phrase: *your work; his power*. If you feel overwhelmed, it may be because you have an attitude that says, “My work, my power.” Imagine preparations being made to put in a subdivision, but there’s a big, 500-foot-high mountain right in the middle of where they want to develop, and you are given the assignment of removing this mountain.



That’s a good illustration of what we are called to do in the Christian life. When I stand up and tell you to obey God, to humble yourself before others, to let go of pride and selfishness, to love your neighbor as yourself, to love God with all your being – I might as well be telling you to move a mountain. And some Christians say, “Ok,” and they grab a shovel and wheelbarrow and start digging. Imagine you do that on the job site, and your supervisor sees you doing that, and says, “What are you doing? You could do that for the rest of your life and not even make a dent in that mountain. We have equipment that actually has the power to move that mountain.” And he shows you the giant earthmoving machines. And he explains

to you “That’s the kind of get this job done.” And so now. I can’t do this with my that do it.” And so you get a feet, and you just keep power of those machines. another visit from the conversation, you get the he’s not really on board with



He tells you in no uncertain terms to get up off that chair and get into that earthmover and get to work. So you go over to the earthmover and you start climbing the ladder to get up inside that thing. And you get about a third of the way up the ladder, and you are huffing and puffing, and all this climbing is getting so monotonous and burdensome, and so you stop, and you look over at the mountain, and it seems like it’s just as big as it ever was. And so you get discouraged and climb back down. You keep doing that every day. Some days you actually make it all the way up to the driver’s seat, but you find that putting that thing into gear is really hard, and you give up. One time you get it in gear, but you find the steering is really complicated and requires some training, and so you get discouraged and give up. And you keep checking the mountain, and it just doesn’t seem to be getting any smaller – even with all this work you’re doing.

power you’re going to need to you say, “Oh, I understand own effort. It’s the machines lawn chair, and kick up your thinking to yourself about the After a little while you get supervisor. And after a brief very distinct impression that the whole lawn chair approach.



That little story illustrates a few different ways that we can fail in the Christian life. We can fail by trying to do it in our own strength, with our own wisdom and our own ideas instead of following what Scripture says. We use the principles of psychology and our own intuition and conventional wisdom, but we never tap in to divine power. That's the shovel guy.

Or, we can fail by becoming quietists, and just waiting around for God to act. That's the lawn chair guy.

Or we can strive to activate the massive, divine power that is available to us, but when we find it difficult, we get discouraged and give up.

What *should* happen in that little story? The guy should get whatever training he needs to learn how to drive that thing, he should build up whatever strength he needs to climb up the ladder and shift it into gear, and he should gain whatever skill he needs to properly utilize the power of that machine. And then he needs to work hard. Get up out of bed every day, show up to work on time, run that machine all day long, then go home and get some rest and do it again the next day. And if he faithfully does that, a month from now that mountain will be gone.

That is how you have success in the Christian life – your work; his power. David's mighty men accomplished great things – how? They did the fighting, and God gave the victory. Did they let go and let God? Did they stop trying and stop striving? The minute they stopped striving some Philistine would take off their head. Shammah tried so hard his hand cramped up around his sword. You can bet those men walked away from that battle field with some significant wounds. I'm thinking they woke up the next day with some very sore muscles. No doubt they had some interesting scars. They fought, God gave the victory.

What is the quick, easy secret to living the Christian life? The quick, easy secret is that there is no quick, easy secret. Do you want to overcome the sins of the flesh in your life? Galatians 5:16 says **Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.** That's pretty straightforward. But does that mean it's easy? No, it's like saying, "Use the earthmover, and you will be able to move the mountain." Walking by the Spirit is like operating the earthmover. It requires some instruction. It requires training.

### **1 Timothy 4:7 Train yourself to be godly.**

If you want to learn how to operate that machine, open the glove box and you'll find that the user manual is made up of 27 books, just in the New Testament, explaining how to activate this power. There is plenty of power available, but don't climb halfway up the ladder and then get discouraged and give up because the mountain's not gone yet.

If there's a little five-year-old boy who points to a professional football player and says, "What's the quick, easy secret to go from the body I have right now to having a body like that?" what would you tell him? You would say, "It's going to take years of time, thousands of meals, lots of exercise, sleep, getting the right nutrition, going to the doctor when you're sick or injured, and a host of other things." If you do a couple push-ups and drink a protein shake and then look in the mirror and see that you still have pretty much the same body you had to begin with, don't get discouraged and quit.

