

Philippians 2:12-30 Spiritual Growth Takes Work

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

Therefore: Always looks back – Paul is looking back to the conversation he began in V.27 of Ch 1

A) Let your conduct (your manner of life) be worthy of the Gospel – Weigh as much as the gospel

B) In Ch. 2 He explained to us what that would look like – and proceeded to give the Ultimate example v5 *Let this mind be in you which was.... Christ Jesus*

C) So that is the goal – that is the target – Important that we know what we are shooting at –

D) Now -The temptation for us would be to say – I can't do that - I can't be like Jesus

E) That is why what Paul says here is so important

1) Walking with God doesn't have to be as hard as we make it sometimes

Here is chapter two we have some practical insights into how to obey Paul's exhortation – 5 insights

A) #1 You have to cooperate with God - work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

One day a man went to the doctor because he was concerned about his Diminishing level of energy.

A) He told his doctor that he wasn't able to do all the things around the house that he used to do.

B) When the examination was complete, the man said to the doctor, "Now, Doc, I can take it. - Tell me in plain English what is wrong with me.

C) "Okay," the doctor replied, "In plain English, you're just lazy."

D) The man replied - "That's a relief- Now give me the medical term so I can tell my wife."

Listen when it comes to spiritual growth as a Christian – one thing that you can't be is LAZY!

A) Spiritual growth takes effort – but the cool thing is that God meets our effort – with his power.

B) Spiritual growth formula: Divine operation + Human cooperation = Spiritual growth

C) Notice- Paul is not saying – **Work for your salvation or **work toward** or even **work at**.**

D) Salvation is a gift from God that comes by placing our faith in Jesus – FINISHED - HIS WORK –

E) And Remember – Paul is not writing to unbelievers - Paul is writing to Christians

F) He has already referred to them as Saints in Christ – (Set apart in Ch 1)

G) These people are already saved – they already have Salvation – like most of you here today-

So Paul is not saying Work for your salvation – You Can't –

A) He is saying work out your salvation.

B) Think of it this way – Salvation is like a muscle – work it! **Work it out – Develop it - let it grow**

C) We all have muscles – born with them – but some people are stronger – why?

1) They worked out those muscles

D) What do you do with those? Flex

Spiritual muscles aren't for show – for GO!

A) Put them to work

The Phrase work out is ONE WORD the Greek kater/gaz/oma

A) The word was used to describe working a mine! Dig and explore

B) So Pretend a distant relative leaves you a gold mine in Alaska –

1) There is gold in them there hills

C) There is gold there and you have it – you own it – You just have to go in and work it out!

1) That is the idea of this statement

That is a good picture because the word Salvation encompasses much more than being saved from our sins!

A) We usually stop there – I am saved – not going to hell any more.

B) The word Salvation – encompasses so much more!

1) It includes all the blessings and benefits of being a child of God

C) It includes the resources that are suddenly at our disposal as Christians

1) It involves **discovering and understanding – what it means to find our identity in Christ!**

So when Paul says – work out your salvation –

A) He is saying to work it like a mine – dig – To discover all that is yours in Christ –

B) And work it like a muscle so that you can grow stronger in your faith and walk with JESUS

C) With fear and trembling – Take spiritual growth seriously

D) But NOTE: Spiritual growth is not entirely up to us and our effort

V. 13 is Key - work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

E) Together – these two verses give us – the right combination for growth –

Divine energy plus + human effort = growth

1) Human cooperation + Divine operation = Maturity

From the moment we get saved God is working in you!

A) “God who works” - Works = energizes
God energizes you!

B) Notice how God energizes you – it starts with the will –

1) The will = desire – The Holy Spirit starts working on our desires

C) Like The desires to draw near to God - Spend time with Him Galatians 4:6 –⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father

D) Abba = daddy

E) Everyday – Longing to draw near to God – pick up the Bible – read it –

1) Seeking to work into you an appetite for spiritual things

Interesting – when you eat physically you get FULL – eat spiritually – your hunger grows

A) God is working on your appetite – expanding it

B) But we have to be intentional about seeking God and applying his word to our lives

C) When we move in that direction God meets us with his power!

D) When that happens God’s word moves from being theory to reality

1) Promise heard - to a promise discovered and experienced

E) God is working in you both to will – and to do for his good pleasure!

How do we grow spiritually?

