

The Letter of Paul to the Philippians Part 9
Working Out Our Salvation part 3 – Philippians 2:12-13
Taking Every Thought Captive to the Obedience of Christ

As we come together this morning I wanted to share a story with you that I ran across from the Old Testament. I shared it with the Board last Tuesday but I see how it fits with where we find ourselves in this sermon series.

The story comes from 2 Chronicles and it relates how the king of Judah handled himself in a crisis. You can read about it in its entirety in 2 Chronicles 16. But for this morning let set up what was going on.

While David of David and Goliath fame, while he was king the nation of Israel found great favor with God. Their lands were expanded and all the nations around them feared them because they knew David was led by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They had seen firsthand how strong and victorious the God of Israel was so towards the end of David's life there was peace in the land.

There was also peace in the land for the first part of David's son, Solomon's reign. But if you are familiar with Solomon's journey you know that he got distracted by many things and did not end well.

Solomon's sons and his grandson didn't adhere to the leading of the God and the once mighty nation of Israel was divided into two different kingdoms.

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10 of the tribes of Israel stayed in the north to make up the northern kingdom and two of the tribes, Judah and Benjamin, made up the southern kingdom which was named Judah.

It wasn't long before this divided nation beginning to squabble amongst themselves and even began to fight each other. Former extended family members who were again, once the most powerful nation in the world when God led them, were now fighting and killing each other. Certainly there is a lesson here for us in this nation.

Keep following me for a moment, I'll get to my point. A man named Asa, the great grandson of Solomon was now king over Judah while a man named Baasha was king over Israel. Baasha was flexing his muscles and was facilitating a siege against Judah. He had set up a blockade and was not allowing anyone or anything to come in or to go out in the city where king Asa was. And Asa, King of Israel, instead of consulting the Lord, look what he did.

2 Chronicles 16:2-3, "Then Asa brought out silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the Lord and the king's house and sent them to the king of Aram...saying, 'Let there be a treaty between you and me...Behold, I have sent you silver and gold' go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so that he will withdraw from me."

In essence, what occurred was that Asa tried to buy his security and he used not only his money but he dove into the treasuries of the house of the Lord, paying off a neighboring country and their king, King Aram, to create a distraction so Israel and their king Baasham would withdraw their armies. But look at how God responded to this.

2 Chronicles 16:7-8, "7 At that time Hanani the seer (a prophet) came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim an immense army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have

acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars.”

God reminded Asa how He had protected him from stronger armies. Not just protected him but completely delivered them into his hands because Asa relied upon the Lord.

Not so in this current circumstance. God told Asa that he had acted foolishly by trying to buy his way out of trouble. Asa tried to broker a peace treaty by his own power. But what happens with peace treaties brokered by men? What is occurring the Middle East now? Has any of the many peace treaties held? No.

Look again at what God said. Its underlined in this passage. **“Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand.”**

God didn't want Asa or the nation of Judah to settle for a peace treaty. No, God wanted to give Asa a complete victory.

So many times I fear we are trying to broker our peace when we don't need to. And because we do, there is no victory therefore no peace and therefore we will continue to have only war in our circumstances and life.

Let me tie this back to our teaching in Philippians.

Last week we spoke of surrender and that the fact that our surrender begins with us asking God to work out the terms of our surrender then giving us the strength to walk it out. Look with me at our passage.

Philippians 2:12b-13, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”

1. Two things to remember:

- a. **We are to work out the salvation that has occurred in our hearts, meaning, we are to come into an understanding of what occurred through Jesus' work on the cross.**
- b. **We are to understand the fact that it is God who is the one works out your salvation in your heart and in your life.**

If you were not here last week you can listen to last week's sermon on our Facebook page and find it in print on our web-page.

Our surrender begins with asking God to work out the terms of surrender and then asking for Him to give us the strength to walk it out.

Let's move onto verse 14 then I'll tie some things together.

Philippians 4:14, "Do all things without grumbling or complaining."

And let us back up to verses 2-4.

Philippians 4:2-5, "... be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing out of selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another more important than yourselves, do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interest of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus..."

Having the attitude of Christ Jesus really is what the Christian life is all about isn't it? That is the work of God in you as He works out the terms of your salvation.

2. **We are to have the attitude of Christ in all things**

All throughout the Bible, New Testament and Old Testament we find lessons and teachings on this very thing, having the attitude of Christ.

In our Thursday night study we are using another phrase for the attitude of Christ and that is kingdom principles. As disciples of Christ we are to live here on earth with the same principles that govern the kingdom of heaven.

One of the great ways we can do this is by the following verses like the following.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5, ³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

This is an incredibly power packed verse.

Certainly we know we are walking in the world or in the flesh as it says in another version of the Bible. We realize we are walking in the world especially as it shows up in our weaknesses. When we get angry at the slightest thing our spouse or children do. When we get defensive when someone slights us. When we are tempted to cut corners in our honesty, when we put others down. When we are jealous, prideful, carried along by the pursuit of riches, pleasures and swept away in our anxieties. We don't need anyone to tell us how difficult it is to walk in the world, in the flesh.

But this verse tells us even though we live in the world we don't do war according to the way the world does.

How did Asa do war? He came up with a plan. He came up with a plan that did not include seeking God and it certainly did not include waiting for God to speak or act. He did war according to the flesh and he lost the victory.

Think about the weapons we are given by God for a moment.

God's weapons are:

- a. Not of this world**
- b. Divinely powerful (sent from heaven)**
- c. They have the ability to destroy strongholds set up by Satan and by those who are operating in the flesh or even in our own heart**
- d. They have the ability to destroy arguments**
- e. They have the ability destroy every crafty, man-made idea that sets itself up against God**

How do we tap into the powerful weapons that accomplish all these things? We are told in the last verse.

“...take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Every thought. Think about that. Every thought. Every time we begin to plan we stop and examine whether or not we have included God in our plan. Every time we get anxious we stop and we don't allow those anxious thoughts to become a stronghold. Every time we are challenged to compromise our honesty, our purity in thought or action, we stop and cry out to the Lord.

I don't believe we cry out for help. I think we have done that too much. It is not help we need, help to do it ourselves. It is the power of the Lord we need to do it for us.

For too long we have asked God to be our co-pilot.

3. God does not want to be your co-pilot. He wants to be your pilot, period!

It is His power that is not of this world. It is His power that is from heaven and has the power to destroy strongholds. It is His power that destroys arguments. It is His power that destroy every crafty man-made arguments that set themselves against God.

O how we need to tap into the power of God.

Working out the terms of our surrender with God means that we grab ahold of every thought and turn it over to God and then ask Him to put the correct thoughts in our mind and in our heart. It is the power of God that we are asking for, not to help us but for Him to do it in us.

I know this works because I have used this prayer when I feel anxious, upset or am experiencing temptation. I just pray over and over again, Lord, take captive my every thought and let it be obedient to Christ. When I do this it isn't long before that time of anxiety, frustration, anger or temptation passes. It is not some magic verse or some application of positive thinking, it is God at work in my life.

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Remember...

For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

I believe by praying for all our thoughts to come under the authority of Christ, this is one of the ways we can see God strongly work in our lives. This is one of the ways we can live in victory, victory over strongholds, arguments, victory over anxiety, anger and temptation and everything else that presents itself against God.

Let's give God every opportunity to bring us the victory, Amen?

Let's pray