Keep learning more and more about how to draw near to God. Keep studying Scripture in finding out what it is God is doing, and how you can cooperate with that. Work as hard as you can at doing that, and get your encouragement from the fact that the more you learn about how to cooperate with the work of God in your heart, the more the power of that giant earthmover will be at work in you.

When Moses and the Israelites were fleeing from Egypt, they got hemmed in at the Red Sea, and they were trapped. Here comes Pharaoh's army. So in Ex 14:13 Moses says "**Do not be afraid. ... 14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.**" Stand still and watch God deliver you. That's close, Moses, but not quite right. Look what God says in the very next verse.

### **15 Then the LORD said to Moses, " ... Tell the Israelites to move on."**

So they start moving, and God parts the Red Sea and they are delivered. You see, it's not "Stand still and watch God work," it's "move on and watch God work."

## God Gets the Glory

That is how you can work hard, and yet God still gets the glory. When that mountain gets moved, what do you think the people in the nearby neighborhood will say? Do you think their first reaction would be, “Wow, the driver of that machine must be one incredibly powerful individual?” No, I doubt most people would even have a thought about the driver. Even though it’s a lot of work for him, most people would see that and just be amazed at the size and power of that machine.

## Grace

I’m making a point to really dig into this, because there is so much confusion about this in the church, and that confusion causes a lot of damage. Inevitably, the anti-work, anti-effort, anti-law people will use the word “grace” to describe their view.

“I don’t believe in all that striving and labor and effort to obey – I believe in free grace.”

They seem to think grace is God backing off of his requirements. Grace is God saying, “You know what – I’m feeling generous. I’m giving you 40% on all the commandments. You can take it easy.” That’s not grace. Grace is power. Grace is not God coming up to you on the job site at noon and saying, “Take the rest of the day off.” It is more like God coming to you at noon and giving you a protein bar and an energy drink and a raise and an inspiring, motivating talk that makes you so that you can hardly wait to get back to work.

**1 Corinthians 15:10 ... his grace to me was not without effect.**

What was the effect?

**1 Corinthians 15:10 ... his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder...**

The effect of grace is not passivity, but activity.

**Hebrews 13:9 ... It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace**

Grace is God giving you strength.

**2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

**Ephesians 3:7 I became a servant ... by the gift of God’s grace**

His power, my work.

## When You Get Discouraged...

So where are you in your Christian life? Are you sweating it out with the shovel and wheelbarrow? And you are to the point of exhaustion, and the mountain hasn’t budged. If that’s you – ditch the shovel and get into the earthmover. Focus on that second part – your work, GOD’S power.

Or maybe you’re trying the whole “Let go and let God, stop trying and let God do it” approach, but – that mountain is still towering over you. You need the other part of that principle. Yes, it’s God’s power, but it’s YOUR work. Get off the lawn chair.

But what if you understand both sides, and you’re trying to do it right? You are trying to draw near to God. You are trying to learn what the Bible says about how to tap in to God’s power. You are trying to walk by the Spirit. But you keep getting discouraged. It just seems too hard. Then what do you do?

I wanted to spend one more week on this passage, because I think there are some things here that can really help with that. Whenever I preach a passage of Scripture that has a lot of imperatives, a lot of commands, heavy on duty – inevitably I’ll get pushback from people. And when I ask, “Are you saying the commands aren’t there in the passage?” they say, “No, I can see that they are there. But it just feels like too much.” Why do people have that kind of response? Is it just laziness? I don’t think so. In most

cases, I don't think that's the issue. In my experience, the biggest reason why people resist what the Bible says about our responsibility to labor and strive and work is guilt feelings. Christians are people who long to feel loved by God. We long to be accepted by him, and for him to be pleased with us. And when we read about God requiring high standards of effort, and we see all our failures, we conclude, "God must be mostly unhappy with me.

"How could God have anything other than anger towards me given how often I fall short of the standard?"

And they can't stand the thought that God is always upset with them, so the only way they can get around that is by imagining that God's grace means a lowering of the standard.

How should we think about God's attitude towards us in the face of our failures? God wants us to abstain from sin. And what do we do? We commit sins every day. He wants us to obey him, and we disobey him every day. He wants us to walk in wisdom, and we do foolish things. He wants us to persevere and we give up, he wants us to be selfless and we are selfish, he wants us to be thankful and we complain, he wants us to be diligent and we are lazy - so much failure. So where does that leave us in our relationship with him? What is God's attitude towards us? Let me show you four observations about that from verses 12-13. First, let's think for a minute about the implications of verse 13.

