

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JANUARY 21 - 25, 2019

TOU

SERMON SERIES

A Study of Philippians

MONDAY

Philippians 2:12-13

THE JOY OF KNOWING THAT GOD IS WORKING THROUGH YOU

Salvation is a richer truth than my being saved from God's judgment and condemnation of the world for its sin and wickedness. Indeed, that is its primary meaning, and I obtain it by trusting in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. He died on the Cross to receive the penalty that I deserve for my sinful life of disobeying and ignoring God's will. Scripture says that the Creator God has appointed a day when He will judge all who have ever lived, granting everlasting life and joy to the worthy, and everlasting destruction to the wicked (Romans 12:2).

But today's passage also tells me that God has a plan for me wrapped up with my salvation, an individualized plan that I need to "work out." Note that it says "work out," not "work for." For God, through Jesus, has already worked for my salvation, and all I needed to do is accept it as a gift from God. But as a saved person, even while I rejoice in the truth that I am now saved and free from God's condemnation, I need to "work out" or realize that plan, because I am still in the flesh living out the rest of my physical, natural life on earth. And I am enjoined to work out that plan by the same attitude of faith by which I have trusted in Jesus Christ as my Savior—trusting my Heavenly Father that His plan and will for me is good and perfect (Jeremiah 29:11).

I can think of several good reasons for my obedience:

1. That I am delivered from evil by getting me to shed all my vices and bad habits.
2. That I may grow and mature spiritually.
3. That I may use my gifts, talents, and resources to “bear fruit”: (a) by helping to bring other people, especially my loved ones, into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ; (b) by alleviating the suffering of others, because Jesus identifies with the poor and needy (Matthew 25:34).
4. That Jesus’ work to redeem the world would continue through me.
5. That I may have the fulness of joy both now and forever!

QUESTION

What is your idea of “salvation”?

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, help me to understand that my salvation through faith in Your Son Jesus involves a perfect plan for my life that You want me to work out. Amen.

TUESDAY

Philippians 2:12-18

OLD CONTEXT, NEW CONTENT, TO NEW CONTEXT

When I receive Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I become a person with four interacting facets:

1. My living, **biological body**—my “flesh” that will continue to grow older.
2. My **social context**, which is me *in relation* to the changing world around me—my family, neighborhood, city, school or work, citizenship and government, rights and freedoms, the natural and man-made environment, etc.

A special part of this social context is my relationship with other believers who are also saved by faith in Jesus. According to God’s perfect plan, my spiritual growth needs interaction with other believers in the church. As Paul wrote, *“This must continue until we are all united in what we believe and know about the Son of God. Our goal is to become like a full-grown man—to look just like Christ and have all His perfection”* (Ephesians 4:13).

3. The **subjective me**—the soul, conscience, and spirit living in my body by which I know, experience, evaluate, and respond to all the sense stimuli, emotions, feelings, memories, thoughts, plans, intuitions, and dreams. It’s the free volitional, willing, valuing, judging and deciding part of me. Scripture says that this “me” is now “born again,” “born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

4. The **Holy Spirit dwelling in me**— whom I receive upon believing in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. The Spirit is the Comforter whom Jesus refers to in John 14:16. Jesus says that the Spirit will abide with me forever.

The Spirit helps me in my prayers (Romans 8:26). He guides and teaches me, protects and sanctifies me. He is the “seal” of God’s ownership of me (Ephesians 1:13). He empowers and strengthens me to follow God’s perfect plan for me.

Thus, upon receiving salvation by faith in Jesus, my *context* will have both old and new elements because my *content* has changed. I am born again and I now have the Holy Spirit as my Comforter, Teacher, and Guide who makes me a *new creation* with a perfect growth plan that I must work out.

This is analogous to the way a plant seed grows into the healthy, full-grown fruit tree, but the plant does it automatically without conscious thought following the biological plan for its growth imbedded in the genes of the cells that make up the body of the plant. I change freely and out of countless conscious decisions I make by faith as I live my life as a Christian. And I will discover that my loving obedience to follow God’s plan for me is the wellspring of my joy as a Christian.

QUESTION

How do you see yourself in relation to the world? What is your purpose in life?

PRAYER

Dear God, help me to understand that, along with Your perfect plan for me, you have given me Your Holy Spirit to carry it out. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

Philippians 2:13

WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING

When I have an important project to work on, I do it in all seriousness, knowing that any mistake can be disastrous. Perhaps that's why Paul uses these very serious words (fear and trembling) in describing the manner or attitude I should have in working out God's plan for my continued spiritual growth after I have received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

The stakes are so high; the "project" is so important; my joy in the faith depends so much on it. God loves me so much and wants only the best for me; my spiritual growth literally deserves my best effort. The Author of the plan is the person of the highest worth and rank—God Himself!

In some passages we read about the perfect love of God for us (e.g., John 3:16). Another passage says, "*Perfect love casts out fear*" (1 John 4:18). Yet, other passages tell us we are to "fear God" (Deuteronomy 10:12). Proverbs 9:10 says, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*" In Philippians 2:13, Paul says we are to work out God's salvation plan for us *with fear and trembling*.

