

Let us see then that a healthy understanding of the grace of God in all of its **promise** and fullness is important and should be constantly emphasized in our Christian life. These **indicatives fuel and motivate** our **faith**. But equally important is the desire for God's people to be holy and **conform practically** to God's will and desire for our lives. These **imperatives express** our **faith** and put the glory of God on display in our lives so that we **bear the image**. This also then addresses the issue of the role of the Law for us. The Law is holy and good and rightly used when it is given to inform us of God's will and also of His character. It helps us to understand who He is and what His purposes are for us in the world. DeYoung comments on this as well; *Let's not be afraid to land on law—never as the means of meriting justification, but as the proper expression of having received it....The Lutheran Formula of Concord is absolutely right in when it says, "We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be urged with diligence, not only upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon true believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith" (Epitome 6.2). Preachers must preach the law without embarrassment. Parents must insist on obedience without shame. The law can, and should, be urged upon true believers—not to condemn, but to correct and promote Christlikeness. Both the indicatives of Scripture and the imperatives are from God, for our good, and given in grace."*

It is NOT **legalism** for the church to preach obedience to explicit commandments from Scripture, when rightly applied. Rather it is the duty of pastors and teachers to bring imperatives consistent with the Word to bear upon our lives and our consciences. However it is **extremely important** that these **imperatives not be confused with the indicatives** of the **Gospel**. Imperatives are now the proper expression of worship and godliness as a **RESULT of our justification, and never a MEANS to it**. We are not saved by the works of the Law, or even obedience to New Testament commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ alone. He is Himself our righteousness before God (Rom 3:28, Gal 2:15-16, 1 Cor 1:30). Therefore, the **indicatives** are where we rest by faith in the sovereign work of God through Christ and the Spirit for our righteousness and assurance of salvation. And the **imperatives** are the obedience which God fully expects of those of us He has called, saved and justified as an expression of the fact that we have indeed been saved and justified, and are now longing to **bear His image** and become like Him, pleasing Him in all our ways and in the thoughts and meditations of our hearts.

**Colossians 3:12** - 12 And so, **as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;** NASB

### **Believing the promises for future grace motivates**

Now here is where it is crucial to see how faith relates to sanctification and image bearing. As we hear about the beauty and glory of God's free grace to us in the indicative promises of the Gospel, our faith is bolstered and strengthened like a great bulwark against the world, the flesh and the devil. As we **believe or exercise faith**, that is **trust in and rely upon God** who gives us the promises, our **faith is motivated** to give expression so that the imperatives are fulfilled. This literally **involves us** in the **working and power of God**, as we are powerfully **changed by the Spirit** and bear the fruit of the Spirit in the midst of a wicked culture, shining as lights in the darkness of this world putting the glory of God on display.

**Philippians 2:12-16** - 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 that **you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of**

**God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life,** so that in the **day of Christ I may have cause to glory** because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. NASB

In Philippians 2:12-16 Paul is calling the Philippians to **continued obedience** of the imperatives of the Christian life, and so reminds them of the great promise that God is **“at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”** As a result, he calls them to obey, **“do all things without grumbling and disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.”** Notice he says, do the **imperatives** of not **“grumbling or complaining”** because **“God is at work in you”** and so you will glorify Him, as His own **“children,”** in the midst of the shameful and wicked world that you live in putting His glory on display as **“lights”** in the dark world. And this happens as we **“hold fast the word of life,”** that is, as we **believe** or **have faith** in the **“word of life,”** that is, the **Gospel**. Our **faith** is **fueled** and **motivated** by the promise that we are His children and He is at work in us, and this gives expression in our obedience of not grumbling and complaining and this temperance and serenity of **Christian character** puts God’s glory on display in our life like lights in the darkness of this world. This faith in the God of the promises has **involved us** in the very **working and power of God**, conforming us into **His image**, causing us to **participate** in the **divine nature** itself.

