

"Working Out Your Salvation"

Philippians 2:12-13

SERIES: PHILIPPIANS- BLUEPRINT FOR JOYFUL LIVING

Introduction:

What comes to your mind when you think of work?

I don't necessarily mean your job.

I want you to think about work in general.

Think of the concept of work.

Actually, work is a part of the curse from Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden.

Listen to Genesis 3:17-19

"To Adam He said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life."

v. 19 "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground..."

Work both attracts us and repels us.

There are times when work is a very good thing.

There are other times when work is a necessary evil.

Story:

Three boys were bragging about their fathers. The first boy said, "My dad can shoot an arrow and make it to the target before the arrow hits it."

The second boy said, "Well, my dad can shoot a deer with a gun 500 yards away and be there to catch the deer before it hits the ground."

The third boy said, "That's nothing. My dad works for the city. He can punch out at 4:30 in the afternoon and be home by 3:45."

Some of you will get that tomorrow.

Some people think of Christianity as just a personal belief system.

People are okay with this as long as our personal belief system doesn't effect how we relate to other people.

This is especially true in politics.

It is o.k. to be religious as long as you don't bring your religious values into your politics.

Of course, the problem is that this is impossible.

3

Our personal belief system ALWAYS affects what we do.

This is especially true of Christianity.

The Christian faith is meant to be intensely related.

It is meant to impact the way we live and how we affect others.

Our salvation is extended by a free act of God's grace.

We did not and cannot do anything to earn it.

But . . . once we are saved, the new life that Christ establishes in us should result in a new way of living.

We have said it so many times before.

The unchanged Christian is a contradiction in terms.

If a person is unchanged they are not a Christian.

If you are a Christian you are always in the process of changing to be like Jesus.

There will be times of rapid growth and there will be times of apparent standstill but over the course of the years real change will be evident, what am I

4

saying – you will continue to grow and mature spiritually.

In Philippians 2 Paul deals with both sides of this matter.

He gives us good theology in the first 11 verses and then begins to apply it in the verses that follow.

“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, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”
(Phil. 2:12-13)

1. Work out Your Salvation

The Apostle Paul tells the Philippians to ***“work out their salvation.”***

Now be careful as you read these words.

He is not telling us to work FOR our salvation.

It is so important that you hear these words.

We are surrounded by people who are working for their salvation. They're trying to be good enough to make it to heaven.

5

They are trying to earn enough points to get in.

They are like the student who is working hard to be accepted to a college, or to gain a scholarship.

They are like the salesman who is trying to meet a particular sales quota.

I would venture to say that a lot of people feel that they must produce BEFORE they can be "saved".

They spend their lives fretting over any mistakes.

Those who feel they "have a good shot at Heaven", desperately fear that they are going to do something wrong which is going to get them booted out of Heaven at the last minute.

But this is not what the Bible teaches.

The Bible tells us that we are forgiven and made new not because of the good we have done to counterbalance the bad . . . but because Christ paid for our sin on the cross.

Amen! Hallelujah!!

We don't work FOR salvation; but we are to work OUT our salvation.

In other words we are to work at godly living BECAUSE we are saved.

This seems like semantics . . . but it is not.

6

So what does Paul mean when he tells the Philippians to "***work out your salvation***"?

There are several things involved in working out our salvation.

1) We are to work at making sure that our hope is truly grounded in Christ and not on our own efforts.

2) We are to work at taking advantage of the ways that God has given us to help us grow.

We should read the Bible, pray, worship, serve, give, fast and so forth.

We should work to make a break with sin.

We are not to just sit back passively, but are to work at repentance and renewal.

We are to work at adopting and applying the positive behaviors that the Bible admonishes.

We are being asked to work out our salvation.

In other words, we are being asked to work out what God has already worked in us.

We're not talking about you being saved, Praise the Lord, you are already saved.

7

Listen to Ephesians 2:8-9 that says, ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”***

In other words, we can't save ourselves. We all understand this, don't we? All the works that we might try to do won't add up and never will be enough to gain our salvation.

You see our problem is sin. Because of sin we need the Savior Jesus.

So God has stepped in and sent Jesus to accomplish what we couldn't do on our own.

Jesus died on the Cross and paid the penalty for our sins.

“For God so loved the World (you and me) that whosoever (you and me) believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

So the work that God did was to make us new in Christ. I want you to be excited about this.

What we're talking about now is the work we need to do after the experience of salvation.

In other words we are to work at:

**love,
compassion,
kindness,**

8

**generosity,
faithfulness,
endurance
and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit.**

Let's look at what they are: Galatians 5:22ff
“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

NOW WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

We are to guard against the influence of the world.

In other words we will adjust our friendships, our amusements, and our use of time in order to combat the real presence of TEMPTATION in our lives.