## **1) God is On Your Side**

### **13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good pleasure.**

The biggest mountain you will ever have to move is your will. What do you do when you don't want to read your Bible? Or you don't want to pray, or go to church, or obey something God has commanded? You can try to force yourself to do it, but how do you change your desires? How do you go from being unwilling to willing? That's a huge mountain. Try to chip away at that with your little shovel and you'll get absolutely nowhere.

But did you know God is willing to do the heavy lifting in that area? He commands things, then he helps you with your own willingness and desire to obey! Have you ever heard of any other god and any other religion being willing to work inside the hearts of the people to will and to act? The false gods of the pagans have all kinds of requirements for the people, but what other religion do you ever read about the gods ever lifting a finger to bring about in the hearts of the people the things that they require? Like in 2 Chronicles 30 where God commands some things, and then stirs up their hearts to do what he commanded (v.12).

In human religions, it always works the same way. If you sin against God, you have to do something to make up for it. And reforming your heart is 100% on you. But in the Bible, it's different. When David was repenting of his sin of adultery and murder, what did he do about his evil, impure heart? How was David going to get a pure heart? He asked God to create one.

### **Psalm 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God**

"God, you said 'Let there be light' and there was light. So now say, 'Let there be a pure heart in my servant David' and there will be. And then make sure it stays that way, God."

### **10 ... renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 ... grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.**

Give me a pure heart, then keep me on the track of purity, and sustain my willingness to obey. In other words, work in me to will and to act. Oh, and I also want to praise you God, but my lips aren't into it, so...

### **15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.**

Isn't it amazing that you can ask God to do things like that? And he doesn't say, "Sorry, your will and your decisions making - all that is totally in your court. That's out of my realm." No, he works in us to will and to act.

## Which Comes First?

“But which comes first – my working or God’s empowering?”

That’s where the mystery comes in. Many times the Bible puts your responsibility first, and the reason God isn’t acting is because you aren’t acting.

**Ezekiel 18:31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD.**

God asks them, “Why will you die? Why would you choose that? I don’t take any pleasure in that.”

But there are other times, many times, when Scripture informs us that if you do confess or believe, it’s because God has already done a work in your heart to bring that about.

**13 ...It is God who works in you to will and to act.**

**Hebrews 13:21 ...may he work in us what is pleasing to him**

That’s why I told you last week that it’s a paradox.<sup>1</sup> Even our repentance comes from God (2 Tim.2:25, Acts 5:31). And so does our faith. We saw that back in chapter 1 – **It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ ... to believe on him** (v.29).

**Acts 13:48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad ... and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.**

**John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me**

**65 ... no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.**

So there is no simple, easy system for understanding how God’s work in our hearts and our work and our own hearts fit together. It is a mystery and a paradox, but both sides of that paradox are crucially important, because if you downplay one or the other, you either make God the author of our sin or you make us the author of our salvation –both of which are heresy.

But the point that I want to emphasize this morning is the divine sovereignty side of that paradox. God is working inside you to bring about the things he desires. And what does that tell you about God? It tells you that God is on your side. When you think of all the times when you have sinned or disobeyed God or stumbled or rebelled, and you get the sense that because of all that, God is against you, that’s wrong. God is for you. He is on your side. Don’t think of God as a police officer, whose job is to enforce the law, or bring justice to lawbreakers. A better analogy is the one in John 15, where God is like a gardener and you are the plant. What is the attitude of a gardener toward his plants? He’s the one who planted them. He knew there would be weeds and that they would need water, and tending to them would be a bunch of work, and yet he planted them anyway because he wanted them. You are like a plant in God’s garden. You were his idea. He planted you for his pleasure, he delights in you, and the reason he wants to get rid of all the weeds is not because he’s against you, but because he wants you to be what he created you to be. When weeds come up in the garden, God does take hard action against those weeds, but he doesn’t have animosity toward the flower. All the efforts of the gardener are for the sake of the flower. *God does not regret planting you in his garden.*

And I realize the analogy breaks down, because flowers can’t intentionally rebel. But even when we do that, we remain his beloved children. If you catch me at the moment in the past when I was most upset

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<sup>1</sup> The Calvinists and the Arminians both tend to oversimplify. The Calvinists want to make it real simple and say, “First God works in your heart, then you act that out.” Plain and simple, easy to understand - no mystery at all. They want to always say it that way so they can maintain the sovereign control of God, which is a great motive. The problem is, it doesn’t explain sin. If everything we do is coming from God’s work in us, where does sin come from? It doesn’t explain sin, and it also doesn’t fit with many passages of Scripture that actually do put our action first, and God’s action as a response. Like the way God spoke to Cain.

with my children, even at that moment I loved them more than I loved any other children in the entire world. And God's love is a whole lot more stable and more intense than mine.