#1 You cooperate with God. V. 12-13

#2 You need to keep the right attitude V. 14-15

¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

Living a life worthy of the gospel in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation is hard

A) Do it without complaining disputing

B) How do we live a manner of life worthy of the gospel? – By being different

C) Known what we are for – or Known for what we are against

Our world is full of complainers – people with critical spirits – BE DIFFERENT

A) That makes us stand out – lights that shine in the darkness

B) Bob Goff – I don't know anyone who doesn't like that guy –

1) He is so good at focusing on the best thing about a person or situation – JOY

C) He lives with such a firm confidence in the Sovereignty of God –

1) God has got this – I am going to trust him

D) So #2 Having the right attitude is key – why am I here? – Shine as lights in a dark world

1) We can't be grumbling and complaining all the time

#3 You need to keep the main thing the main thing.

Verse 16. "Holding fast to the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."

A) Hold fast = to grab something and hold it firmly or tightly

B) Idea of knowing what you believe about the gospel and why you believe it

1) and don't deviate from it in any way

However, a more proper translation would be, not holding fast, but holding forth to the word of life.

A) I LIKE THAT!

B) The idea here is to Hold it forth - Represent the Gospel the good news to the world! –

C) Live it and declare it – HOLD IT FORTH – the idea there is HOPE FOR THIS WORLD

1) His name is JESUS

D) Fits v1:27 – Conduct Manner of gospel-

1) Our life style is like a banner being held forth – declaring the beauty of the gospel

Our world has told an entire generation of young people that they have come from nothing, that they are nothing, and that they are going nowhere...

A) So why are we surprised when they are living that way! Hooking up – being reckless

1) living for the moment – no direction

B) That is the way people act who buy into the message – **that they come from nothing, are nothing, and are going nowhere.**

But the Gospel says: NO - You were created on Purpose and for a purpose!

A) Know GOD live for him – find your purpose in that relationship

B) God has blessed you and given you gifts – abilities – talents – passion – IMPACT YOUR WORLD

C) We are to Hold Forth that message to the world around us –

1) Hope and purpose and meaning in Knowing God through his Son JESUS

D) #3 In our insights for spiritual growth

#4 You need to be ALL IN!

A) Here Paul gives an interesting analogy –

¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

A drink offering was symbolic in that culture of being all in –

A) Poured out – I am all in – completely poured out –

B) But the drink offering in Israel was also associated with the worship

1) It was one of the offerings that was a part of Israel's worship

C) The two ideas combine to form a wonderful picture for the believer in Jesus of what our lives are to be about!

D) We come to God on a daily basis and say – Jesus I am all in – As Part of my worship to you

1) I give you myself – my heart

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Your true and proper worship!

A)Everyday our lives have an opportunity to be a worship song to Jesus

B)If we realize- Jesus I exist for you! – Pour me out today

C)But in order to being poured out – you need to first be – being poured into

D)Lord fill me afresh today with your Spirit

1)Time in the word and in prayer – filled up

E)So that you can be poured out!

Imagine: We prayed Jesus pour me out today for you?

A) Imagine the opportunities we would have to Hold Forth the gospel

B)To live a manner of life that was worthy of the gospel

C)Imagine the impact that our lives could make in each one of our spheres of influence

Church – let's make a pact together – respond to how God is working in us to will and do ... pleasure

A)Everyday – Fill me afresh – spirit

B)Everyday – get into the word – 15 minutes

C)Everyday -Jesus pour me out as a drink offering to you.

1)If we did that God would blow our minds

D)And our impact would be incredible!

E)So #4 Be all in – Drink offering

#5 Do it with others and not alone.

A)Working out is always better – do it with someone else

B)Encourage each other and push each other

C)Don't feel like it – he or she is going to be waiting for me. – Need to go

V. 19-30 Paul is going to mention two guys that were his partners in ministry –

A)We will pinpoint 3 traits that made them good partners

B)These three traits need to be in the lives of those we are seeking to run toward Jesus with

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know **his proven character**, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. 23 Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

25 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; 26 since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold **such men in esteem**; 30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

Paul mentions two guys that he was running the race with – two work out partners in the Christian life.