Working Out our salvation means that we are to bring our salvation to an ongoing process of growing in Christ.

We are to live on the basis of what is true in our lives and hearts.

2. Secondly - Do this work with Focus and Determination.

“work out your salvation with fear and trembling”

We are told that we are to do this work of developing in our salvation with fear and trembling.

This means we should approach this work with **"a holy vigilance and circumspection. It means that as I work out my salvation, I should realize the tremendous seriousness of what I am doing."** [The Life of Joy and Peace, Lloyd-Jones p. 178]

God is at work in your life and my life to create the desire in us so that we will be motivated to follow Jesus. This is the Office and the Work of The Holy Spirit in our lives.

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:23

Now if you're honest with yourself and others, you'll admit that there are times when you would rather not follow Jesus.

There are times when we would rather go our own way.

As a matter of fact, most of would agree that people do what they want to do, even those who profess to be Christian believers.

You see we have the power to choose, so we do what we want to do and do not do what we don't want to do. Amen!

So we may as well be honest with God.

We can't hide anything from Him.

He knows your heart and He knows mine.

You may as well go ahead and confess to God, instead of saying, “Well, God I really wanted to obey you – you might as well say, “God, I disobeyed you and did what I wanted to do. Would you create in me a desire to do Your will?”

Paul reminds us that living out the Christian life is serious business.

We all like to have peace and fun in our spiritual pilgrimage with Christ . . . but that doesn't mean that it is always going to be easy.

As a matter of fact to all the newer believers let me just tell you that this walk with Christ can be pretty intense at times.

It is the most serious endeavor that we are about.

We are serious about developing our faith for several reasons:

First, we are serious because we are in a battle.

We know that we are fighting a formidable foe in the Devil.

How many of you have been in the battle lately?

We must be serious, because he is serious.

Peter tells us ***"Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*** (1 Pet 5:8).

Paul told us to ***"put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."*** (Eph. 6:10-11).

The Devil is taking this contest seriously and we had better take it seriously too.

You hear coaches all the time telling their team **"never take an opponent lightly"**.

That is especially true when the opponent is formidable and dangerous.

If you take a good opponent lightly you will be crushed.

We dare not take our opponent lightly.

Second, we should be serious because we know our own weakness.

We know the way we are.

We know that we are prone to be hot and cold spiritually.

One minute we are all excited about serving the Lord and the next we are indifferent.

We know that if we don't keep after ourselves we will drift away.

We know that we are constantly in danger of becoming lukewarm, or compromising the faith.

We work at our salvation because we know that if we don't we will soon begin to drift.

That's why Paul said in verse 13, ***"...for it is God who works in you TO WILL and TO ACT according to His Good Purpose."***

You know this is a good place for us to be reminded that Jesus promised the disciples that when He went away they would receive power to overcome their weakness.

They were to go to Jerusalem and wait until the Power came.

And the power would come when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

They would be filled with the Holy Spirit and because of this they would be filled with power.

Believer friend when the Holy Spirit fills us, we have the power of God residing within us.

Although the Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity, He seems to be neglected in so many churches and so many believers lives.

Perhaps this is because He has been overemphasized in other churches, with the result being that some people engage in some really far out behaviors claiming to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

But folks, listen to me, **we cannot allow the fact that some people have misunderstood the work of the Holy Spirit to keep us from appropriating and claiming the Power He provides.**

In fact, the Christian life really cannot be lived without the Power of the Holy Spirit.

Unless we learn to allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives, we will **never be very effective or successful in following Jesus Christ.**

We will be like a light that is unplugged.

I like how the New Living Translation puts it in II Cor 3:18b

“And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him and reflect His glory even more.”

Third, we should be serious in our desire to grow because we respect the Lord's discipline.

Children often do the right things at first because they know if they don't, there will be consequences to pay. Would you agree me?

The Bible is clear that because the Lord loves us, **He also disciplines us.**

He is committed to our growth.

He will move us toward growth one way or another.

And I don't know about you, but I have discovered that avoiding the Lord's discipline is always better.

Fourth, we should be serious about the work of discipleship because we know that God is serious about our relationship with Him.

He took it so seriously that He sent Christ to die on an old rugged cross for us so that this relationship might be possible.

When we treat discipleship lightly or we ignore it or we treat it as a joke we make light of the Savior's love.

Are you seeking regular discipleship for your spiritual life?

Are you spending time in valuable prayer?

Are you availing yourself to the opportunities that are provided by your local church?

Are you in the Word of God?

Are you taking time to evaluate your lifestyle in light of God's truth?

Paul addressed these things in Romans 12:1-2 when he said:

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind He will accept. When you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect His will really is. (NLT)

3. Third we should be serious because of the benefit to be gained.

I hate to admit it, but the reason to get serious about exercise is because of the benefit that is received from exercise.

