

GOD'S WORK IN US AND OUR WORK IN THE WORLD**Philippians 2:12-18****(Read Philippians 2:12-18)**

Intro: As I began this series a month ago, my title of that first sermon was HE BEGAN A GOOD WORK AND HE WILL FINISH IT and it was based on Paul's happy assurance for the Philippians *that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ*. Philippians 1:6. As his letter continues he returns to that idea of work as he urges them to . . .

Work out your own salvation

- What?! Work out your own salvation? What are you talking about Paul? You're the very author of the concept salvation by faith alone and not by works. You wrote *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast*. Ephesians 2:8-9. So what gives?
- Well, we know that Paul didn't mean "Work so as to earn your own salvation." because that would contradict the whole of his gospel. What Paul did mean is to call the Philippians to put forth real effort into their Christian lives. This is not to work their salvation in the sense of accomplishing it, but to work out their salvation – to see it evident in every area of their lives, to activate this salvation God freely gave them. Barclay wrote, "*The work of salvation is begun, continued and ended in God.*" Muller wrote, "*The believer must finish, must carry to conclusion, must apply to its fullest consequences what is already given by God in principle... He must work out what God in His grace has worked in.*"
- So, what does that work look like? How about this – Paul says it should be:
 - With fear and trembling – because its serious business
 - Whether he (Paul) is there or not – in other words when nobody's watching. Like – between Sundays. Are you living and working for Jesus Monday through Saturday? Being a Christ Follower is a full-time commitment.
 - God is working in you so don't waste his time. We'll talk about this more in a bit.
 - God is working in us because he loves to work in us.
- Work out your own salvation: the word Paul uses for work out is one that always has the idea of bringing to completion. It is as if Paul says: "Don't stop halfway; go on until the work of salvation is fully completed in you." No Christian should be satisfied with anything less than the total benefits of the gospel.
- There are two significant things about it; it is always used of the action of God, and it is always used of effective action. God's action cannot be frustrated, nor can it remain half-finished; it must be fully effective. That is the work we are doing as a result of our salvation.
- Now then, part of our work is to . . .

Be lights in a dark and twisted world

- Which, first of all, means no murmuring! Spurgeon gives three examples of things we must not murmur against:
 - The Providence of God. A quick definition of Providence from that great theological source, Google, is "*God has big plans and small plans for this world, for the Church, and for individuals, and he actively does things to see those plans through.*" In other words, God knows what he's doing and he does all things well and he will continue to.
 - One another. Deal with it. Tearing one another down is not being light.
 - The ungodly world – this one is interesting! I hear people griping about our world ALL. THE. TIME! But what does it change? What good does it do? Instead of griping – let's be light! Bring God into that ungodly world.
- It basically comes down to not murmuring about ANYTHING! Complaining wastes precious time and energy. When we patiently move forward without complaint we show ourselves to be just like Jesus.
- Just be lights! Shine as lights in the world. This is not an encouragement to do something, it is a simple statement of fact about what we already are. Christ Followers are lights in the world; the only question is, "How brightly do we shine?" Well, one example is a city on a hill. Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and*

put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16.

- Think about what you doing when you are the light of the world:
 - Lights are used to make things evident.
 - Lights are used to guide.
 - Lights are used as a warning.
 - Lights are used to bring cheer.
 - Lights are used to make things safe.
 - Paul knew that the Christ Followers in Philippi were shining their light in a tough place. But instead of excusing the lights for not shining, Paul knew that their position made it all the more important that they shine. Being in a dark place is a greater incentive to shine.
- F. B. Meyer wrote this, *“In this manner you will become as a lighthouse on a rock mound coast, shining with blameless and beneficent beauty among your companions. Light is silent, but it reveals. Light is gentle, but it is mighty in its effects. Light departs when the Sun is down, but it may be maintained by various luminaries until dawn again breaks. As we shine, we shall be consumed, but the sacrifice will not be in vain.”*
- It’s all worth it! Being lights ensures that . . .

God’s (and Paul’s) work is not wasted.

- So hold to fast the word of life: One commentator pointed out that the phrase “hold fast could also be translated “hold forth”. Both work and so Paul probably meant it that way. We hold on for dear life, and we hold forth with the Good News. We can’t lose.
- Paul is full of hope for the news he will get from Philippi as he writes, *so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.* Philippians 2:16b. He wants to know he’s not wasted his time with the Philippians and good reports only serve to make his joy complete. He’s essentially saying, keep up the good work. A pastor wants to know that what he’s taught has “stuck”. He wants to know he’s making an impact, and it is immensely satisfying when someone quotes back something I’ve said in a sermon or I hear something I’ve said applied to your life.
- Keep working!

Conclusion: Paul’s life was going to be a sacrifice for Jesus Christ, either in life or death. This was a source of gladness and joy for Paul, and he wants the Philippians to adopt the same attitude. Again, we come to the consistent theme of Philippians: which is **JOY**. And again, this is joy NOT based on circumstances, in fact it’s quite the opposite, because it’s based in the fact of a life totally committed to Jesus Christ.

We should be working. Working like the saved people we are and showing the work God has done in us and passing it on to a world that desperately needs its own salvation. That’s God’s work in us and our work in the world. Amen.