A)I want to make note of 3 traits in these two guys that we need to have –

B)1st They were reliable

C)These men were willing to travel long distances to come to the aid of the apostle Paul. – **Willing to go the extra mile.**

D)The Journey from Rome to Philippi was over 800 miles

1)Walking and boats – rough terrain – took approximately 6 weeks to get their destination

E)Timothy was one that Paul often sent to various places to represent him.

It was Timothy that was sent by Paul from Athens to Thessalonica, 1 Thessalonians 3.

A) He was also sent from Ephesus to Corinth, 1 Corinthians 4.

B) He was sent from Ephesus to Macedonia, Acts 19.

C) Now he's sending him again on an errand to go all the way from Rome to Philippi,

1) It takes somebody reliable to pull that off.

Principle:

A) The principle is the more reliable you are, the more valuable you become.

➤ **And faithfulness will lead to fruitfulness.**

B) Faithfulness is what will open the door to more fruitfulness.

1) The more faithful you are, you just stay at it, stay at it, stay at it, that will open the door to more fruitfulness.

C) Paul would eventually commission Timothy to Pastor the Church in Ephesus –

1) Paul's longest stint as pastor 3 yrs – Need someone faithful and reliable to pull this off

Epaphroditus is also reliable

A) Notice the titles that Paul gives him here V.25 Brother – fellow worker- fellow soldier – **but your messenger**

B) Messenger = ambassador –

C) We read in Ch. 4 that when the church was sending a financial offering to Paul

1) To help support him in his ministry

D) They didn't have wire transfers or bank transfers or Venmo –

1) It had to be personally carried – and Epaphroditus was chosen to be the carrier –

A Dangerous journey – possibility of getting robbed – a long journey –

A) but when they needed a reliable person to carry out the mission

B) Epaphroditus was the man chosen

C) And he was sent to serve Paul personally, and to serve alongside of him.

1) He fulfilled his calling: **the one who ministered to my need;**

E) SO #1 A good friend is reliable

#2 Compatible:

A) V.20 Paul says this about Timothy - 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For **all seek their own**, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.

B) One of the best compliments that Paul could give about Timothy was that Timothy was like minded!

1) Paul was saying that if I can't come – **Timothy is the next best thing.**

C) It is interesting that this is the only time this phrase likeminded appears in the NT

1) The Greek for like-minded literally means – equal souled or like souled.

D) Paul defines what made Timothy like-minded when he says – **everyone else is seeking their own – not the things of Christ.**

E) You need friends that are going to be running in the same direction as you toward Jesus

Now we also see that Epaphroditus was Compatible to Paul as well.

A) He shared Paul's heart and burden for the people of God.

B) In 2 Corinthians 11 Paul spoke of the burden he carried for the churches he ministered to

1) He called it a DAILY pressure – his deep concern for the churches

C) In Another place he spoke of being burdened beyond measure.

D) Paul had a true pastor's heart- he carried for the spiritual and physical wellbeing of the people in these churches he started

E) Here in our text Paul revealed that

Epaphroditus had that same heart as well. 26 since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, **not regarding his life**, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

F) These men were compatible in the sense that they were sold out in their service to Christ!

1) Willing to risk it all in fulfilling the work that God had called them to

So 3 Marks of a good friend

#1 Reliable

#2 Compatible

#3 Durable

A) We learn from Paul's other writings that Timothy was timid

B) He struggled with his age – being younger –

C) Paul exhorted Timothy – God has not given you a spirit of fear but of power and love and sound mind

D) Timothy would overcome his timidness to become a man that was used mightily of the Lord!

Epaphroditus was also durable – He overcame sickness unto death

A) Paul refers to him as soldier

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴ No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

2 Timothy 2:3, 4

B) This verse is key to why Epaphroditus and Timothy were so durable

1) They were serving to please the one who enlisted them – JESUS!

That is key: Not serving – men – not serving for a pay check – or public recognition

A) Serving Jesus – the Ultimate picture of Durability

And toughness – Tough as Nails

B) Our culture: Tough guys – MMA fighters

1) But being a tough guy doesn't mean – beat people up – sticking up for yourself when offended

C) A true tough guy sacrifices himself for the sake of others

1) Jesus carried the cross – 200lbs up the Via Delarosa no less than 650 yards – 6.5 football fields

D) But more than carrying the cross he was carrying the weight of all the sins of the World

E) Your sin and my sin!

For the Joy that was set before Him he endured the cross – despising the shame!

His Joy – You his child

He is the friend that sticks closer than a brother!