This is analogous to a child's relationship with his good and loving father. The child knows he can rely on his strong father's protection and provision. However, he also knows that in daily life, his father lays down certain rules and guidelines about things that *should not be* done because they are bad, potentially dangerous, and harmful, or *should be* done because they are

good for him. It's those guidelines that a child should regard *with fear and trembling*, being careful for his own good not to violate them.

God is in a spiritual war with the Evil One for the redemption of the world. Upon salvation, a Christian is immediately enlisted as a soldier in God's army. "*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 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 2:34).

In God's warfare, I have a place and post for which I'm responsible. It's that responsibility that I, as a spiritually maturing follower of Jesus Christ, am to *work out with fear and trembling*. Everything I do, from the least to the greatest importance, matters.

QUESTION

How do you see yourself in relation to the daily news of things going on in the world, both good and bad, near and far?

PRAYER

Dear God, thank You that I don't need to feel overwhelmed by all the bad news I hear. Remind me that You have a wonderful plan for my life and that I have Your Holy Spirit to give me wisdom and power to carry it out in love, joy, and peace. Amen.

THURSDAY

Philippians 2:13-16; 1 Corinthians 15:10

IT IS GOD WHO WORKS IN YOU ...

Grace is one of the many-splendored truths in God's Word. It is primarily understood as the favor or mercy granted by God to undeserving sinners (which is all of us), independent of our works of righteousness to win God's favor. The dictionary defines *grace* as "unmerited divine assistance given to humans for their regeneration and sanctification." It is in this sense that Paul wrote, "*For it is by grace ye are saved and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God so that no one should boast*" Ephesians 2:8-9)

But more than the unmerited favor of receiving salvation, God's grace is also the source of the motivation, the power, and the actual doing of what God wants done in the world. Paul's introduction in many of his letters is actually a prayer for the bestowal of that grace on the people he was writing to: "*Grace and peace be unto you, from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Paul attributed his accomplishments in sharing the Gospel to the grace of God. Thus, he wrote 1 Corinthians 15:10.

This is again one of the wonderful paradoxes of our Christian faith—that while we work out our salvation in fear and trembling, it is God who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (v. 13).

1. This is a call to continued obedience to God after we receive God's gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.
2. The very *willing* to do what is good and right comes from God by His grace.

3. The very *doing* is actually by God Himself. Outwardly, it looks like we are the ones doing the work. In reality, it is God working through us.

4. This is also a call to humility so that we do not boast in our accomplishments but give glory to God who is doing the actual work using our bodies, our hands, our feet, even our minds.

For our surrender of the use of our bodies to accomplish God's will, we receive a crown of rejoicing, as Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers: *"For who is our hope, or joy, or the crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"* (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

We see again the ultimate purpose of God's work on our behalf—our joy! For it's His joy for us to live in joy, both now and forever!

QUESTION

Did you ever realize that when you do good things in obedience to God's Word, you are actually cooperating with God's Spirit, who is the true Author of all that is good?

PRAYER

Dear God, help me to realize and experience the joy of knowing that You are working through me to bring about good in the world. Amen.

FRIDAY

Philippians 2:17-18

JOY IN BEING POURED OUT AS A DRINK OFFERING

I'm so blessed by this ministry of devotional writing. I am learning so much, and with the learning is spiritual growth. The deep thinking and prayer that's needed to express what God wants me to write, as opposed to what I myself may want to write, is a healthy exercise I would highly recommend. I get to discover more deeply the truths in the Bible that I probably would miss in my usual reading. The result is that the devo becomes something that's addressed to ME as well!

The beautiful truth today's passage is one such learning adventure. My initial understanding of this passage was that Paul was using poetic language to tell the Philippian believers that he was ready to die if that's how his imprisonment would end.

Upon researching this ancient sacrificial practice of "pouring a liquid, usually wine" (technically, it's called a "libation"), I learned that this practice was quite common in ancient Greece and in ancient Israel too. Numbers 28 and 29 describe the daily, weekly (Sabbath), monthly, annual festival (i.e., Passover) sacrifices the people are commanded to offer to God as *an offering of sweet savour*. A *drink offering* is always included. And the sacrifices are supposed to be offered in joy and thanksgiving (Psalm 107:22).

Alluding to this practice prescribed in the Mosaic Law, Paul is saying the following:

1. The works and service done in faith by the Philippians, including their continued help and support for Paul, are actually a "sacrifice of sweet savour" pleasing to God, analogous to the burnt animal sacrifices prescribed in the Law.

2. If Paul's imprisonment for preaching the Gospel ends in his execution by beheading and the pouring out of his life-blood, he sees that as analogous to the aroma-enhancing drink offering of wine that is poured out as part of the Philippians' sacrifice.

3. Rather than fear of death, Paul anticipates the sacrifice of his life with joy at the thought of offering his life for his beloved Lord and Savior Jesus and for the Gospel.

4. Paul therefore invites the Philippian believers to look at their works of faith and Paul's offering of his life in the same light, and to unite with him in joy and celebration.

As Paul wrote earlier in Philippians 1:21, "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*"

QUESTION

What is your life dedicated to?

PRAYER

Dear God, give me the grace to realize that You are good and want only what's ultimately good for me. Give me the grace to realize the importance of following Your perfect plan that I may experience Your joy both now and forever.



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