Exercise allows you to have more energy, be more healthy, and be more productive.

People get serious about their sports because they want to achieve success.

People are serious in their jobs because they want to reach their goals.

We get serious about the things we believe will benefit us.

So what will benefit us more than a close relationship with the God?

Who does not want that ***"peace that passes all understanding"***?

Who does not want that sense of the Lord's strength?

Who does not want to reach family and friends with the good news of the gospel?

Listen to me - to receive the benefits you need to be diligent in working out your salvation.

So How Do We Do This? Do So Consistently.

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

Paul acknowledges how hard the people in the church in Phillippi have worked. . . at least while he was with them.

He encourages them to be faithful when he is there and when he is not.

Today we would say that we should live consistently for Christ whether others are watching or not.

Bill Hybels had a great title for one of his books, "**Who You are When No One is Looking**".

It is the reminder that who we are when no one is looking is who we really are.

We can all maintain a certain image when we are in church.

But the real test of faith is when we are outside of the church.

The goal of the Christian is to live consistently day in day out, hour by hour and minute by minute.

Will Rogers perhaps summed it up well, "**Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip.**"

Paul would urge contemporary Christians to be consistent in their faith

when they are in worship

when they are out with their friends

when they are alone on a business trip

when they are flipping through channels at night

when they are dating

when they are pursuing their amusements

when they do something wrong

when they are aggravated

when they are in a bookstore far away from home

when they are on the Internet late at night

Living the Christian life is a full-time pursuit.

Paul urges us to pursue a God-honoring life in every aspect of our life.

Remember That God Gets the Credit for "**He Works In You for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.**"

After telling us that we are to work hard at bringing our faith into everyday living it would be easy to despair.

When we consider our weakness and inconsistency we might feel that we can never succeed.

But Paul follows his challenge with these wonderful words: ***"it is God who works in you to act according to his good purpose."***

We are told that God is the one who will give us the desire and the determination to do what we should be doing.

There are some people who don't like this verse at all.

They would say that it sounds like God is violating our free will.

Dr. Boice really helps us understand this whole idea of a free will.

"You have free will to decide certain things, but you do not have free will to decide all things. You can decide whether you will go to work on Monday morning or pretend you are sick. You can order turkey over roast beef at a restaurant. But you cannot exercise your free will in anything that involves your physical, intellectual or spiritual capabilities. By your own free will you cannot decide that you are going to have a 50 percent higher I.Q. than you do or that you will have a gift of dealing with quantum mechanics. You do not have free will

to make a billion dollars. You do not have free will to run the 100-yard dash in eight seconds." [Philippians p. 144-145]

In the same way, we are not able to choose to follow Christ. It is against our nature.

When Adam and Eve sinned all their descendants lost their capacity to be holy.

And over time we lost our capacity to even truly love God.

Paul says there is ***"no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; no one who seeks God."*** (Romans 3 10,11)

The Bible seems to teach that even the faith we exercise is something that God has first planted in us.

He is working in us so that we will (desire) and do (practice) according to His good purpose.

Do you realize how important and valuable this is?

This means several important things

It means God understands our weakness and is committed to helping us

21

It means we are not left to simply work to muster more of our strength but we are invited to tap into His strength and power.

It means we don't have to worry about falling away in the end because God is working on our desires and appetites so that we won't want to drift away.

It means that the victories and accomplishments we have in the spiritual realm should be acknowledged as coming from the Lord . . . and we should give Him the glory.

Folks, our victories in our spiritual lives are dependent upon Him and our dependence upon Him.

One of my friends from school sent me a video that I wanted to share with you here at the end of my sermon.

A son asked his father, 'Dad, will you take part in a marathon with me?' The father who, despite having a heart condition, says 'Yes'.

They went on to complete a marathon together. Father and son went on to join other marathons, the father always saying 'Yes' to his son's request of going through the race together.

One day, the son asked his father, 'Dad, let's join the Ironman together.'

To which, his father said 'Yes'.

For those who don't know, the Ironman is the

22

toughest triathlon ever.

The race encompasses three endurance events: a 2.4 mile (3.86 kilometer) ocean swim followed by a 112 mile (180.2 kilometer) bike ride and ending with a 26.2 mile (42.195 kilometer) marathon along the coast of the Big Island of Hawaii.

Father and son went on to complete the race together.

[View this video of the duo.](#)

[This is an example of God's relationship with us.](#)

It means that we CAN live the Christian life.

CONCLUSIONS

Do you know that your Redeemer lives?

Friends, it won't always be easy.

There will be obstacles all along our Race.

But Jesus, our Lord and our Savior, will be there helping us, assisting us, lifting us up and bringing across the Finish Line.

Can you say, ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."***