# Not I But Christ

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Date: 15 February 2026

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. There are some things in the Christian life that are clearly revealed in Scripture, but admittedly, a bit beyond our fullest comprehension. There are some doctrines that are clearly revealed in the Bible that we can know what is true, and yet the depth of what those truths are exceed our finite ability to fully and completely grasp because our God's way, our God's ways are higher than our ways, His thoughts higher than our thoughts. He is near us, and yet He is greater than us. And we've just come off of a couple of weeks of looking at an example of that in Philippians 2, verses 5 to 11, when it speaks of the nature of Christ. We can clearly see in Scripture, particularly in what we've studied the last two weeks, that Jesus is one person with two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. When the Bible speaks in Philippians 2 of

Christ emptying Himself, we've spent the last two weeks grasping to understand what's happening in the emptying of Jesus is He's emptying Himself by adding a human nature. And we can understand that, and we can see that. Jesus is one man, two natures, and yet the depth of that truth is still beyond our fullest comprehension. In the same way, when we speak of God, there is one God who exists in three persons. We've sung of that triune nature today even, that there is one God, one essence existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. And we understand that, and we can believe that, and yet the fullness of the doctrine of the Trinity is far beyond our mind's ability to completely and entirely grasp, because God is so much greater than us. That's why when people try to come up with illustrations for the Trinity, they very quickly fall apart.

My encouragement to you as you teach children in your home or in a water in Sunday school, when you're grasping for an illustration of the Trinity, just stick with the Scripture. Leave the egg and the yolk and the shamrock leaf and the water and the vapor, like leave all that aside, because none of those illustrations are going to hold up.

Just stick with what is biblically true, that there is one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. Another one of those doctrines that we can understand in Scripture and see it, and yet it is beyond our mind's ability to fully and completely grasp the richness of it, comes down to who wrote the Bible.

We're studying the book of Philippians, and if I said who wrote Philippians, you would rightly say, well, Paul wrote Philippians, and he did. But, if I were to ask you who wrote 2 Thessalonians, you would again be right to say Paul wrote it. Paul says that he is writing it. 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 17, I, Paul, I, Paul, write this with my own hand. So, who wrote Philippians? Who wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians?

[4:40] Paul did. And yet, 2 Timothy 3, verse 16 says, all Scripture is breathed out by God.

So, if I asked you who wrote Philippians, you'd be right to say Paul, but you'd only be partially right. Because the fullest answer is that Philippians is written by who? The Holy Spirit. Well, we can understand that, and yet it is beyond our mind's ability to fully grasp all of the richness and fullness of these things.

Jesus is one person with two natures. There is one God in three persons. Men wrote the Bible, but only as they were carried along by the Spirit, and God Himself is the true author of all of Scripture. We can make it even a bit deeper when we talk about things like salvation. How is somebody saved?

[5:57] Well, the Bible clearly says that Acts 17, we are to call all men to repent. Everyone is responsible to repent.

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Acts 17, verse 31 could not be more clear. We call all men to repent. And yet, Acts 13, verse 48 says, As many as were appointed to eternal life believed.
We can go to the Gospel of John. John 7, verse 37 says, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
But if you look at the page before, John 6, verse 37, Jesus says, All the Father have given to Me will come to Me. So, are men responsible to repent?
Or is salvation the work of God? And the answer is yes. All men are called to repent. And salvation is the work of God.
[7:07] We can see that in Scripture. And yet, page after page after page after page is written to try to explain and explore the depths of that rich truth in the Bible.

So, when we look at Scripture, we always want to be driven, not first by emotion, but by what is in the Bible.
And we want to make sure that what we believe isn't just what we have assumed, but that it is what is revealed in Scripture. And while we don't want to pretend to be ignorant of what the Bible has clearly revealed, neither do we want to pretend as though our finite minds can grasp everything about who God is, as if He is not greater than us.
So, there are doctrines we can see and doctrines we can affirm and doctrines we can understand and doctrines we can teach. Yet, these are truths that we will never, ever on this earth fully exhaust because of the greatness of our God.
Well, today we come to Philippians 12 and 13. And as you might expect from that introduction, there is yet another truth here that is one of those things we can see and understand.
[8:43] And yet, it can kind of keep you awake at night trying to figure out how are these things true at the same time. Philippians 2 verse 12 says, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Who is at work in your Christian life?
Well, verse 12 tells you to work it out. Verse 13, Because God is working in you.
Who wrote Philippians? Paul. Who wrote Philippians? The Holy Spirit. Who is responsible for your Christian life?
You are to work it out. How does that happen? The Lord is working within. So as we strive to not only understand what the verses are saying to us, but also strive to make sure that we are submitting all of our heart and our mind and our life to the authority of God's Word and honoring His Word in obedience to it, let's take some time, even though it's just two verses here.
[10:18] We're going to take a couple of weeks to look at this truth because I do believe it is really important, not only that we would understand these two verses, but it has so much to say about our salvation, our sanctification, and how we are to understand how the Lord works in the lives of His people.

