

The Gospel According to Philippians
Gospel Perseverance
Philippians 1:27-2:18
Sermon Outline

Introduction: What does it mean to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling” and how do we do it?

I) It means that we are on our own. We have to work things out for ourselves

v. 12 ...not only in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation...

A) The Philippians’ situation

Paul is gone

Married, but without the mentor who provided pre-marital counseling

Not “work for”...but “work out”

B) Meaning for us

EPC’s story

At a personal level: We cannot drop the responsibility for our growth in someone else’s lap

Exhilarating but scary

With fear and trembling (v. 12)

...lest I have run in vain and labored in vain (v.16)

II) How do we “work out our salvation with fear and trembling?”

A) The right attitude: We stop complaining

v. 14: Do all things without grumbling or questioning

Attitude at the head of the list. Why?

Israel in the wilderness

Comprehensive: *Do all things...*

Does this mean denial and “plastic” cheerfulness?

Deep river flowing God-ward and praise word

Odd linkage of “fear and trembling” with praise. Why?

B) The right focus: We stay on mission

v. 14-15: ..that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world

Lust or evangelism in the subway

Not hiding your connection with Jesus

Living a public life that no one can fault

C) The right resource: We hold fast the word of life

v. 16: Holding fast the word of life...

Praying God’s prayers

Quoting God’s words

III) We are not on our own.

v.13: for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

A) A mysterious co-working

B) The deepest work is God's

Unstoppable: *both to will and to work*

Freely chosen: *for his good pleasure*

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Recall what it was like when you first found yourself “on your own”—free from the constraints of home and family. What was it like? Exhilarating or scary? Why?
- 2) To “work out our salvation” means to flesh out the meaning of Christ’s presence and the gospel’s reality in each new generation and each new setting. Recall a situation in which you were confronted with the need to do this. What did you decide to do?
- 3) Respond to the following statement by Alec Motyer: “The Christian life, growing in the likeness of Christ, is a blend of rest and activity—not alternating from one to the other, but a blend in which, at one and the same moment, the Christian is resting confidently in Christ...and actively pursuing the right things.”
- 4) We are to do “all things without grumbling or questioning.” Is this realistic? Is it honest? How can Paul say this when he also speaks straightforwardly about his own sufferings (see 2 Corinthians)? What would it mean, practically speaking, for you to be a person for whom praise is the deep and persistent song of your life?
- 5) Respond to the following statement by Alec Motyer: “The ‘fear and trembling’ of which Paul writes is not the terror of a lost sinner before a holy God, but rather the fear of a true child before the most loving of all fathers—not a fear of what God might do to us, but of the hurt we might do to him.”
- 6) Part of how we “work out our salvation” is by staying consciously “on mission” as those whom God has called to “shine as lights in the world.” One way we stay on mission is by always being willing and ready to identify with Christ (1 Peter 3:15: “Honor Christ in your hearts always being ready to give an account of the hope that is within you when asked.”). Share stories in which you have done this? What inhibits you from doing it?
- 7) Another way to stay on mission is to live a public life that no one—not even your enemies—can fault. Grade yourself on this on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 as the highest grade). If your score is low what will you do about it?
- 8) Reflect on the following statement by Alec Motyer and spend some time thanking God for his persistent love: “It is important to ask why God works in us. If he works only where he finds a promising response, or only where there is evidence of progress, or only when we really desire him to do so, then none of us can entertain any hope of reaching the great goal. But it is not like that. He does it because he wants to. It is of free, divine choice; for ‘his good pleasure.’ Nothing then can stop the ongoing divine work...He loves you because he loves you. It is no explanation, and yet it is the greatest of all explanations, for it means that, though the reason is hidden from us, it is a reason which makes sense to him. He will never give us up.”