So that's the first observation – God is on your side. He is for you, not against you. The other two observations come from verse 12.

## 2) God Calls You “Friend”

### 12 Therefore, my dear friends...

That is Paul expressing his affection for the Philippians, which he does many times in this book. And it is important to understand that Paul is writing as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. An apostle is someone who has been sent with a message. When Paul writes these letters, he is speaking for the Lord himself. And his affections in these letters reflect how the Lord himself feels. The reason Jesus' apostle feels this way is because Jesus feels this way. So the warmth of those words, **therefore my dear friends...**, you can take that as coming from the heart of God himself toward you. The word translated friends is *agapetos* – beloved. And that is the same word God uses to describe all the saints – all the people who are his children through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Romans 1:7 To all in Rome who are God's beloved and called to be saints...

Ephesians 5:1 refers to us as God's beloved children. We are God's friends, and his chosen and dearly loved children.

### Psalm 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him

## 3) God Counts a Life of Repentance as a Life of Obedience

So God is on your side, God's heart toward you is that he thinks of you as a dear friend and a beloved child, and then the third observation is in the next phrase:

### 12 ... as you have always obeyed...

Ever since this church first came into existence, they have been obeying. That's God's classification of them in heaven. If you looked on their profile in heaven, and you saw the two check boxes by their name:

- Obeyers
- Disobeyers

The “obeyers” check box would be checked.

“But what about their disobedience? What about the fact that this church was having problems with disunity and pride and selfishness? What about all the times when they disobeyed God?”

If you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you repent when you disobey, then your disobedience is forgiven, and the only things that register on your profile in heaven are your acts of obedience. So if you have been striving to live in obedience in every area, and when you disobey, you repent, and you've been doing that for the last 10 years, then the way God looks at it, you have established a 10-year track record of obedience. You are an obeyer. So Paul would say the same thing to you that he said to them – “Just as you have always obeyed, these past 10 years, keep it up.”

God is not a hard master. Psalm 103 says he's like a father understanding the weakness of his children. A loving father doesn't expect his two-year-old to be at the level of a 10-year-old. You are his chosen, beloved child. And Jesus calls you a brother, and the Father calls you a friend. He accepts a life of faith and repentance as if it were a life of obedience. And he is on your side. He planted you in his garden, on purpose, knowing every sin you would ever commit, and he is investing work into nurturing you. Yes, he does command you to get some mountains moved. But if you do away with the shovel and wheelbarrow, and you make your way up the ladder and get the thing into gear, and you go through the

training God has provided in his Word and through the church, it will require work, but it will be work that taps into divine, mountain-moving power. When you hear sermons about your duty and responsibility and all kinds of commands that God has given that seem out of reach, the way to fight discouragement is to realize – those things are the mountain. If you are not strong enough to move a mountain, that’s ok. Just focus on climbing the ladder. And God does promise to enable you to do that.

#### **4) God Sees Your Secret Righteousness**

And another thing about God – he sees your secret righteousness.

**Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence...**

God has his spokesman, Paul, praise them for the fact that they obeyed even when Paul wasn’t there. Character is revealed in how you do when you are on your own. Our behavior is determined by external pressure or internal principle. If you do what is right only because of external pressure, you will do wrong when there isn’t enough external pressure. This happens all the time. Someone agrees to have some accountability, and they do great as long as the accountability partner stays on their case. But as soon as that ends, the behavior goes right back to what it was.

But the Philippians were governed by internal principle. Paul left, and they obeyed even more. That is real character. And even though they are struggling in the area of unity and humility, God is pleased with the fact that they are still obeying him even without Paul being there. God keeps track of your secret righteousness. Those moments when you resist a temptation, and no one knows about it. No one sees. God sees, and he takes note. God isn’t just watching for things you do wrong. He is also watching for every single thing you ever do right. You will be rewarded on Judgment Day for millions of things you did that you have completely forgotten about. But God won’t forget.

#### **Joyful Fear**

This is the attitude God has toward you.

“But what about that part about the fear and trembling?”