Let's start with just this word. Write down the word obedience. Obedience. And underneath that heading of obedience, there's two things I want you to see of what biblical obedience is.
First, biblical obedience is to be consistent. We are to consistently be obedient. Verse 12, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now not only is in my presence, but much more in my absence.
Therefore, of course, takes us back to what we've just looked at in verses 5 to 11, and let's just keep the entirety of this context in our mind here. Chapter 2, verses 1 to 4, we are to be humble and live in unity.
Our example of that is Jesus in verses 5 to 8, how He humbled Himself by taking on a human nature, being obedient to death, even death on a cross.
[11:49] Because of what Christ did, verse 9, Therefore, God has highly exalted Him. So, let's get the entire rhythm here of this passage in our heart and mind.

Verses 1 to 4, we are to be united together as the body of Christ. We do that by living in humility. The example of that kind of humility is Jesus, who added a human nature, and in so doing, became our perfect representative on the cross, dying in our place.
Because of that, He is highly exalted, and is going to be receiving the affirmation that says, that every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

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Because of that truth, verse 12, therefore, we are to be obedient. So, here's how you put the whole context together.
We're to live in unity by being humble. We are humble by looking at the example of Jesus. And because of what Christ did, He will be crowned as King of Kings, Lord of Lords.
[13:07] Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess. Now, because that's true, therefore, we are to be obedient. Because He is the Lord of Lords, we are to be obedient.

Now, you need to notice in verse 12, it says, therefore, my beloved, so He's referring to believers here, as you have always obeyed.
Obedience is to be consistent. It's not something we just do on occasion. It's not something we turn on and turn off. We're to be obedient consistently.
You might just make a note that the word here, it says you've always obeyed. That Greek word obeyed, it's a compound word. It's the root that we eventually get our English word for acoustics. Meaning, to hear. That compound word would be used to describe the activity of opening a door.
[14:16] Somebody knocks on the door and you hear that and you respond to that. Just Friday, Marsh and I were at the house and we heard this noise and she said, what is that noise?

And I said, I don't know, I heard it, but I'm not sure what it was. Well, it was our doorbell. I've not heard our doorbell in like 10 years. When I was a kid, the doorbell rang all the time.
Today, the doorbell rings and you duck and think who is strangely coming to our house unannounced. Well, when we figured out it was the doorbell, that elicited a response.
I said, Marcy, go to the door and see who that is. That's the idea. This word for obeyed, it's to respond. That you hear and you respond.
You hear a knock on the door, you answer the door. That what you hear isn't just something that gets forgotten. It brings about a proper response.
[15:22] The language here means to place yourself under what's been heard. That's why we get our English word for acoustics. So we are to obey in response to what we've just heard.

Notice also here in verse 12, as you have always obeyed, our example that he's been using is Christ. Go back to chapter 2, verse 8. Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death.
So he speaks of Christ's obedience. Now in verse 12, he speaks of our obedience. Christ, as I keep saying over and over each week here, He's more than our example.
He's our Redeemer. He's our Savior. He's our burden bearer. But He's not less than our example. We are to seek to live as He lived. So there is to be obedience in the Christian life, and it's to be consistent.
as you have always obeyed. But it's not just to be consistent. Secondly, our obedience is to be genuine.
[16:40] He says, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence.

obedience. Our obedience is genuine. We are seeking to obey because our heart has been changed. We don't obey simply based on external factors and who's watching externally.
We obey because we belong to the Lord. And we want to do what He's called us to do. So when Paul says, you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but much more in my absence.
It's been about ten years since Paul has seen the church he's writing to. He founded the church. He saw them when he went through Macedonia.
The believers there were quick to respond and quick to obey. They were highly teachable. And their obedience has been not only consistent, it's been genuine because he says, when I was with you, you were obedient to the Lord and now I've been absent from you and yet I hear you're still being obedient to the Lord.
[17:55] That's genuine obedience. Not just when someone is watching, but genuine obedience because your heart desires to do what is right.

