

Lesson 3

Salvation A Present Experience

Phil. 2:12-18

Introduction:

We noticed in our last lesson that Salvation is a word that has three tenses—past, present and future. We discussed “Salvation, A Past Experience” showing what God does for the sinner when God saves him. Paul shows all three in one passage:

Rom 5:1-2 NASB

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

While grace is the underlying principle in human redemption, man's acceptance of God's offer is crucial. It is with this in mind that Peter on Pentecost urged **“Save yourselves from this wicked generation”** (Acts 2:40). In our text Paul points out that the Philippians had begun their Christian life in obedience just as Peter urged. Paul also summed up the first letter to the Corinthian church by instructing them:

1 Cor 15:58 NASB ***Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.***

Salvation is by “grace” but it is by **“grace through faith”** (Eph. 2:8ff). The expression, **“through faith,”** has to do with the essential human response to divine grace. So, while we are saved by grace, **salvation is not by grace alone.**

When Paul tells us in our text to **“work out”** our salvation this is the virtual equivalent of the **“faith that worketh by love”** (Gal. 5:6). We are saved by God's grace on the condition of our active, obedient faith. There is a parallel Scripture to this: **“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure”** (2 Pet. 1:10).

Paul is clearly showing that the Philippians were to work out **“their own salvation.”** That is they must carry their salvation to its conclusion, thoroughly digest it, and apply it to day-by-day living. They must strive to produce in their lives all the **fruits of the Spirit** (as enumerated in Gal. 5:22, 23).

The tense of the verb translated **“work out”** means continuous, sustained, strenuous effort. **Believers are not saved by one stroke.** Their salvation is a **process** (Acts 2:46, 47). It is a process in which they themselves, far from remaining passive or dormant, take a very active part. Every illustration of the Christian life shows that it is a pursuit, a pressing on, a contest, fight, and race (Rom. 14:19; I Cor. 9:24-27; I Tim. 6:12).

Putting forth such a constant and sustained effort is not easy. It is a battle on three fronts, a warfare against the tremendously strong and wily combination of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

1 Jhn 2:15-17 NASB ***Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not***

from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

Rom 8:5 NASB *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

1 Peter 5:8 NASB *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

This battle will mean making full use of every God-appointed means to defeat the evil and bring out the good within a child of God that was made possible when one rendered obedience to the gospel. In fact, so very difficult is the task that is here laid upon the Philippians, that, left to their **own resources** (Jer. 10:23), they could not fulfill the command given. That is why Paul said,

Phil 2:13 NASB *For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

To Paul, Christianity is a **divine-human encounter** in which deity indwells the Christian. God is at work in the individual. This divine working does not nullify the human will. It is contingent upon the Christian's continued surrender—his working out his salvation with conscientious caution and self-distrust, in order to trust in God (Prov. 3:5).

It is comforting that the apostle adds **"for His good pleasure."** God, as the infinite Source of spiritual and moral energy for believers, causes them to work out their own salvation. God does this without in any way destroying man's responsibility and self-activity. Please observe also that grace and salvation are the objects of God's delight and pleasure. (cf. Eph. 1:5, 7, 9)

I. What Is Involved In Working Out Our Salvation?

Once God saves us we are raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-5). This new life that Christ provides for us should result in a new way of living. The unchanged Christian is a contradiction in terms. If a person is unchanged he or she is not a Christian. If they are a Christian they are in the **process of changing**. There will be times of rapid growth and times of apparent standstill but over the course of the years **real change will be evident**.

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.

- We are to work at making sure that our hope is truly grounded in Christ and not on our own efforts. Col. 1:27
- 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, etc. Heb. 10:25; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Thess. 5:17
- 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. Jas. 4:7-10; 1 Jno. 1:8, 9

- We are to work at adopting and applying the positive behaviors that the Bible admonishes. In other words we are to work at producing love, compassion, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, endurance, etc..
- Gal. 5:22, 23; Phil. 4:8
- 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 sin in our lives. I Cor. 15:33 Eph. 5:15, 15

Working out our salvation means that we are to bring our salvation to a practical expression and conclusion. We are to live on the basis of what is true in our lives and heart according to the word of God. John 8:32; 17:17

II. Do So With Focus and Determination

“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling” Phil. 2:12

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]

We are to be serious about the developing of our faith for several reasons.