I know that’s an issue for some people, because your upbringing was such that when you think of fear and trembling in relationship with a father figure, you picture someone who is abusive or easily irritated and harsh, and you’re afraid to go near him. That is not the kind of fear this is talking about. This is a healthy kind of fear. Not a fear that God is going to do something bad, but the kind of fear that puts you on alert to the consequences of sin. It’s a healthy fear that puts you on guard so that you don’t stumble and lose your joy, so that you don’t offend the one you supremely love, so that you don’t violate your testimony to an unbelieving world, so that you don’t undermine your effectiveness in ministry. Picture a kid whose dad tells him, “Ok, you can borrow the car, but you need to be home by 9 o’clock sharp,” and the kid says, “Yeah, whatever. I’ll be home when I please.” This is the opposite of that. That is a kid who’s not taking his dad seriously at all. The right kind of relationship between a kid and his dad is that if his dad starts a sentence with, “You had better...,” then he has that kid’s undivided attention. His dad can just give him a look from across the room, and he will instantly stop messing around. But at the same time, he loves his dad and longs to be near him. The reason he fears his dad’s discipline, is because he treasures closeness with his dad. He is afraid to disobey his dad, but they are close enough to where he loves wrestling with his dad on the floor and wants to be around his dad is much as he can.

**Psalm 128:1 Blessed are all who fear the LORD**

Happy are the ones who fear. This is a kind of fear that brings happiness into your life.



## So Expect Great Things!

So, if God is for you, he is on your side, he calls you friend, he thinks of you as an obeyer, he is pleased by every last one of your good deeds – if he has that attitude toward you, and he is at work in you, you can do great things.

Josheb-Basshebeth defeated 800 Philistines with a spear. How do you kill 800 men with a spear? The only way I can think of is to kill one at a time for a really long time. They kept coming, and by God's power, he kept striking them down. Think of the enemies you face that come in the form of temptations. Do you think the world, the flesh and the devil are going to let up on you this week? No, temptations will come like the waves of the sea – one after another. Expect great things from God. Say, "God, I'm going to take hold of the sword of the Spirit, and I'm asking that by this time next week I'll see 800 temptations lying dead on the ground at my feet. I'll fight, you bring victory. My work, your power."

"God, right now I have no desire to get up in the morning and read your Word and pray. That's the Philistine army I'm facing right now – lack of desire. But tomorrow morning I'm going to expect great things from you in that area, and so I'm going to attempt great things for you in that area. If you can enable one man to defeat a whole army, you could work in me to spark a desire for your Word."

In chapter 4 Paul makes that famous statement, **I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength**. That verse is not talking about dunking a basketball or acing a test or making a big sale or anything like that. What it is talking about is the strength to do the things God commands. Every single thing God has commanded (like contentment, humility, love, purity, selflessness, delight in his Word – whatever he has commanded) you can do it through Christ who strengthens you.

You cannot *automatically* do it. In the previous verse Paul says he *learned* contentment. He didn't automatically know how to be content. He didn't become content just by praying, "God, please give me contentment." It required some learning. But he eventually learned it, and the strength to do that came from Christ. Your work, his power.

You have been given salvation, now work it. Carry it out. There are some sins that cause a lot of obvious trouble in our lives, and so we fight against them vigorously. But there are others that we are just sort of waiting for them to go away on their own. What are the sins in your life that you haven't really been fighting very hard against? Selfishness, impatience, laziness, ingratitude, complaining, self-pity, unforgiveness? Let's take up the sword. Let's attempt great things for God and expect great things from God in those areas. Study what Scripture says about it, read some books on the subject, get some counseling, set up accountability, pray hard about it every day – work your salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God who is at work in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. He is on your side. He is nurturing you like a flower that he planted. He accepts your life of repentance as a life of obedience. He loves you. He likes you. He is patient with you. He calls you his friend and his child. And he supplies all the strength you will need to do what he has saved you to do.

**Benediction: Matthew 12:28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**

### Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Are you more prone to take up the shovel (do ministry in your own strength) or sit in the lawn chair (wait for God to act while neglecting your responsibility)? Why do you think you are bent in that direction?
- 2) Which encourages and motivates you the most: 1) That God is for you, like a gardener nurturing a flower, 2) That God likes you, and regards you as one of his beloved friends, 3) That God counts your life of repentance as a life of obedience, and takes note of every act of godliness?
- 3) Which is most difficult for you to believe? Why do you think that one is harder for you to believe?
- 4) What great thing do you think God would have you attempt?