This is a very high compliment to pay. That they are faithful in doing what is right even when their apostolic authority is not there.
They would still do what is right because they understand that the Lord, their highest authority, is always with them. This speaks a lot to our personal holiness here.
For our elementary students and for our middle school students here at the front, you wouldn't cheat on your test if the teacher were standing right over you.

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But if the teacher were to leave the room, your standard of holiness should be unchanged. It's not that when the teacher turns her back, now you're free to cheat on your test or homework, but when your teacher turns back and can see you, now you don't cheat because you don't want to get caught.
[19:23] That's not obedience. You would do the right thing, he says here, whether someone is watching or not, that's true, genuine obedience.

Do you disobey your parents when they're not there? Or, can you be trusted to do what is right, not because of fear of punishment, but because it's what's right?
This is why, as we raise our children, of course, when they are young, there are very clear rules. There has to be. But this is why, as our children get older and older in our home, the teaching and training of our children is less about just our own house rules and more about loving and honoring Christ.
Because when your child moves out to their dorm room for college, they will face and experience things you've not been able to give them a specific rule for. But if their standard is, I will honor Christ no matter what, then your child should be well prepared for that situation.
For our college students, it's not just a matter of be smart enough to not get caught plagiarizing your research paper.
[21:08] It's to have a standard that says, I will honor the Lord with all of my work. being a good college student isn't being smart enough to cheat and not get caught.

Being a good college student is saying, I will honor the Lord in everything I do. And so, all of your bodies really may be cutting corners to do their work.
But you represent Christ. Christ. And that should impact the way you write a research paper or do your homework. Or for us as adults in what we do, would you do the right thing because it's right? Or do you just do the right thing when certain people are watching? This is an extremely high compliment to pay them.
You've always obeyed. And now, not only in my presence, but much more in my absence. He calls them to stay obedient.
[22:31] This kind of obedience is what honors Christ. This kind of obedience is what shows us that the pleasure of God, the glory of God, is our greatest and highest joy.

So we will do what is right, I pray, not just so we don't get caught or get in trouble, but because we long to hear the Word and then we respond in obedience.
So just like the Word I mentioned that comes from a moment ago, we hear the Word and we respond to it in the same way we hear Scripture and we respond to what it says.
we place ourselves under what has been heard. So as you read the Bible and you hear the Bible explained to you, we know that we are to honor the Lord.
And so whether the boss is watching, the teacher is watching, the policeman is watching, we will do what is right because our desire is to obey the Lord.
[23:57] There's a second word here and this is where it starts to get beautifully perplexing. Write down the word effort.

Effort. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only is in my presence but much more in my absence, here's our effort.
Work out your own salvation. Work out your own salvation. This word that we get in English to work out, it means to work and down.
Two parts of the word. To work and down. You're to take the work and work it down. Apply it. Unfold it. It means to take something to its completion.
This is a continual, habitual work. We who are in Christ are to take our salvation and work it out. Work it down.
[25:08] Take it to its fullest completion. So, the question is, if you are converted, if you love the Lord, if the Holy Spirit is within you, how should you react when you're tempted?

Well, you ought to take your salvation and work it out. Take your salvation and apply it. Live it. Unfold it, so to speak.
Work it down. That you don't say, it's Sunday, I need to honor Christ, but tomorrow I'm at school and there's a spelling test and I don't know the word, but the friend beside me is really smart and so it's not Sunday, it's not Wednesday, it's not a church day, so I can look at that paper in my third grade spelling test, it's okay to do that because it's not Sunday, it's not a church day.

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No, no, no. The Bible says something totally different. You are to take your salvation and work it out, apply it, live it, every day in every situation.
Work out your salvation. Now, notice the text here, work out your own salvation, not work for your own salvation.
[26:34] We're not working to be saved. We're not doing good work so that we will become saved. We are working out our salvation.

Don't get confused between working for and working out. Working for would be to try to achieve something. Working out is to apply what has already been given to you.
Now, we know this not only because of the teaching in numerous places in the Bible, but in this very specific passage itself, verse 12, therefore my beloved.
We're talking to believers. So, we're not talking to people who are trying to become converted. They are converted. They are in Christ. And because they are in Christ, he says, there is a certain way you are to live.
And we see this in the greater range of this New Testament book. Go back to chapter 1 at the very end. Verse 28.
[27:44] Don't be frightened by anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God.

