

The Letter of Paul to the Philippians Part 7

Working Out Our Salvation

Philippians 2:12-13

As we continue our look at Paul's letter to the Christians in Philippi, I bet the title of this sermon might have tripped some of you up. Working out our salvation.

You might say, I thought my salvation was already worked out. I thought Christ did it all, paid for it all on the cross. I didn't think there was anything more to do or that I could do to earn my salvation.

I believe in Ephesians 2:8-9 you might say. "For by grace that I have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves for it is a gift of God; not of works lest any person should boast."

If this is your thinking then you are exactly right! If you have accepted the work of Jesus on the cross then there is nothing more you need to do. So then what does this sermon title and the passage where it is found mean?

Look with me. **Philippians 2:12-13**, "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, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

What is Paul talking about when he says to work out your salvation with fear and trembling?

I think there are a couple of things we should consider as we attempt to figure out what the meaning of this statement is.

Think about this. When someone joins AA or NA what is one of the first steps to recovery? Identifying and admitting who they are right?

To come to that place where the person admits they are an alcoholic, a drug addict, a gambling addict, addicted to porn or any other destructive behaviors, admitting the truth about themselves is the place where healing can possibly begin right? The same is true about becoming a Christian. You must...

1. Identify what occurred in your heart when you were saved

If you remember my example from last week, once we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, His blood washes us internally where we are pure enough that God can pour His Spirit which is holy into us. We then become vessels of God's and Christ's Holy Spirit.

The second place we need to come to is a place where we truly believe, not just a surface belief in our minds, but to believe with all our heart, soul and body this occurred. This the beginning place for a Christian.

Now, I am not so sure that all Christians have come to this place of belief in the complete work of Christ in their life. I wonder if Satan has convinced them kind of like what happened with the ugly duckling. They were told over and over again that internally they were ugly, that God couldn't love them, forgive them and save them. Satan fed this lie to them so much and they did not battle these lies with the truth so they began to believe his lies.

This is one of the reasons I like to remind all of us of the truth of what occurred once we accepted the sacrifice of Christ in our lives.

I was reminded last week of the old hymn, Wonderful words of life. Sing them to over and over again to me, wonderful words of life. Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life.

In today's world we need to hear the wonderful words of Jesus's salvation over and over again don't we? We do because we so easily drift away from them. We can so easily get pulled along with the world.

Our second point we must come to...

2. We must come into full **agreement** of what occurred in our hearts

A tremendous book that I would recommend for all to read is

BOOK: "Who I am In Christ" by Neil T. Anderson. This book shares 36 truths about what occurred when you were saved by the blood of Jesus.

One of the passages that caught my eye was...

2 Corinthians 1:21-22, "Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." NIV

Again, I believe we need to hear these truths over and over again until they sink down deep into our souls, overcoming the lies of Satan, the lies of the world, the lies of friends and family and sometimes even the lies we tell ourselves.

Jesus said the truth of what He did for you will set you free. This book is full of these truths that if you focus on them, they will set you free.

After we get these first two things settled in our hearts, identifying the truth and coming into full agreement with the truth, then I think we can move on to the third point.

3. Work out your **salvation** with fear and trembling

Now, I wish we could all claim to be in this shape. Full of God's Holy Spirit in a vessel that was clear and transparent. A blessing to all who see us and comes into contact with us. But we know this is not the case, don't we? Not yet anyway.

This is where I think most of us find ourselves. Yes, you have the great work of Jesus in your life. Yes, you have the Holy Spirit in your heart. But the history of your life, your past, the culture you were born into and Satan's influence in your life have created a layer of stuff which makes it hard for the Holy Spirit to come out of the depths of your heart and impact you and the world around you.

What do we do about this? What is our part in this process.

Here is where we get into some of the things I mentioned last week. Here is how we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Look at how this teaching begins in verse 5 of chapter 2.

Philippians 2:5, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus..."