**2 Peter 1:4** - 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, **in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature.** having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. NASB

### **Faith expects God to intervene in the affairs of our daily life**

And so we should expect God to show up and intervene in the affairs of our daily life because He is in fact at work in us and through us to cause us to bear the image and put His glory on display, the thing He loves and seeks for above all other things, the manifestation of His own glory and excellence as God. This is God’s main purpose in our salvation, to cause us to bear the image and be powerfully sanctified and transformed, and therefore we should expect that this is what God will do in our lives. **We expect God to show up powerfully and change us!** Let us not see the difficulty of trials and tribulations as some strange thing happening to us (1 Pet 4:12), but the hands of the Potter molding us into the image of Christ. God by His loving Providence is **“conforming us into the image of His Son”** (Rom 8:29). Therefore we are to **find joy even in the difficulties of life** because we know that they are working the exceeding great privilege and blessing for us of sanctification, causing us to **bear the image**. What greater privilege can there be in this natural world that God would conform us into His supernatural image and cause us to become **“partakers in the divine nature”** (2 Pet 1:4) and so come to enjoy the highest and best of experiences, even becoming like God and Christ in our very own character, as children of God? And so we are exhorted in the Scripture to **“rejoice”** in this process knowing that **“God is at work in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure”** (Phil 2:13). We should count it **ALL JOY!**

**Romans 5:3-5** - 3 And not only this, but **we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;** 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. NASB

**James 1:2-4** - 2 **Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.** 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. NASB

**1 Peter 1:6-7** - 6 In **this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 that the proof of your faith,** being more precious than gold which is

perishable, even though tested by fire, may **be found to result in praise and glory and honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ; NASB

Everything that happens is working toward this good end of God conforming us into Christ's image. The trials and sorrows, the joys and happiness, the blessings and the discipline all work together for the good of true Christians.

**Romans 8:28-30** - 28 And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.** 29 For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. NASB

Thomas Watson comments; "*Observe the happy condition of every child of God. All things work for his good, the best and worst things. The most dark cloudy providences of God have some sunshine in them. What a blessed condition is a true believer in! When he dies, he goes to God: and while he lives, everything shall do him good. Affliction is for his good. What hurt does the fire to the gold? It only purifies it. What hurt does the fan to the corn? It only separates the chaff from it. God never uses His staff, but to beat out the dust. Affliction does that which the Word many times will not, it " opens the ear to discipline " (Job 36:10). When God lays men upon their backs, then they look up to heaven. God's smiting His people is like the musician's striking upon the violin, which makes it put forth a melodious sound. How much good comes to the saints by affliction! When they are pounded and broken, they send forth their sweetest smell. Affliction is a bitter root, but it bears sweet fruit. " It yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness " (Heb 12:11). Affliction is the highway to heaven; though it be flinty and thorny, yet it is the best way. Poverty shall starve our sins; sickness shall make grace more helpful (2 Cor 5:16). Reproach shall cause " the Spirit of God and of glory to rest upon us " (1 Pet 4:14). Death shall stop the bottle of tears, and open the gate of Paradise. A believer's dying day is his ascension day to glory. Hence it is, the saints have put their afflictions in the inventory of their riches (Heb 11:26).*" End quote. **WOW! Our afflictions are our riches?** Indeed they are! And we are to **count them joy** in the process of becoming like Christ! Normally, our trials not many, but when they do come, let us rejoice in the goodness of God to change us, and remember that if they were not necessary, they would not come. Consider that normally, our days are filled with the rich and abundant blessings of God and His hand is rich with blessing!

**1 Timothy 6:17-19** - 17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to **fix their hope** on the uncertainty of riches, **but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.** 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, **so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.** NASB

Indeed God shows up each day with abundant blessings of provision, and health and sunshine and family and friends and work and happiness and rich enjoyment of everything He created! Through these, as well as our trials and difficulties **He powerfully molds us into thankful, obedient, joyful, patient, and loving children of God.** When we pray, He hears and answers. When we share the Gospel, others get saved. When we make disciples and love and serve the church, the saints are edified and encouraged and built up in the most holy faith. When we worship through the preaching of the Word, the taking of the Table, the joyful singing of saints in assembly, and we read the Word and fellowship and encourage one another, **God powerfully shows up and changes us into his image** by the work of the Holy Spirit. Our **faith** in Christ has **involved us in the working a power of God**, who is fetching glory for Himself and putting it on display in the church to all of mankind, as well as the angels both holy fallen.

**Ephesians 3:8-12** - 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, **to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,** 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which