Where'd your salvation come from? From God. Verse 29. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should believe.
So, why do you believe? Because it was granted to you. Why do you have salvation? Because it was from God. This isn't your work.
This isn't your achievement. This isn't your doing. Your salvation is from God. You believe today, verse 29, because it was granted to you to believe.
Now, because that's true, work out your own salvation. Romans 4, verse 5 says, To the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.
[28:57] You can't work to gain your salvation. That must be granted to you. Given to you. But as a believer who has been given salvation, now we are called to work out our salvation.

And this is perfectly logical in our doctrine, in the Scripture here, because as an unconverted person, the Holy Spirit does not reside within you.
It would be impossible for you to make yourself alive. The book of Ephesians says, in salvation, you've been made alive. And one of the things that happens when you're made alive is the Holy Spirit now dwells within you.
So, as a believer, you have a new nature. And because you've been given a new nature, and because the Holy Spirit now dwells within you, in 1 John 4, greater is He that is in you than is in the world, what would you expect from a believer?
You would expect that a believer would be tempted, and yet, now, with a new nature, with new passion, with new love, with the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us, we take that truth that's been given to us and we work it out.
[30:21] We live according to it. Work out your salvation, not work for, work out. Let me show you this, just one other place, just because it's close by.

Just turn back a page or two to Ephesians 2. Ephesians 2. We see this exact same understanding that we're saved not by our works, but that our salvation leads us to our works of obedience.
Ephesians 2, verse 8, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It's the gift of God, not a result of works.
So Ephesians 2, verse 8, it says it twice to make sure you don't miss it. You're saved by grace, not your own doing.
It's a gift, and he's going to repeat in verse 9 again, not a result of your works. So two times, in Ephesians 2 here, it makes it very clear, your salvation is not what you do.
[31:37] It's not your works. It's not your own doing. It's the gift of God. Verse 10, For those who are converted, are saved, we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for, say it with me, for what?

Good works. So in this passage, does the believer have good works? Yes. Are those good works how you're saved?
No. Because without faith, it's impossible to please God. But, if a person is converted, will their life give evidence that they've been changed?

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Absolutely. So, are good works how we are saved? Never. Are good works the result of what God has done in our life?
Absolutely. You see it crystal clear in Ephesians 2. You see it crystal clear back in Philippians 2. Our obedience is the result of what He has done.
[32:54] Now, if you are in Christ, work out your own salvation. Go over to chapter 3 in Philippians.

We see a very similar encouragement here. Verse 10 says, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.
Not that I have already obtained this or I'm already perfect, but I press on to make it my own.
He is saying, I'm giving maximum effort to follow Christ, to honor Christ, to love Christ. I'm working, I'm pressing not to be saved, but because He has been saved.
You say, can you show that to me in the text? Yes. The very next phrase. I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own.
[34:17] Why is Paul a believer? Because Christ made him His own. Because He has, does Paul just sit back and sleep in until noon and watch first century Netflix until 6?

No. He presses on. He gives maximum effort not to be saved, but to work out His salvation.
Your works will never be good enough to save you. But if you are truly in Christ, your life won't be able to help but give evidence that you've been changed.
Work out your salvation. The point in Philippians 3 I just read to you is that we are not passive. We are to press on.
We are to give effort in our obedience. But go back with me to the, just in your mind here, to the Gospel of John when Lazarus has died.
[35:40] And Jesus shows up and they're weeping and wailing because he's been dead for several days. And Jesus says, follow me and they go to the tomb.

How hard is Lazarus working to come to life? He's not because he's dead. And Jesus says, Lazarus come forth.
And by the work and the word of Christ, he's raised, he's alive. And then Jesus tells them, go take the grave clothes off because I made him alive.
You work in obedience to what I give you. Someone who doesn't know Christ, they can't work themselves to salvation.
They're dead. Dead men can't work in that way. But those who have been made alive are to respond in obedience and to do what he's given us to do.
[37:01] Paul says that he was made Christ own. Back to Philippians 3, he was made Christ own. That's past tense.

And so, because he was made his own, he presses on. Little English here. What tense is that? If I press on, what tense is that?
That's present. That's today. So that I may attain. What tense is that? That's future. Past, present, future.
Christ did the saving. Because of that, Paul strives to be obedient in anticipation of what awaits him in the future.
This is exactly how we are to live our Christian life. Not working to be saved, you can't do that. Our salvation is the work of Christ. But if you are in Christ, if you have been saved in the past, then today, live in obedience because of the glory that awaits in the future.
[38:10] scripture, and again, this is exactly what the Bible teaches. Let me just give you a few examples of this in scripture. Titus 3, when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us.