4. What was Jesus' attitude?

Verse 6, "...who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped

- a. Jesus was in a good place with God but was humble about it**

Verse 7, "...but He emptied Himself, taking on the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

- b. Jesus emptied Himself and allowed Himself to be shaped into another form**

Verse 8, “Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

c. Jesus died to Himself

Jesus was humble, He emptied Himself and He took on another form the form of a human, as He died to Himself. This is the attitude of Jesus that Paul says that we are to have.

What does this look like for us? Well, let me share this.

First, to have the attitude of Jesus is to be humble and by that I mean, to recognize that without God I cannot do anything.

I shared this verse a couple of weeks ago and it applies here. **John 15:5, “(Jesus said) I am the vine, you are the branches; they who abide in Me and I in them, they bear much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”**

5. It is only as we humbly recognize that all we have received, all that we are and all that we will ever be is due to what Christ brings into our life.

Humility is that childlike quality that, even though you are in good standing with God concerning your eternal salvation, you realize that there is more to your relationship with God and you want to find out what that more is.

Humility before God is where the work begins.

The second and third thing Jesus did was He died to Himself, emptied Himself out, and allowed Himself to be shaped into another form, a human form.

For us, it is the emptying out of our humanity. It is allowing ourselves to be emptied out of all the gunk that has accumulated in our life, the gunk that keeps God's Spirit from free flowing through us into the world around us.

How do we work out our salvation, helping the good stuff to come to the top?

Probably not like you think. Remember, apart from Jesus and God you can do nothing.

Look back at verse 13 of our passage. **“for it is God who is at work in you...”**

If you think about it being God in you that is working then it makes me think all we need in our lives to work the salvation out of us that is already in us is more God, more Jesus. Amen?

It's kind of like this.

If I want more of what the Holy Spirit of God has placed inside of me then what is it that I need to do to bring it to the top? Do I strive to be more patient, more loving, more forgiving? If you strive to grow in these things on your own you will have limited success.

On the other hand, if you hang out with the One who does have all these things then this is what will occur.

POUR IN OIL

The Spirit inside of you will begin to grow and the Spirit of God, not you, will press out all the gunk that is hindering your growth in Christ-likeness. This is not rocket science. It is in with the good, out with the bad. The more good you have coming in the less bad you have in your life.

For too long people have tried to deal with their problems themselves, their insecurities, their lack of patience, lack of love, anger, temptations and a number of other problems when all along all they had to do was rest in the One who is already in them and has already taken care of what ill you.

It is true, Jesus has paid it all. He has taken it all upon Himself and the more we rest in Him, be filled by Him, the less worry and troubles we will have.

As you read through the entire passage found in Philippians 2:5-11 you come to this place beginning in verse 9. Look with me.

Philippians “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that ever tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

This passage starts out for this reason. What reason did God highly exalt Jesus. Because He was humble, He emptied Himself out, He allowed Himself to be shaped into a human form and He died to Himself.

Guess what. When we follow Jesus’ lead a similar thing happens in our lives. We will not receive the name above all names and so forth but God will highly exalt us in special and unique ways.

As we come to Him in humility, as we fill ourselves with Him we are emptied out and we take on His glorious form. In essence, we die to self.

And here’s where it gets even better. Look with me at Jesus’ promise.

Matthew 13:12a, “For whoever has, to them more shall be given, and they will have an abundance...”

Do you know what this means for you and me? The more of God's love, patience, kindness and goodness I allow to flow into my heart the more I will be given. I am stewarding properly the presence of the Holy Spirit inside of me and God's says great. They have done well with what I have given them so I am going to give them even more, in fact, I'm going to give them an abundance.

By following Jesus example, by having this attitude like Jesus did, we have tapped into a well that is never ending and we become the person Jesus is talking about in the following verse.

John 7:38, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From their innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

We become the well of the Holy Spirit that out of will flow rivers of living water to all those around us.

No longer is the Holy Spirit trapped inside of us by the gunk we, the world and Satan has put on us. The Spirit inside of us has been set free and in the process we also have been set free.

This is the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ. What He did on the cross was not just for our salvation after this life is over, it is for us in the here and now.

You live among the blessed right now and you can be blessed even more.

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Come to Jesus in humility, be filled with Him as you are emptied out and take on His glorious form. This is God's wonderful plan for you and for me.

Amen?