First, we are to be serious because we are in a battle. We know that we are fighting a formidable foe in the Devil. 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.

Second, we should be serious because we know our own weakness. We know that we are prone to be hot and cold (Rev. 3:15, 16). One minute we are 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.

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. The Bible is clear that because the Lord loves us, He also disciplines us (Heb. 12:3-13). He is committed to our growth therefore, He will move us toward growth one way or another.

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 so that our relationship with Him might be possible. When we treat discipleship as a joke we make light of the Savior's love (Jno. 3:16).

Finally we should be serious because of the benefit to be gained. Who does not want that **"peace that passes all understanding"**? (Phil. 4:7). 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? To receive the benefits you need to be diligent in the work.

III. Doing So Without Murmuring and Disputing v. 14

The apostle exhorts us in these verses to adorn our Christian profession by a suitable temper and behavior, in several instances.

First, by a cheerful obedience to the commands of God (v. [14](#)): *Do all things, do your duty in every branch of it, without murmurings.* Do it, and do not find fault with it. Mind your work, and do not quarrel with it. God's commands were given to be obeyed, not to be disputed. I Jno. 5:3

Second, do so by peace and love one to another. **"Do all things without disputing."** Wrangling, and debating one another should be replaced with love for each other, because the light of truth and the life of religion are often lost in the heat of disputation. I Jno. 4:20-21

Third, by a blameless conversation towards all men (v. [15](#)): **"That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke;"** We are not to be injurious to any in word or deed, and give no just occasion of offence. We should endeavor not only to be harmless, but to be blameless; not only do no hurt, but don't come under the just suspicion of it either. Let there be no brawls, strife, or contentions, which would be the opposite of the humble willing mind which the Christian should have and with which he should always work.

IV. So You Can Shine As Lights In The World (v. 15-16)

Christians are to function as **"lights"** in a dark and dead world. Christians are to be blameless and harmless in order to **"shine as lights"** or luminaries (cf. Matt. 5:13-16). The word Paul uses for "lights" could describe the heavenly bodies—sun, moon and stars—with their unexcelled brilliance and beauty. Such attractiveness is seen in those who possess the mind of Christ. They reflect the radiance of that One who said, **"I am the light of the world"** (John 8:12).

The idea could also refer to lighthouses along the sea coast. Just as lighthouses on a seacoast are placed on a dangerous coast to warn vessels of their peril, and to save them from shipwreck, so the light of Christian piety shines in a dark world, and in the dangers of the voyage which we are making to help others to be saved.

It is an honor, as well as a heavy duty and responsibility, to be obligated, as recipients of the grace of God, to hold forth the **"word of life"** (v. 15; cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-2). We are obligated not only to live it but to teach it so others may be saved.

Conclusion:

Phil 2:16 so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

Paul and other Christians of the first century looked forward with great joy toward the second coming of the Lord (2 Tim. 4:6-8). This was the motivation with which Paul urged Christians to let their light shine, working out their own salvation in the appointed way, so that we might meet “the Lord of lords” in peace at last.

Since Paul had converted these at Philippi thereby establishing the church, their faithfulness would not only be a blessing to themselves, but it would also promote joy and great happiness for him and bring rejoicing to him through eternity (III John 4).

We should ever give thanks to the Heavenly Father for His abundant grace. God has done His part well in preparing and presenting the plan of salvation through the death of His Son to establish salvation, and in sending the Holy Spirit to reveal in the New Testament the work done.

Now we must ask of ourselves whether we will accept the offered mercy and grace to work out our salvation or reject it.

Acts 10:34-35

And opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him. NASB