What tense is that? Children, help the old people out. That's past, right? He saved us. Was it because of works?
No. Verse 5, he saved us not because of works, but according to his own mercy. Our salvation, in that sense, is past tense.
He saved us. We have been justified. God granted us salvation. 1 Corinthians 1.18, for the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it's the power of God.
What tense is that? We're doing great. That's present. Both of you got it right. Past, he saved us. Present tense, we are being saved.

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[39:24] You guys are going to ace this question. Romans 13.11, besides this, you know the time that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep for salvation, is nearer to us, it's closer than when we first believed.

That ultimate salvation is near. It's not yet, it's near. What tense is that? You are great scholars. What's the point of all that?
If I were to ask you what tense is your salvation? salvation? Well, in one sense, it's past tense. You were saved. He made you alive. You were justified. But it's not just something that happened a long time ago. It's something that today is active.
You are being saved. You are being transformed. You are being sanctified. You are being made right with the Lord. It happened in the past, but it's active today. But your final salvation, that ultimate reality, when you die, are you in heaven?
[40:37] Are you in hell? Are you with the Lord? Are you under judgment? That final, ultimate salvation, it's near. It's nearer than when you first believed, but it's not yet.

You're going to be saved in that sense. Here's what I want you to feel. The salvation of God is behind you, and with you, and in front of you. It's all around you.
And so when you talk about the glory of God in salvation, it encompasses your past, your present, and your future. It's all of your existence.
Now, with that in mind, work out your salvation. Knowing He saved you, knowing He's with you, knowing He will deliver you when you die, now work out.
Apply, respond with obedience. No matter who's watching.
[41:44] Next week, we'll look at the end of verse 12 and verse 13. We do this, it says, with fear and trembling. In other words, your obedience obedience is an act of worship.

Not cheating on your homework is an act of worship. Not letting AI write your research paper while you put your name to something you did not do, that's an act of worship doing the right thing.
not taking what isn't yours, refraining from stealing because everybody else in the office does anyway and the boss isn't watching but your standards, not the other employees, your standard is Christ and when you choose to do what is right, it's an act of worship with fear and with trembling.
So the whole point today is that we are to be obedient and we are to give effort to work out our salvation even though verse 13 next week says it is God who works in you.
We'll look next week at how those two things fit together. But for the unbeliever today, for the child whose parents brought them to church, for the teenager who came with your friend, for the adult who chose to come to church, you're not even sure why, for the adult who came to church because you come every Sunday but in your heart you've never truly repented of your sin.
[43:26] Let me tell all of you as an unbeliever, you can't work for your salvation, can't happen. You can't be good enough to earn it.

What the Bible says we are to do is to simply receive his gift of grace. The gift of salvation isn't something you earn, it's a gift you simply receive.
So child or teenager or adult, if you don't know Christ is your personal savior, stop trying to work to earn something that you can't do.
But the Bible says for those who believe in Christ, for those who believe his word, who trust in his work, we will be saved.
God, today, today, with a repentant heart, ask the Lord Jesus Christ to save you, not because of all the good things you've done, but because by faith you trust in the finished work he has done.
[44:48] God, and for those who are believers, live out your faith to the fullest. Obey the Lord no matter who is watching, knowing God sees all things.

if Christians would practice what we've looked at today, if we would acknowledge that we've been saved by grace and now with a humble heart we would obey his word and work out what he has planted within us, the world around us should see and should know that no matter who is watching, we will be faithful.
So children, when you're at home and your parents aren't watching, that shouldn't impact how you live because your standard is to do what is right.
Teenagers, when you're home by yourself, and your parents don't see what you're doing, when your parents aren't monitoring what you're doing with your phone, it shouldn't change what you do because you're obeying even in the absence of authority because your highest obedience obedience is to Christ.

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Adults, when you go to work tomorrow, you don't work harder because the boss is walking down the hallway, but instead you're a trustworthy employee giving your best effort no matter what because your greatest desire is to honor Christ not get promoted or raised.
[47:03] So an authority's watching eyes really should have no influence on our lives because we are already living by a higher standard to work out what God has worked within us.

That's how the believer lives. Lord, we thank you for your word today and I pray that even in the complexities of what we have studied and seen together that it would be with a heart of faith and trust that we would seek to obey and to respond.
Help us Lord to love you and to trust you to honor you and obey you. We pray that in Christ's name. Amen.

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