

Shining as Lights

Philippians 2:12-18

Introduction

This morning, we continue in our series on “Christian Living in a Secular Age.” Last week, we saw that we are to live as exiles in this world. This week, we are going to see how we are to go about living as exiles who impact the world around them.

Read Philippians 2:12-18

I. Work Hard to Grow in Your Salvation! (Vs. 12)

Very simply, this means that we need to recognize that salvation is not simply a past event. It is also a present reality and a future hope. Paul speaks of salvation in all of these ways, and we should too. Now there are certainly aspects of our salvation that happened in the past:

- **We were born again. (New Birth & Conversion)**
- **We were brought into the family of God. (Adoption)**
- **We were declared righteous before God. (Justification)**

Yet there are also aspects of our salvation that continue right now. For instance, we are currently as Christians being conformed or transformed into the image of the Son of God. In other words, by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, we are become “more like Jesus.” This present work in the life of the Christian is sometimes called “sanctification,” which means we are become more like Christ, taking on His moral identity.

We are practically and personally become more holy. This, too, is an aspect of our salvation. And it is this aspect (i.e. – becoming more like Jesus) that Paul has in mind when he tells us to “work out our own salvation.” This makes perfect sense in light of the context where we have just been told to have “the mind of Christ” in an early portion of Philippians 2.

So, for Paul, our salvation is not just about believing and obeying in the past but continuing to believe and obey in the present with an attitude of reverence and awe toward God.

II. Rely on God in Your Growth! (Vs. 13)

Having exhorted us to work hard to become more like Jesus, Paul grounds this command in the reality of God’s work in us. From beginning to end, salvation is the work of God. Even our sanctification. This is what we saw in **Philippians 1:6**, which says, “I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

So, when we hear the command to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” we must recognize that this work is also by grace. It is by the power of God working in us, though it is no way negates our own efforts in this work. Understandably, there is a tension here that we cannot fully explain, but nevertheless, must embrace. We are called upon by God to work while also being told that God is working in us!

In **1 Corinthians 15:9-10**, Paul states it like this: “For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10** But by God’s grace I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not ineffective. However, I worked more than any of them, yet not I, but God’s grace that was with me.”

III. Recognize that Growth as a Christian Matters to God and Impacts the World! (Vss. 14-18)

In these closing verse, Paul addresses a few particular aspects of growth that seem to have been an issue within the Philippian church. Essentially, he calls for them to be content. Stop the grumbling and arguing within the church. Be happy with whatever state of life you find yourself in, because God is at work in you to do His good pleasure.

But how does this impact the world? According to Paul, as Christians are “working out their salvation,” the dark world see the great light of God shining within them. They are like stars in a clear, dark night sky. They are unmistakably beautiful and attractive. They reflect the purity and perfection of their Savior by being more like Him!

But how is it that they live like this? What is the source? Paul says it in verse 16, “Hold firmly to the message of life.” Cling to the gospel. (Explain the gospel and call people to respond)

This result of the Philippian’s life meant that Paul’s life was not lived in vain. That the work that He did had eternal significance, because the Philippians were becoming more like Jesus and serving their purpose as lights of the gospel in a dark world

Conclusion - *Paul’s point is to exhort and encourage the Philippians and us to work hard in our growth as a Christian fully recognizing that any progress we make is dependent upon God. We must rely on God to enable us to will and to do that, which is pleasing to Him. Specifically, in the case of this passage, that which is pleasing to Him is a life of contentment and faith in the gospel!*

Application

- **Make Growth as a Christian Your Ambition** - Make Time to Read the Bible, Pray, Serve, Give, and Be with Other Christians **IN SMALL GROUP** (Think about the hardest you’ve ever worked at something in your life --- Now. Work harder than that at growing as a Christian.
- **Be Encouraged** – God is at Work in YOU! Personally and Powerfully at Work in Your Life! The only way you will ever be able to work as hard as you are called to work is for you to be empowered by God!

Invitation

- Pray that God would Impact Your Desire and Your Ability to Live for Him! Believe that He will answer!
- Remember the gospel message? God – Man – Christ – Response. Pray that God would Save You! Believe that He is able! Call upon Him today!