

The Letter of Paul to the Philippians Part 8
Working Out Our Salvation part 2
Philippians 2:12-13

As we continue our look at Philippians let's review **Philippians 2:5-8**, **“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”**

Last week we identified these:

- 1. Truths from Philippians 2 about what Jesus availed Himself to:**
 - a. Jesus was in a good place with God but was humble about it**
 - b. Jesus emptied Himself and allowed Himself to be shaped into another form, the form of a man**
 - c. Jesus died to Himself**

Likewise:

- 2. If we are to have the attitude of Jesus in our lives then we are to:**
 - a. 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.**
 - b. Allow ourselves to be emptied to take on another form, the form of Christ**

c. **Die to ourselves**

Last week we touched upon what it meant to be emptied of ourselves. Really it is not an emptying of ourselves as much as a filling of ourselves with Jesus and His Spirit. As it says in **Philippians 2:13**, “...for it is God who is at work in you...”

God does all the work in us, we just avail ourselves to Him through His word, through prayer, through fellowship with other Christians and through obedience in the things God prompts us to do or not do. Now, for this process of becoming Christ-like, becoming the light of the world, it takes something that a lot of people hesitate doing and that is surrender.

No one likes to surrender do they? No one likes to admit that they cannot do it on their own. We are independent people who actually take pride in our independence. To think we have to surrender, raise the white flag is difficult isn't it?

Well,

1. **Surrendering is what it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling**

Michal and I are meeting with a person that is not quite ready to ask Jesus into their heart. What do you think is their biggest fear to doing so? She knows she needs help. She knows that her life has been a big struggle. She believes there is no one she can depend on, lean on or ask for help. What is her hesitation?

When I handed her a Bible and a book, this book on who I am in Christ, you could see a shadow come across her face and then she asked if the

books are going to cost her. I told her nope. They are not going to cost you a thing. It is something that we, the church wanted to provide for her.

You may not know this but church, you are putting Bibles in people's hands. Through the faithful giving of your tithes and offerings we are able to give people Bibles and other materials that will help them connect with God. Through your giving you are part of their salvation process.

This woman was not prepared to receive something for nothing. She had not experienced much generosity and grace in her life, at least not in a way that she could understand and appreciate it.

Her thinking about surrendering her life to Christ was the same and I wonder if it is the same for us as well. I wonder what this is going to cost me. If I surrender my life to Christ, if I totally and completely surrender my life to Christ, I wonder what it is going to cost me.

Let me tell you this morning if you totally surrender your life to Christ it is going to cost you nothing and it is going to cost you everything.

Let me explain but first a fable.

There was once a chicken and a pig walking along a road. The chicken perked up and said to the pig, we should open up a restaurant. Let's call it ham and eggs. The pig thought about it for a moment and then said, no, I don't think so. While you would contribute now and then and then get to go on with your life, I would have to totally commit myself.

As I thought about this last week, I wonder if this is where a lot of Christians find themselves and sometimes I find myself. Kind of like the chicken, they don't mind contributing every now and then but they are unsure of what it will cost if they surrender their life totally to Christ.

Look at what Jesus said about this.

Matthew 16:24-25, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, they must deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save their life will lose it; but whoever loses their life for My sake will find it.’”

Jesus is saying that to follow Him means we have to be like the pig, total commitment, total surrender. The tough thing for us is what does that mean.

What does it mean to deny oneself, take up your cross and follow Jesus. What does it mean to lose your life only to gain it?

Well, here is the main point of this sermon. In order to experience all that Jesus has for us, all that He died on the cross for, it is different for everyone.

2. Total surrender to Christ is a personal journey and can only be accessed through a relationship and prayer with Jesus.

While there are some basic things a person can do like spending time in the word, prayer, fellowship and worship, each person is unique and their surrender process is unique.

Let's be reminded of a couple of things.

We are to “**work out our salvation with fear and trembling**” and “**it is God who is at work in you.**” **Philippians 2:12b-13a**

If we are to work out our salvation and it is God who is doing the work then it only makes sense that we need to spend time with Jesus in prayer, asking for direction in getting it all worked out.

If we ask, God will enable us to live a surrendered life. So many times we try and clean ourselves up, raise the white flag of surrender but it is only God who will do this work in us and only if we ask.

I think most of you know what I am talking about. You have tried and failed, tried and failed and on and on it goes. Someone was telling me that they got going good and then they falter. Start up in their Christian life for a little bit then fall down, start up, fall down. Not the life God wants them to have. They are still trying to do the work of surrender in their own power and they are losing. You will always lose in the work of surrender because you are not strong enough to do this great work of God in your life.

If we ask, God will work it out in the secret places of our heart. By the power of the Holy Spirit He will take us to places of surrender that we never knew were possible.

If in your will you are not strong enough to give everything up, if you still fight the desire to do your thing, pray, pray, that God will make you willing. God is not going to rob you of some joy or pleasure you may think you have. He desires that we live life and live it more abundantly. God is offering more joy and peace than your mind can imagine.

If you are searching, hungering and longing for something more in this life, it is the tug of the Holy Spirit. It is Jesus in your heart through the Holy Spirit, desiring that you would live a surrendered life just as Jesus did.

3. Even if we doubt the completeness of our surrender, God hears our prayers, accepts them and His work in us begins

Our prayers may seem feeble but the Holy Ghost will take them and the work of God in our life will begin.

Believe it or not even Jesus experienced times of weakness. Look with me in Luke where we see Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane before the day He was crucified.

Luke 22:41-44, “And Jesus withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, “Father, if Thou are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will but Thine be done.” Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.”

In His physical form Jesus was in agony. He even asked that the cup, the cross, would be removed from Him. It took an angel from heaven to strengthen Him so that He was able to go ahead and do His Father’s will.

Jesus didn’t have all the answers of what His surrender would look like. He knew the cross was before Him but I don’t believe that He knew exactly what the journey to the cross would look like. He was crying out in prayer for the work of surrender to be accomplished no matter what that looked like for Him.

The same is true for us. Even though we may feel feeble and weak in our prayers, we need to have faith that God hears our prayers and that He is doing His work in us. Not only will He empower His Spirit inside of us but He will also send His ministering spirits, angels, to strengthen us.

Working out your salvation with fear and trembling is coming before God in prayer, with fear and trembling and working out the terms of your surrender.

The question is, are you willing? Are you willing to begin the process by praying for Him to work out your surrender.

This is where the great verse of Jeremiah 29:11 comes in to play. You know, you probably have it on a picture or a coffee mug.

Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope.”

We love this verse. We love this promise from God but its not really a promise if you think about it. It is more of a statement of who God is and His desired plans for you. But it is not an automatic blessing. You must read on.

Jeremiah 29:12-14a, “Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord.”

The plans and the future God has for us is revealed to us only as we call out to Him, asking Him to work out the terms of our surrender.

Let's pray